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WISDOM

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ALTINOLUK

THE DISEASE OF ENJOYING PRAISE AND ITS CURE



Osman Nuri Efendi:
The Training in Sufism
(Sayr-i-Suluk)

Cafer Durmus:
An Analysis of Characters who
Enjoy Praise

Rayyan Alzimati.
The Disease of Enjoying
Praise and Its Cure

EDITORIAL

*D*ear Readers,

“Think not that those who exult in what they have brought about, and love to be praised for what they have not done,- think escape the penalty. For them is a penalty Grievous indeed.” (Qur’ân, 3/188)

One of the biggest trials Muslims face is praise and fame from their families and friends. It is the nature of humans to praise what they see of people, but we should always remember that too much praise can harm a person. Hence, the righteous would find ways to keep this praise away from themselves and remind those around them to not over praise others.

When we are constantly praised, our weak souls begin to rely and covet this praise, so good deeds are then done solely to hear those words of praise. A person’s *nafs* may rely so much on this praise that they begin seeking it for what they did not do. Allah says in the Qur’ân:

“Think not that those who rejoice in what they have done, and love to be praised for what they have not done...” (Al-i Imran, 3/188)

It is reported that Sayyidina Abu Bakr would say after being praised: “O Allah, make me better than what they think of me, and forgive me for what they do not know about me, and do not take me to account for what they say about me.”

Our teacher, Osman Nuri Efendi, writes on the training in Sufism and explains us that Sufism represents the educational method by which the Blessed Prophet (upon him peace) trained his Companions in guiding them to religious and spiritual purification. Cafer Durmus analyses of characters who enjoy praise while Rayyan Alzimati explicates that how we can purify our hearts from enjoying praise and similar diseases from the words of the Messenger of Allah (upon him peace).

May Allah make us among the sincere ones and may Allah purify our hearts from seeking praise and being affected by it.

Elif Kapici

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**Shirin
Attia**

**Praising
Someone in
their Presence**



**Prof. Henry
Francis
Espiritu**

**Sufi Maxim
for Self-
Authenticity:**



Salih Kareem

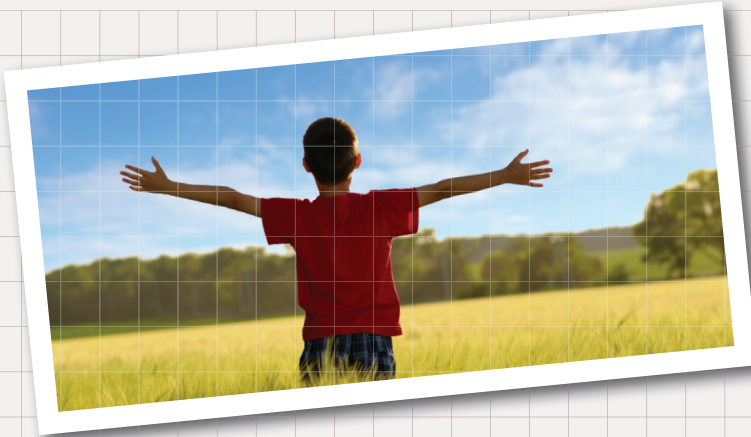
**The Society of
the Age of Bliss
(IV)**



**Halime
Demiresik**

**Sayyidah
Mariya (r.ah)
(II)**

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The Training in Sufism (*Sayr-i Suluk*)

During the process of purifying the lower self, a servant should not overdo spiritual exercises in the name of taking the self under complete control; for Islam commands moderation in all states and actions, and warns people against all kinds of exaggerative behaviour.

Human beings are created in various capacities with potential talents and abilities each possesses. Sufi masters, therefore, use variety of training methods compliant with the aspirant's spiritual talents and disposition. It goes without saying that it is impossible to subject human disposition to a complete change; yet it can be matured to a certain important extent if trained by and guided through Divine instructions. Islamic law (*Shariah*) establishes the same general regulations for all Muslims. In addition to and based on these general rules, the Sufi path promotes particular methods of spiritual training in accordance with the personal characteristics of the wayfarer. Here, we need to clarify a subtle and frequently misunderstood point: Sufism does not promote any principles that contradict the *Shariah*. The relationship between the *Shariah* and Sufism may be comparable to a compass. The stable leg of the compass is the *Shariah*, while the other, moveable leg is Sufism. Though the distance between the


two legs may increase depending on personal disposition and abilities of the wayfarer, the moveable leg is nonetheless always bound, remains loyal to the fixed leg, and never moves beyond its control.

On the other hand, this delicate criterion is applicable only to those who thrive in observing the commands and prohibitions of the Almighty. For this reason, true Sufis are those who rectify their outward aspects while at the same time directing their attention to maturing their inward qualities. Such Sufis constantly strive to embody advanced characteristics, both externally and internally, in a delicately balanced manner. Not only do they acknowledge the importance of correcting and perfecting the external human qualities, they emphasize the significance of improving internal human characteristics; namely the heart, as human actions come into effect through the will, which in turn, is controlled by the heart.

One of the subtle principles the Blessed Prophet followed (upon him, blessings and peace) in spiritual education was to never reproach the interlocutor, even if he be guilty at all fronts. Much rather, the Prophet (upon him, blessings and peace) would caution the person in an indirect manner by ascribing the fault to himself. There are numerous reports that detail the admirable and exemplary attitude the Blessed Prophet (upon him, blessings and peace) would show in such

situations. On many an occasion, for instance, the Prophet (upon him, blessings and peace) would express his disapproval of an unpleasant behavior by simply saying, in a very gentle and polite manner, “What is wrong with me that I see you do such and such?” Emulating this exemplary attitude, Sufis call themselves to account on a regular basis, but treat others with utmost leniency. Since they are too occupied with inner purity and spiritual education, they approach others, even sinners, with affection and tolerance. Sufis thus strive to get rid of all kinds of sin, though certainly not the sinners themselves. Before correcting negative human characteristics, Sufis try to soften the hearts of their interlocutors through the spiritual power and blessings that emanate from their gatherings, and prepare the hearts for the awaiting process of correction and betterment. Sufis, therefore, help others tone their anger and rage while at the same time lend them a helping hand in restoring their sense of repentance.

An incomparable example of spiritual refinement can be found in Hazrat Yusuf’s (upon him, blessings and peace) treatment of his brothers. During his reign in Egypt, his brothers, who had once attempted to kill him by throwing him into a deserted well, came to ask his help. To ensure they did not feel uncomfortable, Hazrat Yusuf (upon him, blessings and peace) hid his real identity from them and gave them everything they



To fulfill this process of purification, a servant should readily submit himself to Divine will and resist against his lustful passions and indecent expectations.

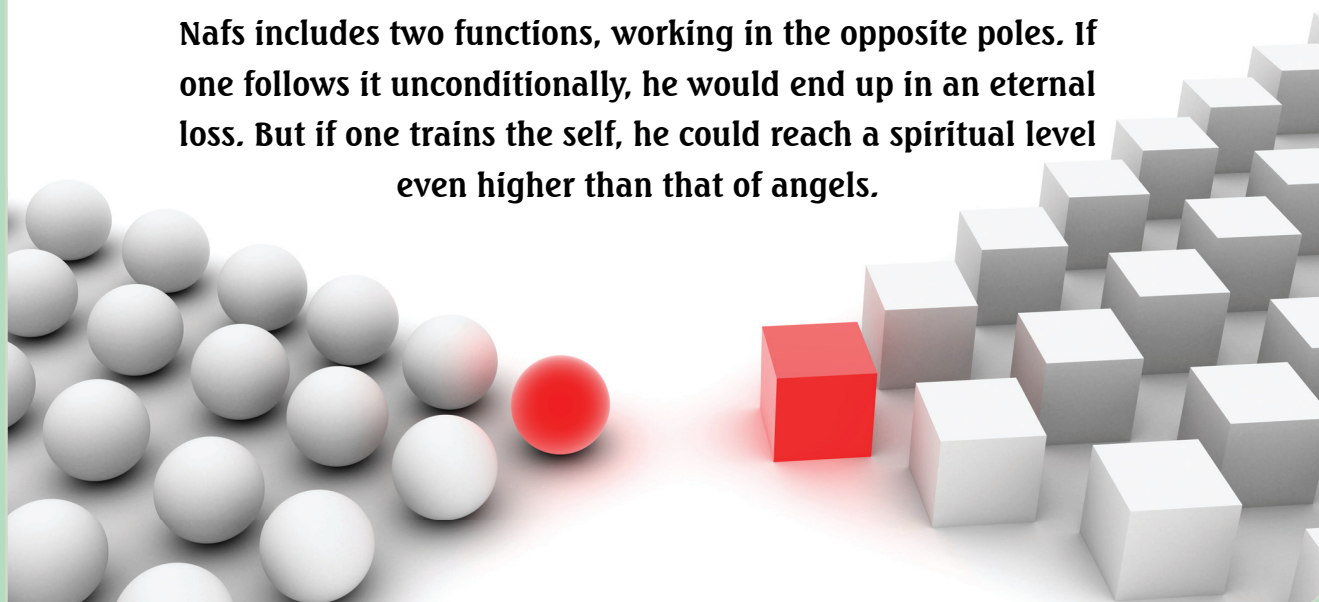
requested; treating them with dignity, honor, and hospitality. Remember that by that time, the Prophet Joseph (upon him, blessings and peace) had all the power to exact his revenge from his brothers and settle all accounts. But, instead, being the exemplary spiritual guide he was, he displayed utmost forgiveness, putting everything aside for the sake of the Lord. The Quran recounts the assuring words Hazrat Yusuf (upon him, blessings and peace) said to his brothers once his true identity was revealed: "No reproach this day shall be on you; the Lord will forgive you; He is the Most Merciful of the merciful." (Yusuf, 92) Seeing this noble act, Hazrat Yusuf's (upon him, blessings and peace) brothers felt a deep regret of what they had done to him many years ago and repented, there and then, of their grave sin. They acknowledged Hazrat Yusuf's (upon him, blessings and peace) excellent qualities and testified to his spiritual merits; the desired result was achieved through this process.

Another exemplary manifestation of the spiritual methods of education Sufis have followed in history is as follows. A group of heedless young men were sitting by Tigris River, drinking, and enjoying their day, when Maruf Karkhi, a prominent saint, happened to pass by them. When they saw him coming, the young men thought that the Sheikh would see their inexcusable situation and curse them. Understandably, they felt

uncomfortable. Frustrated, however, one man from the group stood up and called out, sarcastically, "Why don't you start your cursing right away, Sheikh, so that we are drawn into the ferocious waters of Tigris and perish once and for all?" Yet, without showing the least sign of irritation, the Sheikh raised his hands up mercifully and prayed: "O Lord! Let these young men be happy in the world to come as well, just as You let them enjoy their time in this world!" Surprised by the Sheikh's reaction, the baffled young men asked: "What are you talking about, Sheikh? Your words do not make any sense!" Maruf Karhi, whose simple prayer had already touched the hearts of the young men for its sincerity, replied: "Sons, if the Lord wants you to be joyful in the world to come, He leads you towards repentance." Seeing such an unexpected and affectionate response, the young men were sent into deep contemplation. Overcome by a deep remorse, they ended giving up the bottle of wine and their musical instruments, repenting for all their previous misdemeanors to become seekers of happiness and salvation, both in this world and the world to come.

As mentioned above, another basic principle of Sufism in spiritual education is to utilize various pedagogical methods in accordance with the disposition of the seeker. The reason why we have a variety of Sufi orders is to be explained by this aspect of human psychology; as depending on the

Nafs includes two functions, working in the opposite poles. If one follows it unconditionally, he would end up in an eternal loss. But if one trains the self, he could reach a spiritual level even higher than that of angels.





The servant should be mindful of the fact that his entire personal efforts towards purification will be useless in the Hereafter, unless the Almighty purifies him.

types of personal dispositions, Sufi orders employ a range of educational and instructive methods. For instance, a seeker with an enthusiastic disposition would find greater appeal in the Qadiri type of tutoring, which would allow him to proceed on the spiritual path with greater efficiency. A seeker with a poetic, artistic, and romantic temperament, on the other hand, would find himself more at home in the Mawlawi order. Likewise, a seeker with a sober and calm nature would find the Naqshbandi order more suitable. Therefore, in his spiritual training and progress, the seeker searches and finds the avenue most suitable for his temperament

Human disposition cannot be reset completely. Acknowledging this fact, Sufi masters see themselves responsible only for helping their disciples to become aware of their positive and negative personal qualities, and lead them to heavenly directions through this awareness. Sufi masters work diligently to introduce specific methods for each disciple in treating his personal and spiritual problems.

The Arabs of pre-Islamic times were extremely uncivilized and hardhearted, to such an extent that they could even bury their infant girls alive. They were members of a merciless society in which human rights belonged only to the powerful, while ordinary people had to undergo all kinds of suffering.

Through Prophet Muhammad's (upon him, blessings and peace) spiritual education, this society found the guidance that would make them the most civilized and distinguished human beings on earth. Thanks to the unspoiled spiritual energy in their hearts, which was inspired by their unconditional love for the Blessed Prophet (upon him, blessings and peace), they offered their acts of worship in an admirably sincere fashion. Celebrated as the Noble Companions (*Ashab-i-Kiram*), they left a lasting legacy of exemplary religious and moral standards to the following generations.

Under the Prophet's (upon him, blessings and peace) guidance and education, the Noble Companions reached the highest point of spirituality. Abdullah ibn Masud describes their unparalleled spiritual progress, when he says: "We reached such a level that we were able to hear the morsels, going down our throats, praising the Lord."

Sufism, therefore, represents the educational method by which the Blessed Prophet (upon him, blessings and peace) trained his Companions in guiding them to religious and spiritual purification. Sufism refers to a spiritual school in which the heart and soul undergo a process of refinement and purification under the guidance of real educators, who are, in effect, the heirs of the Prophet (upon him, blessings and peace). And



Every believer should be mindful of the characteristics of his self and the responsibility he carries for its purification. He should take great care and use the appropriate methods, in order not to fall victim to the nafs in the process.

the training in Sufism (*sayr-i-suluk*) is the term used to describe this spiritual school and the progressive path of becoming a perfected human being.

A. THE SELF (NAFS) AND ITS PURIFICATION (TAZKIYA)

1. THE REALITY OF THE NAFS

The Almighty created Hazrat Adam (upon him, blessings and peace) the father of all human kind, in Paradise and through him, made man the most honorable among created beings. As a result of this heavenly privilege, however, the Almighty willed that mankind toil to deserve an eternal and blissful life in Paradise. As desired by the Almighty's design in eternity-past, Hazrat Adam (upon him, blessings and peace) committed that well-known blunder in paradise, as a result of which he was sent out from Paradise to this world; though Paradise remained his original homeland, while this world was a land of exile and trial. Man's subsequent return to Paradise has thus become a matter of reward and merit, for which he has to successfully undergo a variety of tests.

For such reasons, among all creation, the Almighty has given human beings unique characteristics. The Almighty willed to design

humankind in accordance with the quality of their praiseworthy and blameworthy deeds, ranging from "the lowest of the low (*asfal al-safilin*)" to "the highest of the high (*a'la al-illiyin*).¹" In other words, being the pearl of all creation, man possesses an inborn capacity towards good and evil; and thus his high or low position among creation depends on the way he uses his will. The success of man in this undertaking is proportional to his personal success in enhancing his good qualities and, at the same time, curbing his evil aspects. The merit of a human being becomes evident in this battle ground where the good and evil features stake conflicting claims over the control of the person.

According to Sufis, the negative and positive inclinations that exist in man have two locale or focal points: in "the animal soul" and in "the lordly soul".

The animal soul is a subtle faculty that enables man to stay alive in this world and to keep his biological existence under control. It is also called "life" or "self". Since the animal soul keeps running its basic operations in the human body even while a person is asleep, most of the biological functions in the body are involuntarily carried on during sleep. But the lordly soul leaves the body during sleep, to return to it once again the moment a person wakes up. The animal soul sets the body in motion, makes it speak, and enables it

to operate all the other basic bodily functions. The animal soul leaves the body by death. Its location is between the brain and the heart, from where it spreads out to the whole body and undertakes its main operations through the circulating blood. This soul is related to “the temporal and created world (*alamu'l-khalq*)”¹ and constitutes the starting point of human actions. If untrained, this soul may exercise negative influences over a human being.

The lordly soul refers to the human soul which the Almighty had breathed upon His Spirit. It is this quality that differentiates a human being from the rest of creation. The lordly soul belongs to “the world of unconditioned existence (*alamu'l-amr*)”² and accompanies the human body so that man may perform good deeds. By way of, and thanks to, this soul which the human body dresses, man leads a decent and observant lifestyle in servanthood and obedience. The lordly soul does not perish or disappear with the death of the body; though by death the effect of the lordly soul over the body comes to an end.

Man gives directions to his life depending on the exact nature of the battle taking place in his inner dimension between the animal and lordly soul. When the lordly soul wins the battle, man becomes inclined towards good deeds and morality. But when the animal soul takes control, man becomes inclined towards

all kinds of sin and immorality. Man's responsibility for his actions is based on his preferences and decisions between good and evil deeds. Since man is given a capacity to perform his actions in accordance with his free will, and thereby take his animal soul under control to a certain extent, he is liable for what he does and eligible for both reward and punishment.

The human ego constitutes one of the biggest obstacles that stand in front of man in this world of tests and trial. For this reason, in general, we think of the human self, or *nafs*, as a negative concept. In reality, however, the self has positive qualities embedded in its essence. To make this essence appear in all its glory, man must instead polish the *nafs* from all kinds of dirt through spiritual purification (*tazkiya*). Man should continually keep himself busy with striving for good causes in this world so that he could reach a blissful life in the world to come, as every man shapes his own eternal life in this world and reaps whatever he sows. Depending on the quality of his deeds, each person will attain a pleasant or an unpleasant life in the Hereafter. In one respect, we might even say that it is man himself who writes his own destiny in this life.

One of the essential conditions of eternal happiness and salvation for man is to mature the lower self or the ego to a proper degree of ripeness, so as to accustom it to offering good



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The purification of the self is an act of cleansing aimed at eliminating all kinds of theoretical and practical impurities. This process ends in filling the nafs with good religious and moral qualities.

deeds. A self that lacks this ripeness is similar to an aggressive and untamed horse, which takes its rider to destruction, rather than to his intended destination. A saddled horse, on the other hand, properly trained and bridled, takes its rider peacefully to the destination, however dangerous the road might be. Likewise, an untamed and uncontrolled self cannot take its possessor to the sublime and celestial aims of life.

In fact, the self, or *nafs*, functions as a two dimensional vehicle. While it has a potential to elevate man's value to the peaks of maturity and make him the pearl of all creation, it could also degrade his value to the lowest of the low. The self, therefore, has a potential to head towards both directions, like a two-edged knife. When properly trained, it heads towards the good; though if not, it recklessly heads towards evil.

Every human soul that remains deprived of spiritual guidance and control, functions like a dark curtain of ignorance that covers the surface of Reality. However, as mentioned above, despite the obstacle of the ego, if a person purifies himself by salvaging his soul from the hands of immoral characteristics, he can reach advanced points even higher than that of the angels. For the merit of every end is proportionate to the level of difficulty experienced and of the obstacles overcome for the sake of reaching this end.

Immoral characteristics in the soul

interfere with the communication between the Almighty and the servant. Only through the practice of the required spiritual methods can one remain firm against these relentless interferences; and this means an equally relentless struggle against the ego's lowly temptations and desires. Such a course of action requires a persistent and determinate toil. In this context, the Blessed Prophet (upon him, blessings and peace) says:

الْمُجَاهِدُ مَنْ جَاهَدَ نَفْسَهُ

"[The real] struggler (*mujahid*) is the one who struggles against his own self." (Tirmidhi, *Fadailul-Jihad*, 2; Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, VI, 20)

Although the struggle against the lower self, or the ego, does not kill it, it nonetheless takes it under control. In fact, Sufism does not so much aim at utterly destroying the self, as withholding it from transgressing and immunizing it against lowly desires and inclinations. The Sufi way undertakes this operation in accordance with Divine instructions. In this regard, Imam Al-Ghazzali compares man's position with a rider and says, "The *nafs* is the spirit's saddled beast. If a person lets go of the bridles of the *nafs* and follows its direction, his destruction becomes unavoidable. If he tries to destroy the self (as it is in the case of certain Hindu and Buddhist religions as well as other mystical philosophies), then he is bound to remain behind on the path of Reality, without any

saddled beast. Better you hold on tight to the bridles of the beast and make use of it.”

Following this course of action in dealing with the self is a requirement, and moreover, an essential part of the prophetic method in human education. The Blessed Prophet (upon him blessings and peace) did not approve of the attitude of refraining totally from eating, drinking and living a family life for the sake of devoting the entire energy to worship. He repeatedly underlined the fact that such a monastic practice of complete self-isolation was not part of Islam. The Blessed Prophet (upon him, blessings and peace) hence showed the possibility and methods of accomplishing spiritual progress whilst leading a life in society.

On the other hand, during the course of this education, which is a difficult struggle indeed, a wayfarer encounters certain states and stations of the *nafs* (lower self). One of the most dangerous afflictions the *nafs* encounters whilst advancing on the spiritual path is the risk of ascribing an existence to itself and dragging itself thereby into self-conceit. Detrimentially, this is where the hidden arrogance and pride take their control. In the course of struggling against the lower self, even small mistakes are inexcusable, as they allow the lower self to return to its original starting point.

Since the lower self is always on alert and waiting in ambush, one should never feel safe from its deception and harm. For this reason, a believer should constantly be aware of the possible dangers and tricks that come from his own *nafs* (ego). He should meet them with sound judgment and rein them in with a determination inspired by Divine revelation.

How can we purify the self, man's saddled beast, when it has innate evil temptations? Furthermore, what kind of spiritual levels are waiting to be reached in the course of this training of purification? Now, it is time for us to focus on these two questions.

The question is whether or not you will be able to acquire a rose-like nature. What this means is that even though you see all kinds of thorns in the garden of this world, you are not to act as a thorn yourself; however severely injured you might be by them. You should instead try to be like a rose, which, despite the chill of winter, blossoms all the same...

Endnotes: 1) *Alamu'l-khalq*: This world is bound by time and space and constituted by created beings. *Alamu'l-khalq* is also called “the temporal or visible world”. Things that we perceive through our five senses come from this world. 2) *Alamu'l-amr*: This world is free of the concepts of time and matter and has come into existence merely by the Divine command “Be!”. It is also designated by the terms “the spiritual or unseen world”. Subtle realities such as the intellect, soul, spirit, heart, and secret belong to this world.





THE DISEASE OF ENJOYING PRAISE AND Its Cure

We can learn what we must purify our souls from, and how we can purify our hearts from enjoying praise and similar diseases from the words of the Prophet Muhammad.

One of the diseases which distances a person from Allah and gradually destroys the spiritual emotions in the heart is enjoying praise and wanting to be flattered with every opportunity.

The constant desire of being referred to by superior attributes is undoubtedly a spiritual disease that is difficult to cure. The desire of praise which generates from pride, arrogance and selfishness is a spiritual disease which appears mainly among polytheists and hypocrites. But unfortunately, this disease is also quite often visible among Muslims.

Those deprived of experiencing the joy of faith not only wish to be praised for certain characteristics they bear and things they do, but they also want to be praised for achievements to which they made no contribution. The Qur'ân conveys the tragic fate of such individuals with the words: "Think not that those who exult in what they have brought about, and love to be praised for what they have not done, think they can escape the penalty. For them is a penalty Grievous indeed." (*Abl-i Imran* 3:188)

Indeed, a person relying on initiatives in conducting good deeds is a sign of arrogance, and this eliminates good actions. Again, a person must constantly find fault with his own soul and seek forgiveness of the soul, however, this modern day disease quite often entices a person to delight in being praised by others.

On one occasion, the Prophet Muhammad (upon him peace) asked prominent members of the People of the Book about a topic regarding their own faith. But as they considered that the truth would be against them, they hid the truth and lied. Not only did they take pleasure in lying, but they also expected appreciation for this false information. Thus, the divine declaration in question revealed the real truth regarding those so-called scholars.

On the other hand, when the Prophet was leaving for *jihad*, some of the hypocrites parted from the Muslims and remained behind, giving various excuses. If the Muslims were defeated, then they would rejoice that they had not participated, walk among the people with pride and conceit professing cleverness and foresightedness. Whereas if the Muslims defeated the opposition and returned with the bounties of the war, then they would take credit of the victory by claiming that they remained behind and fulfilled their necessary responsibilities, that even if they did not participate, their hearts were with those on the battlefield, and they would boast and expect praise and reward for things they had not done. This verse of the Qur'ân reveals the hypocrites who rejoice and display arrogance at the things they do, and even take pleasure in being praised for things they did not do.

Although this verse was revealed due to the polytheists and hypocrites, it also concerns the Muslims who classify being praised by others a virtue, who cannot abstain from this attribute of polytheism, who are unable to avoid diseases such as pride, arrogance and conceit.

In fact, modesty should be the most

distinct characteristic of a true believer. A true believer is aware that he is simply the means of every virtuous act, every good deed performed towards others, and that the Creator is the One who actually makes this possible. Therefore, a true believer despises being complimented and never likes to be praised.

In which case, what should a person inflicted with this disease do?

First and foremost, we should be familiar with the meaning of the 151st verse of *Surah Baqarah* "...We have sent among you a Messenger of your own, rehearsing to you Our Signs, and sanctifying you, and instructing you in Scripture and Wisdom, and in new knowledge." (Baqarah 2:151)

We can learn what we must purify our souls from, and how we can purify our hearts from enjoying praise and similar diseases from the words of the Prophet Muhammad.

In addition to the obligatory forms of worship, continuing to perform supererogatory acts of worship, supplications and remembrance of Allah which strengthens our faith, increases our piety and adorns our character as a person.

Tirmidhî and Abu Dawud reported from Abu Hurairah who narrated from Abu Bakr that the Prophet Muhammad (upon him peace) said: Abu Bakr asked: "O Messenger of Allah! Teach me some words so that I may recite them in the morning and evening." The Prophet (upon him peace) replied: "O Allah! Creator of the heavens and the earth! The Knower of the Hidden and the Exposed! The Lord of Everything and Everyone, I bear witness that none has the right to be worshipped but You. I seek Your protection from the evil of my own self, from the evil of Satan and from the evil of *shirk* (idolatry and polytheism) to which he calls." The Messenger of Allah (upon him peace) continued "Recite these words in the morning and the evening, and when you go to bed." Reciting these words morning and night teaches us to keep our souls under constant

control, and ensures that we are constantly aware of the demands of our souls. These are some of the diseases which the Prophet of Allah warned us about, the diseases that afflict the souls most frequently; and again which the Prophet taught us to fight against. Undoubtedly, *shirk* (idolatry/polytheism) is one of the most horrid diseases in the life of a human. A believer who is devoted to the unification of Allah is saved from all of these diseases, however, a disguised form of *shirk* begins to haunt him, that disease is hypocrisy. There are many Qur'anic verses and *hadith* (Prophetic traditions) revealing the fate of those who perform an act without seeking the pleasure of the Creator. In one of these *sahih* (authentic) *hadith*, it informs of three groups among Muslims who will enter hell first. They are the ones who perform *jihad* for *riya* (ostentation), those who perform a deed with *riya* and those who give charity for *riya*, whereas faith prevents a person from performing a good deed for anyone except Allah.

The believers who bear ostentation in their souls will be confronted with what they believe-in before the disbelievers and oppressors. In order to eliminate ostentation from the heart, it is necessary to abandon its source, namely the desire of bearing rank and position, liking praise and the desire of attaining what others possess. A Bedouin came to the Prophet and said: "O Messenger

of Allah! One man fights for booty, another fights to win fame, and the third fights for showing off." He asked: "Which of them is fighting in the Cause of Allah?" The Messenger of Allah (upon him be peace) said: "The one who fights so that the Word of Allah (Islam) will be exalted, is the one who fights in the Cause of Allah." When a person realizes that the soul should only expect praise and compliment from the Creator, then he also becomes aware that deeds and worship should be performed in secret whenever possible. When a believer strives to avoid these acts of ostentation, Allah comes to his aid. If an individual abstains from straying off the true path, Allah will never deprive His servant from a favor He bestowed. Our faith in the Creator is one of the finest favors He bestowed upon us.

The Prophet not permitting a person to walk behind him is one of greatest examples in curing pride, a disease of the soul. The initial means of fighting these spiritual diseases is by constantly remembering Allah. Duly remembering Allah with the most excellent words and statements, with the words of the Prophet who remembered Him in every aspect of life with his heart, speech and actions, and structuring our lives on the Prophet's words of advice will give us peace and contentment both in this world and in the hereafter...

When a person realizes that the soul should only expect praise and compliment from the Creator, then he also becomes aware that deeds and worship should be performed in secret whenever possible.





PRAISING SOMEONE in their PRESENCE

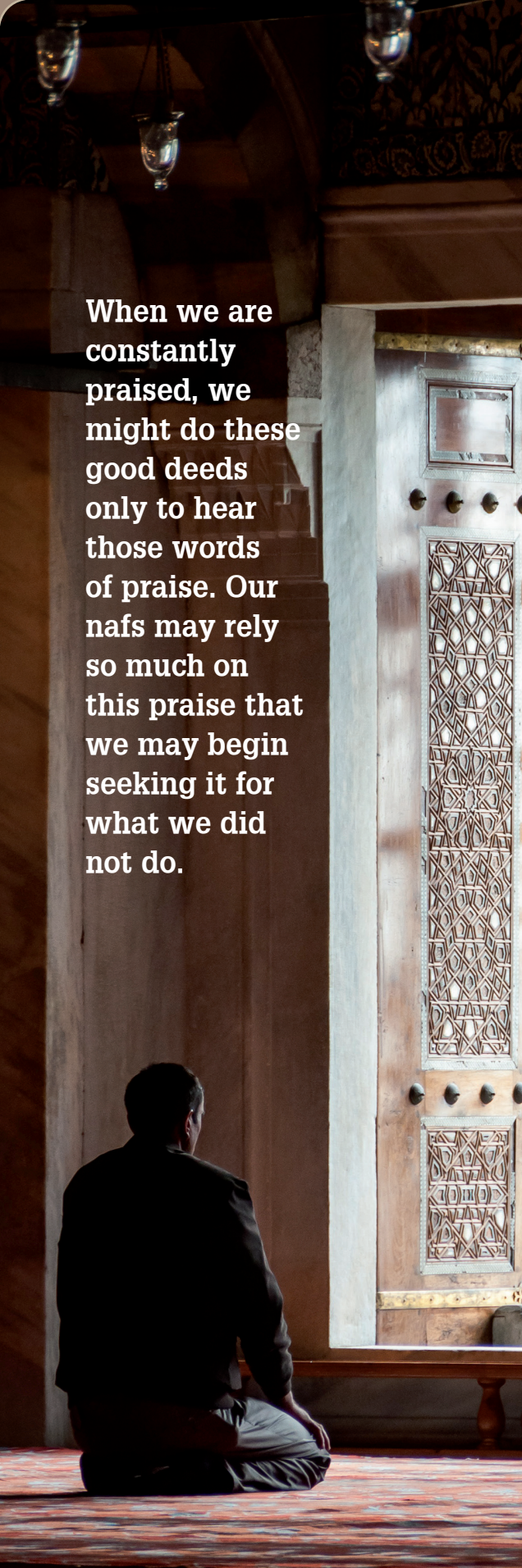
It is the nature of us to praise what we see of people, but we should always remember that too much praise can harm a person.

For many Muslims, one of the biggest struggles they face is praise and fame from their families, communities and friends. It is the nature of us to praise what we see in people, but we should always remember that too much praise can harm a person.

Once, the Messenger of Allah (upon him be peace) heard a man praising another, and he responded to him, “May Allah’s Mercy be upon you! You have cut the neck of your friend.” (*Bukhârî*)

Praise is poison because of the manner by which it can ruin a good intention into a corrupt one. When we are constantly praised, our *nafs* (selfish ego) begins to rely on this praise; hence we might do these good deeds only to hear those words of praise. Our *nafs* may rely so much on this praise that we may begin seeking it for what we did not do. Allah describes this in the Holy Qur’an:

“Think not that those who rejoice in what they have done, and love to be praised for what they have not done...” (*Ahl-i Imran*, 188)



When we are constantly praised, we might do these good deeds only to hear those words of praise. Our *nafs* may rely so much on this praise that we may begin seeking it for what we did not do.

How To Respond To Praises:

The scholars and the pious would find ways to keep this praise away from them and remind those around them not to over-praise others. This is why we find many narrations where they humiliate or speak lowly of themselves – it is to keep their *nafs* in check.

This supplication was not taught to us by the Messenger of Allah (upon him be peace), but it is one that his best friend, Sayyidina Abu Bakr would make after being praised.

It is reported that Sayyidina Abu Bakr would say:

“O Allah, make me better than what they think of me, and forgive me for what they do not know about me, and do not take me to account for what they say about me.”

Is It Necessary For a Person to Praise a Muslim With What He Has?

The Messenger of Allah (upon him be peace) praised some of his companions in order to make apparent their excellence amongst the people; in order for this praise to spread amongst the people so that they will respect these companions.

The Messenger of Allah (upon him be peace) was speaking one day and asked: ‘Who amongst you is fasting today?’

Sayyidina Abu Bakr replied: ‘I am.’

Then the Messenger of Allah (upon him be peace) asked again: ‘Who amongst you has followed a funeral procession today?’

Sayyidina Abu Bakr replied: ‘I have.’

The Messenger of Allah (upon him peace) said: ‘Who has given charity today?’

Sayyidina Abu Bakr said: ‘I have.’

The Messenger of Allah (upon him peace) asked: ‘Who amongst you has visited a sick person today?’

Abu Bakr replied: ‘I have.’

The Messenger of Allah (upon him peace)

said: 'These matters are not gathered in a person except that he will enter Paradise.'

In addition to this, the Messenger of Allah once spoke of the one who trails his garment on the ground out of pride and that Allah will not look at him, and Abu Bakr said: 'O Messenger of Allah indeed one side of my garment loosens away from me though I attempt to keep it up.'

The Messenger of Allah (upon him peace) replied: 'Indeed you are not of those who do it out of pride.'

The Messenger of Allah (upon him peace) said to Sayidina Umar: 'I do not see Shaytan, except that he follows a pathway other than your path.' This means that when you Oh Umar follow a pathway, then Shaytan runs away from it and takes another pathway.

These are examples of the Messenger of Allah (upon him peace) explaining the excellence of Abu Bakr and Umar, and there is no harm in this.

Therefore if we witness generosity and being good to others of a Muslim, we may mention his/her qualities in order to encourage him/her and make him/her firm in order for him/her to continue with what he/she is doing. Allah says in the Qur'an:

"...Help one another in righteousness and piety..." (Maida, 2)

It is not permissible for a Muslim to do a good deed hoping to be praised by the people, because it consists in ostentation, which harms his/her *taqwa* (piety) but on the other hand announcing charitable activities carried out by organizations or individuals is recommended so that other Muslims might follow their example and the benefits may spread, but with the condition of having a sincere intention in doing the deed only for the sake of Allah.

O Allah! All praise belongs to You Only; and all Gratitude is for You. O Allah! You, and no one else, rightfully deserves of all true praises. O Allah! Protect us from *nafs* and from Shaytan. Âmin!

Announcing charity activities carried out by organizations or individuals is recommended so that other Muslims might follow their example and the benefit may spread.





An Analysis of Characters who *Enjoy Praise*

Those who remember Allah frequently are fully aware that they can never deceive Him. Such a person would never make falsification a part of his life, but would portray sincerity.

In the 188th verse of Surah Al-i Imran, it commands: "Think not that those who exult in what they have brought about, and love to be praised for what they have not done, - think that they have escaped the penalty. For them is a penalty grievous indeed."

A single verse of our book of life, the Holy Qur'an, can sometimes broaden our horizons for the future. When referring to this holy book, we see that it contains the cure for the most painful memories, and is also the sustenance of the soul. It contains warnings in depth regarding the diseases and addictions that are spreading among the society day by day, and many more subtle points of advice.

I would like to make an assessment in view of the Qur'anic verse mentioned above conveying that continuing to commit sin without paying attention to the consequences incites a person to commit even greater sins and mistakes. Indeed, in this verse, it states that those who take pride/boast of their acts, and who love to be praised for things they have not done will be subjected to a grave



A person of morals does not like to speak of his acts and deeds; and never considers boasting about something he did not do.

punishment. This is signifying deterioration and moral decline.

A person of morals does not like to speak of his acts and deeds; and never considers boasting about something he did not do. Indeed, in these terms, those informed of the punishment of Allah that will be subjected to in this verse are clearly suffering from a behaviour disorder, and are pursuing acts of discord and hypocrisy on a grave level.

The late Hamdi Yazir states; "This verse of the Qur'an was revealed regarding the hypocrites. However, this judgement includes the arrogant ones, both the disbelievers and polytheists, and the believers who bear these morals. Being ignorant of the future due to arrogance; and blind to the fact that judging whether any kind of act is righteous and acceptable is not their duty, overestimating an act performed and due to this being caught up in the delusion of superiority is in fact an act of small mindedness. Portraying an act he did not conduct as a personal accomplishment and savouring the praise for this is in fact attaining pleasure by distorting the truth. This is being unmindful of the Creator. The first of these bad habits induces the individual to commit the second. And when both are present together, this renders the individual worthy of grievous punishment." And continues: "Unfortunately, there are so many bearing these two characteristics at the present."

Becoming accustomed to the extreme example of hypocrisy mentioned in this verse of the Qur'an is one sign of being a hypocrite. In addition, it also arouses concern that this will entice the individual to the characteristics of discord. Initially we would like to point out that lying is mentioned first in the hadith of the Prophet (upon him peace) which states: "*The signs of a hypocrite are three: when he speaks he lies, when he promises he breaks that promise; and when he is trusted he betrays that trust.*" (Bukhârî, *Kitab-ul-Iman*, 24), and then bring attention to this verse of the Qur'an: "When they stand up to prayer, they stand without

earnestness, to be seen of men, but little do they hold Allah in remembrance.” (*An-Nisa* 4:142) In view of the *hadith* (Prophetic tradition) and the verses of the Qur’ân, we can say that the clear characteristic of a hypocrite is the one who preaches one thing but acts contrarily, and who gives particular importance to what others think and say. As a result, lying and other bad characteristics become a part of that person’s nature. The main reason for this is that they fail to remember Allah often. Indeed, those who remember Allah frequently are fully aware that they can never deceive Him. Due to this, such a person would never make falsification a part of his life, but would portray sincerity. However, when a person neglects, or fails to remember Allah accordingly, he will believe that he bears the right to act excessively. Such a person behaves with insincerity, and over a period of time adopts a conduct of ostentation.

Indeed, there is a warning following the verse forming the basis for our topic; “To Allah belongeth the dominion of the heavens and the earth; and Allah hath power over all things.” (*Abl-i Imran* 3:189). Presumably this means; no matter how much you boast about what you have done, or exult for what you have not done, you will certainly return to the Creator one day, and give account for what you have done.

This means you can never deceive Allah. The recording angels (scribes) write everything you do, good and evil, whether this is in secret or in the open.

In the Qur’ân, it informs that those who adhere to the call of Islam are described as bearing the characteristics of honesty, compassion, justice, loyalty and humility; while atheists and hypocrites who ignore this call are the ones deprived of the qualities listed above, the ones who falter between the evils of deception, mercilessness, hypocrisy and disloyalty. We believe that in these kinds of verses, there are subtle signs which are spreading among the people.

When a person neglects to remember Allah accordingly, he will believe that he bears the right to act excessively. Such a person behaves with insincerity, and over a period of time adopts a conduct of ostentation.



Pearls Of Wisdom

*He grants wisdom to whom
He pleases, and whoever is
granted wisdom, he indeed is
given a great good and none
but men of understanding
mind.*

Qur'ân, 2/269

*Avoid jealousy, for it
destroys good deeds as fire
destroys wood.*

Prophet Muhammad

*Knowledge exists
potentially in the human
soul like the seed in the soil;
by learning the potential
becomes actual.*


Imam Ghazali

*I have never debated with
knowledgeable, except that
I won the debate, and I have
never debated with an ignorant
person, except that I lost.*

Imam Shafii

*Reflection is the lamp of the
heart. If it departs, the heart
will have no light.*

Abdullah ibn Al-Haddad



*Verily, knowledge is a lock
and its key is the question.*

Jafar As-Sadiq

*Whatever has befallen you
was not meant to escape
you, and whatever has
escaped you was not meant
to befall you.*

Anonymous

*He who comes to take the
love of Allah can have no
taste for the love of the
world.*

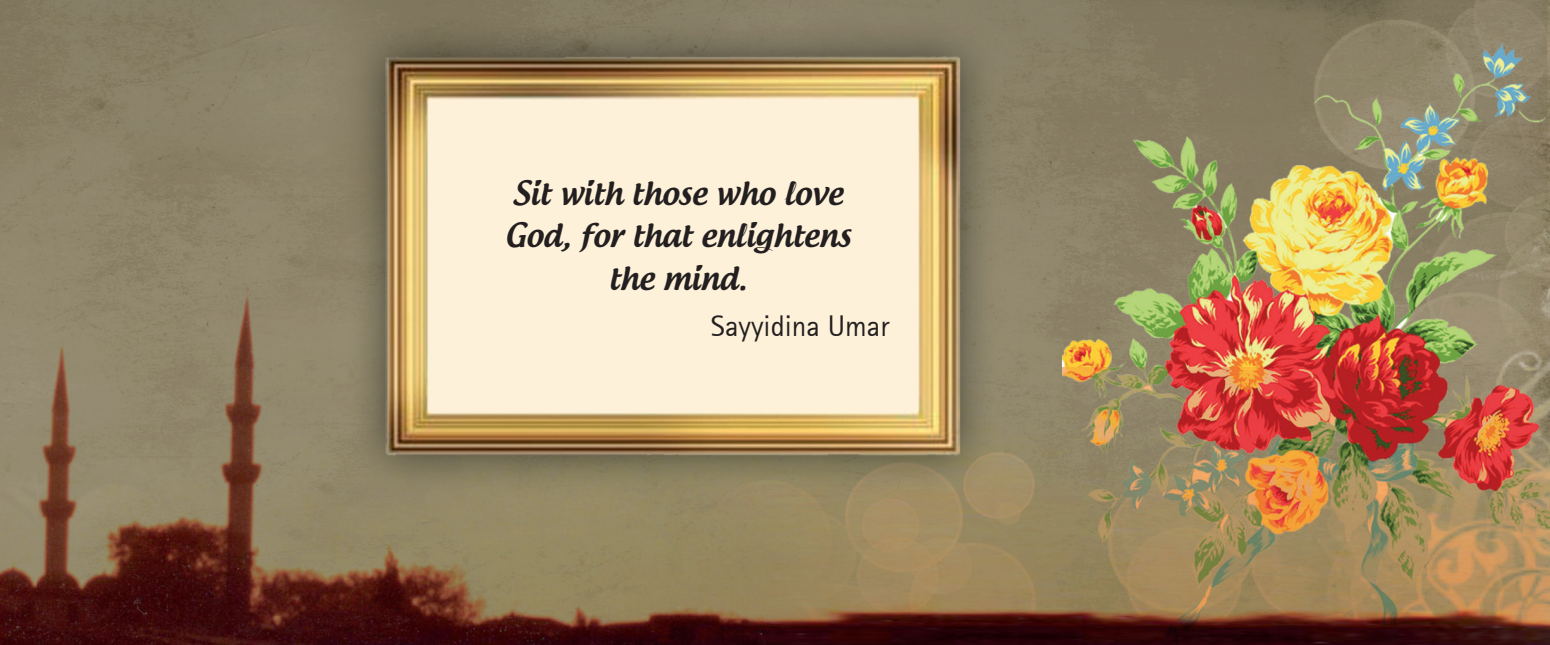
Sayyidina Abu Bakr

*The word of Allah is the
medicine of the heart.*

Sayyidina Ali

*Sit with those who love
God, for that enlightens
the mind.*

Sayyidina Umar





Sayyidah

MARIYA (r.ah) (II)

■ According to information provided by Ibn-i Sa'd and other sources, after the birth Archangel Jibreel arrived and said "Assalamu alaikum, O Father of Ibrahim."

Being with Prophet Muhammad (saw)

Sayyidah Mariya was with Prophet Muhammad (saw) for a year. She was very happy in his presence because Prophet Muhammad (saw) did not treat her any differently from his other wives, but rather as if she was a free woman.

All her hopes and thoughts, her existence and her ego had melted when fate brought her face to face with this man of such lofty personality. From this aspect, Allah's Prophet (saw) was not only her master and owner, he was her family and her nation. Her only desire was to win his love and approval.

To Be Like Hagar

Sayyidah Mariya (r.ah) resembled Hagar in her personality and in her fate; indeed, both came from Egypt. Both were presented to a prophet, and it was for this reason Sayyidah Mariya (r.ah) never tired of hearing the story of Hagar, the *jariya* of Prophet Abraham (as). Prophet Muhammad (saw) often told her the story about how Abraham (as) married Hagar, and for her each time was just like the first time.¹

The Prophet then transferred Sayyidah Mariya to the lovely neighborhood of Medina known as “Aliya”. This was a plateau, and the Prophet wanted to settle Sayyidah Mariya in a place that had fresh air before giving birth.



The land in which Sayyidah Mariya (r.ah) was now living was the land in which Prophet Abraham, Hagar and Ismail had lived. Her master, Prophet Muhammad (saw) was a descendant of the master of Hagar, Prophet Abraham (as).

Would she be able to give Prophet Muhammad (saw) a child? If only!.. This did not seem very likely, or more truthfully, almost impossible. After the death of Sayyidah Khadijah (r.ah), Prophet Muhammad (saw) had married ten women. Some were young and healthy, and some had children from earlier marriages, but not one of these women had borne Prophet Muhammad (saw) a child. And the Prophet (saw) was now nearly 60 years old.

But Sayyidah Mariya (r.ah) was not without hope. After being with the Prophet (saw) for two years, she suddenly became aware of the signs of pregnancy; however, she thought this was just her imagination, and she kept the situation secret. When the signs became more and more apparent, she told her sister Sirin, who responded that this was not just her imagination, what Sayyidah Mariya (r.ah) was feeling was real.

The Mother of Abraham (as)

Sayyidah Mariya (r.ah) was so happy to hear this that she nearly fainted. One day when Prophet Muhammad (saw) came by she told him this important secret. The Prophet (saw) of Allah remembered how Sayyidah Mariya (r.ah) had been upset and without appetite recently, the signs of her pregnancy were the same as those that had been displayed by Sayyidah Khadijah (r.ah). Prophet Muhammad (saw) was overjoyed as this was the best comfort he had received since the loss of his daughter Zainab, and he gave thanks to Allah.

When Sayyidah Mariya (r.ah) told the Prophet (saw) that she had doubted her pregnancy in the first days, Prophet Muhammad (saw) recited the following verses from the Qur'an:

"Zakariyya said: O my lord! How shall I have a son seeing I am very old and my wife is barren?" "Thus" was the answer "doth Allah accomplish what He willeth." (Surah Al-i Imran, 3: 40)

"So (it will be) thy Lord saith, 'that is easy for Me: I did indeed create thee before, when thou hadst been nothing!'" (Surah Maryam, 19: 9)

"And We gave him the good news of Isaac -a prophet- one of the Righteous. We blessed him and Isaac: but of their progeny are (some) that do right, and (some) that obviously do wrong, to their own souls." (Surah Saffat, 37: 112-113)

While Sayyidah Mariya (r.ah) was listening to the Prophet (saw) reciting these verses she laughed, and this young woman, brimming over with life and health, said: *"But I am not an old woman Prophet!"*

The whole of Medina soon heard that Sayyidah Mariya was pregnant. There is no need to describe the depressing nature that this news had on the other wives of Prophet Muhammad (saw).

Prophet Muhammad (saw) then transferred Sayyidah Mariya (r.ah) to the lovely neighborhood of Medina known as "Aliya". This was a plateau, and Prophet Muhammad (saw) wanted to settle Sayyidah Mariya (r.ah) in a place that had fresh air before giving birth, much like the ancient Arabs used to send their new born babies to the desert to be suckled.³


Throughout her pregnancy Prophet Muhammad (saw) showed Sayyidah Mariya (r.ah) special attention. Whenever he had time, morning or night, he would be with her. Her sister Sirin also gave her special attention until it was time for the birth.

In the eighth year of the *Hijrah*, the time for the birth arrived suddenly in the night. Prophet Muhammad (saw) brought Salma, the wife of Abu Rafi, to act as midwife for Sayyidah Mariya. Then he retired to a corner to pray and supplicate.

According to information provided by Ibn-i Sa'd and other sources, after the

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birth Archangel Jibreel (as) arrived and said *‘Assalamu alaikum, O Father of Ibrahim!’*⁴

The midwife Ummu Rafi (Salma) took the child. Her husband, Abu Rafi came and gave Prophet Muhammad (saw) the glad tidings. After receiving this news Prophet Muhammad (saw) gave a slave to him (as a gift for bringing the good news). The Prophet (saw) of Allah congratulated Sayyidah Mariya on the child that had set his mother free.⁵

The women of the Ansar competed for the honour of being wet nurse for Ibrahim. Prophet Muhammad (saw) hired a wet nurse, not only to maintain the traditions and customs of the day, but also to show that Sayyidah Mariya was now a free and noble woman.⁶ The wet nurse hired was a woman called Ummu Saif who was in Medina.⁷ She was given seven milking goats in return for her services.

Prophet Muhammad (saw) sacrificed a ram on the seventh day after his son’s birth. After Abu Hind had shaved Ibrahim’s head the Prophet (saw) distributed silver to the poor of Medina equal to the weight of the hair. He then buried the hair in the ground and named his son.

Jealousy

Prophet Muhammad (saw) dearly loved his son, who was growing with every passing day, and demonstrated this love to all. One day, he took his son and went to Sayyidah Â’ishah (r.ah). *“Doesn’t he look like me?”* he asked. Sayyidah Â’ishah (r.ah) replied in anger: *“I see no resemblance between you and he...”* Prophet Muhammad (saw) understood that he had offended Sayyidah Â’ishah and immediately left with his son.

Once there was a new opportunity for the flames of jealousy, which were never doused, to flare up once again among the Prophet’s wives: when Prophet Muhammad (saw) was with Sayyidah Mariya (r.ah) in Sayyidah Hafsa’s (r.ah) house whilst Sayyidah Hafsa (r.ah) was not around, the spark of the flames flared up once again and burned, so that

Sayyidah Hafsa exclaimed: “O Prophet of Allah!.. In my home and on my day?” and began to cry.

Prophet Muhammad (saw), in order to comfort Sayyidah Hafsa (r.ah) told her that Sayyidah Mariya (r.ah) was now *haram* for him, but that she should not tell anyone of this. These words were not enough for her and she wanted him to swear to her that he would not touch Sayyidah Mariya (r.ah). Prophet Muhammad (saw) said: “I swear to Allah, I will never touch her again.”⁸

Sayyidah Hafsa (r.ah) was very pleased by this. After the Prophet (saw) had left she told Sayyidah Â'ishah (r.ah) this secret, saying: “O, Â'ishah, thanks be to Allah, we are saved from Mariya!..” When Prophet Muhammad (saw) learned of the situation he swore that he would not go near any of his wives for the next month. It was after this event that the first verses of Surah Tahrîm were revealed:

“O Prophet! Why holdest thou to be forbidden that which Allah has made lawful to thee? Thou seekest to please thy consorts. But Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. Allah has already ordained for you, (O men), the dissolution of your oaths (in some cases): and Allah is your Protector, and He is Full of Knowledge and Wisdom. When the Prophet (saw) disclosed a matter in confidence to one of his consorts, and she then divulged it (to another), and Allah made it known to him, he confirmed part thereof and repudiated a part. Then when he told her thereof, she said, “Who told thee this? “He said, “He told me Who knows and is well-acquainted (with all things).” If ye two⁹ turn in repentance to Him, your hearts are indeed so inclined; But if ye back up each other against him, truly Allah is his Protector, and Jibreel, and (every) righteous one among those who believe, – and furthermore, the angels – will back (him) up.” (Surah at-Tahrîm, 66: 1-4)

There are other reports as to the reason for the revelation of these verses of Surah Tahrîm.¹⁰

The land in which Sayyidah Mariya was now living was the land in which Prophet Abraham, Hagar and Ismail had lived. Her master, Prophet Muhammad was a descendant of the master of Hagar, Prophet Abraham.



Endnotes

1. As we know, Abraham (as) had had no children with Sarah and they were both growing older. Sarah set her slave Hagar free and married her to Abraham (as). From this union Ismail was born and Prophet Muhammad (saw) was a descendant of Ismail. Sarah thought that the light of Muhammad (saw) would emanate from her and she was greatly saddened by the birth of Ismail; she told Abraham to take Hagar to live somewhere else. Abraham (as) took Hagar and her son Ismail, on the order of Allah, to the deserted location which was Mecca. They stayed there in that barren desert; then due to the patience and submission shown by Hagar and Ismail, drinking water (zam zam) flowed out from the middle of the desert and people (the Jurhumi) arrived, with whom they could form a society.
2. "Abraham (as) was 120 years old, while Sarah was either 90 or 99. According to Ibn-i Abbas, a group of angels, including Archangel Jibreel, came to give the glad tidings about the birth of Isaac to Abraham (as). They went from there to destroy the people of Lot.

The angels came to visit Prophet Abraham (as) disguised as human beings. Abraham (as) fried some meat for them and put it in front of them. But they did not eat of this meat. It was then that Prophet Abraham understood that these were angels. At first, not knowing that they had come to give him the glad tidings of the birth of Isaac, he was frightened and said: "Have I done something to anger Allah? Or have you come to destroy my people?" And he offered the meat to them, once again, so that he could determine whether or not they were angels. But the angels replied that they would not eat without payment. Then Abraham (as) uttered *Bismillah* and then *Alhamdulillah*. The angels said "It is true, Halil is Allah's friend..." Then they said to Abraham (as): "Fear not, Abraham. From here we are going to the people of Lot, to destroy them!..."

Thus, the reason why they would not eat and the reason why they had come became clear. When Abraham had been reassured the angels gave him the glad tidings of the birth of Isaac. All the while Sarah had been listening from behind the curtain, and because Sarah was a woman of modesty she covered her face with her hands. She and her husband were shocked at these glad tidings considering their advanced years. The angels said: "Are you surprised by the order and appointments of Allah?" (Osman Nuri Topbaş, *Nebiler Silsilesi*, I, page: 364-366)
3. Ziya Kazıcı, *Ibid.*, page: 322-323.

4. Ibn-i Sa'd Tabakat, VIII, 214.
5. Prophet Muhammad (saw) had accepted Mariya as a present from the *muqawqis*, however, according to reports she continued to occupy the position of *jariya*. Islamic law allows a *jariya* who gives birth to the child of her master her freedom. Thus the child is born "free".
6. According to Islamic law, the *jariya* who gives birth to her master's child is considered to be *ummu walad* (mother of the child) and is free after the death of her master. Prophet Muhammad (saw) had the following to say about *ummu walad*: "*If a jariya gives birth to the child of her master, with the death of that master, even if he has not previously set her free, the woman will be free.*" (Beyhaki, *Sunen-i Kubra*, X, sh: 342-343)

Another hadith states: "*Mariya's (ra) and the child have been set free.*" In short, in order for us to understand the stipulations that had been described by Prophet Muhammad (saw) and for his Sunnah to be as complete as possible it was necessary for Allah's Prophet (saw) to be with such a *jariya*." (M. Hamidullah, *Islam Peygamberi*, II, 691)
7. Abdülmumin bin Halef, *Nisâu Rasulillah*, page:75; narrated by Ziya Kazıcı, *Ibid.*, page: 323.
8. Ibn-i Sa'd, *Tabakât*, VIII, 213; DIA, the article of "Mariye".
9. That means Sayyidah Âisha and Sayyidah Hafsa.
10. The first of these is that the wives of Prophet Muhammad (saw) wanted better living conditions, and to live and eat like the wives of other believers. But Prophet Muhammad (saw), unable to meet their demands, freed them; that is, they were to choose Allah and His Prophet or this world, and it was at this time that he decided not to approach them.

According to the second report, Prophet Muhammad (saw) stayed too long in the house of one of his wives. This caused jealousy among his other wives, in particular, Â'isha. He had been given honey in this house which is why he stayed, but the other wives thought that he had been fed the liquid from the *urfut* tree (which is like glue and has a bad smell), because, they said, his mouth smelled like that. Then Prophet Muhammad (saw) swore never to eat honey again, and this caused the revelation of the verse. (See: The article of "Sayyidah Hafsa" in this book.)



Stories

Ibrahim ibn Adham *and the Fawn*

Ibrahim ibn Adham was previously a king in Balkh, lavishing in the luxury of the palace. The Sufis of the time used to counsel him, time and again, to save him from his destructive lifestyle and revive his eternal wellbeing. According to a famous report, while lying down on his bed on night, Ibrahim overheard some strange noises coming from the rooftop. Unable to sleep, he stuck his head out of the window and shouted:

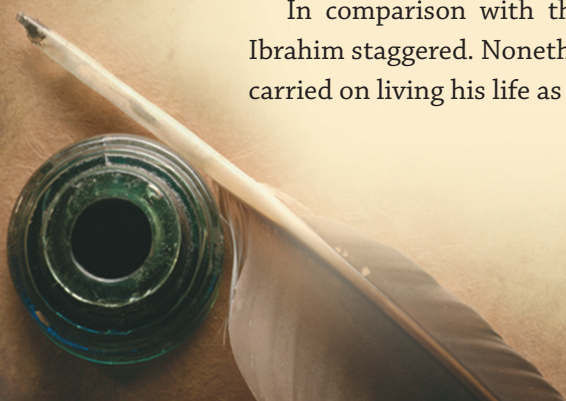
“What on earth is going on there?” He was responded to with an odd answer.

“I am searching for my lost camel”, a man said.

“What are you thinking”, Ibrahim retorted, “searching for your camel on a rooftop?” This time around, the response was startling:

“You know very well, Ibrahim, that it is only foolish to search for a lost camel on a rooftop, yet you never stop to think how foolish it is to search for eternal happiness in the life of pomp and extravagance you lead!”

In comparison with the advices he had previously heard, these words left Ibrahim staggered. Nonetheless, all it took was a few days for him to forget and he carried on living his life as usual, without any noticeable change.





Many days had gone by when Ibrahim one day decided to set out from the palace, with his cohorts, to go hunting for fawns. At one stage, he rode off alone, in search for a good game. It was then he heard a whisper in his ear. 'Wake up', said the voice. He took no notice. But the voice reverberated again, and again. Suddenly, the voice became ubiquitous; it was coming from everywhere:

"Wake up before death wakes you up", they echoed.

Ibrahim ibn Adham was both stunned and scared. But then, a beautiful fawn suddenly appeared before his prying eyes, which momentarily made him forget the voices. Gathering his poise, he enthusiastically took aim at the delicate fawn with his arrow, keen on hunting it down. He was only a fingertip away from letting go of the arrow. But then the fawn, directing its poignant stare at Ibrahim, murmured:

"Did the Merciful Allah create me so you could hunt me down, Ibrahim?"

Petrified, Ibrahim began to tremble, from head to toe. With eyes welled up with tears, he came down from his horse and fell prostrate on the ground in deep remorse and prayed:

"My Lord, whose grace and benevolence is infinite! For a long time, I have wasted the breaths of my life in lavishness and pomp! Wash my heart with Your grace, o Allah, and leave nothing therein except for Your love!"

Ibrahim ibn Adham's eyes had now been awoken to an entirely different world; he found himself gazing deeply at a Divine realm. This truly beautiful sight erased from his mind all the conceptions of beauty he had previously entertained. The caftan of kingship, which he would don every morning with great care, and the pride of being the sultan of Balkh, had now suddenly lost all their glitter and significance. They suddenly appeared as awkward extras he could very well do without.

With eyes still moist from tears of repentance and a heart burning in the fire of remorse, Ibrahim ibn Adham set out towards the wilderness. He had walked a tremendous distance when he came upon a shepherd, wearing a woolen cloak as was customary. He approached the shepherd, without hesitation, and swapped his woolen cloak for his exquisite caftan. The moment Ibrahim put on the cloak, he felt an enormous relief. The shepherd, in the meantime, was astounded. "Our sultan has lost his mind", he thought to himself. Yet, far from having lost his mind, Ibrahim ibn Adham had much rather come to his senses. He had gone hunting for a fawn, only to be awoken by Allah, glory unto Him, through a fawn.



Serving Creation

A righteous man saw Pertevniyal Valide Sultan, the benefactor of the Aksaray Valide Mosque in Istanbul, in his dream, shortly after she had passed away, where she had attained to high ranks in the Hereafter.

“Was it because of the mosque you had built that Allah lifted you atop this rank?” he asked her.

“No”, replied she.

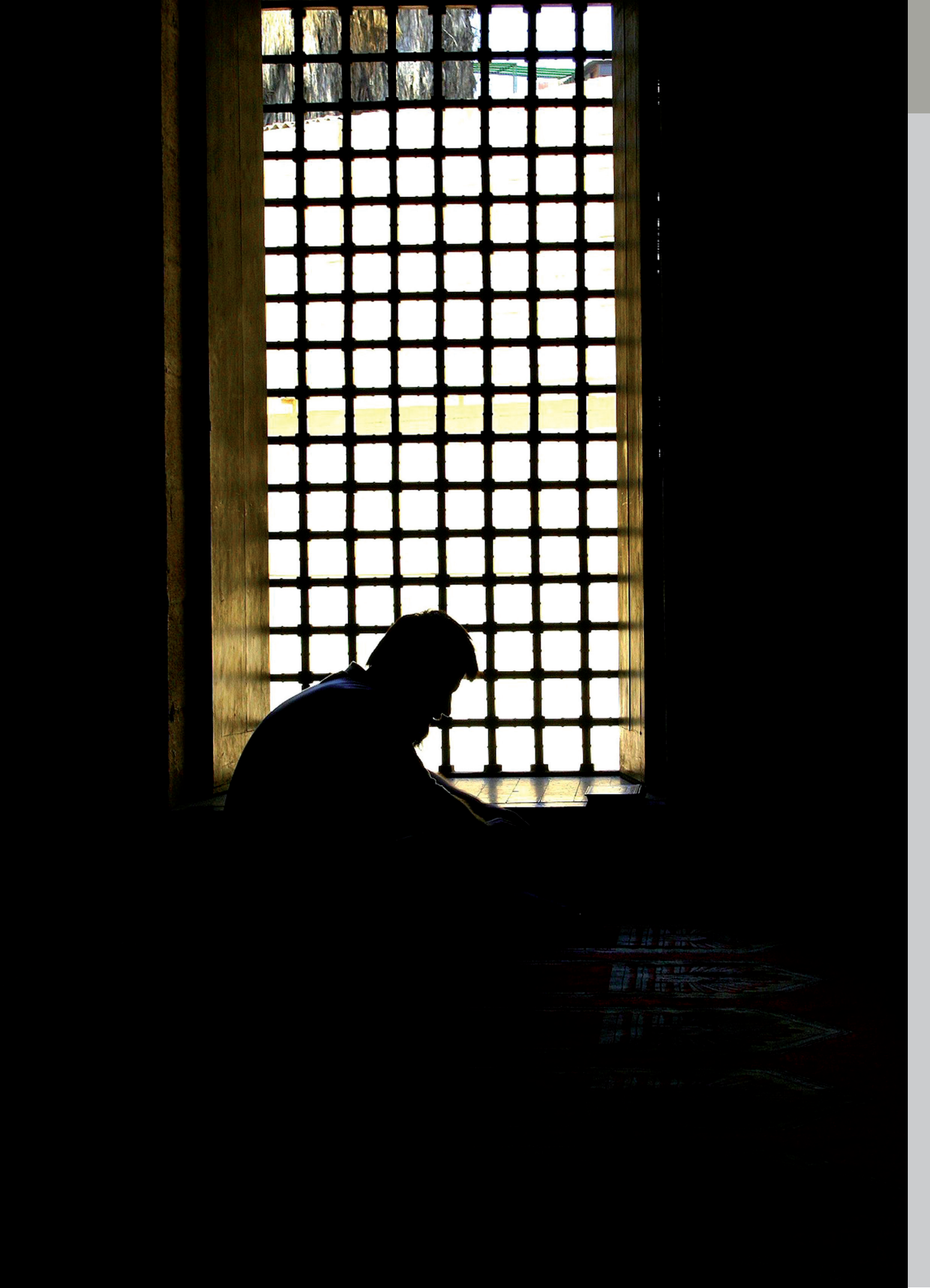
“Then with which deed?” asked the man curiously.

“It was a rainy and muddy day”, she began explaining. “We were on our way to Ayyub Sultan Mosque when I noticed a scrawny kitten, grasping for breath inside a puddle of water on the side of the pavement. I had the cart stop and told the *baji*^[3] next to me to, ‘Go and take the little kitten out of the water...lest the poor thing drowns.’

Disinclined to step out of the cart, she replied, ‘But my lady we will have our hands and clothes dirty should we step outside in this rain!’

So, without wanting to break her heart, I stepped out of the cart myself, and plunging myself in the mud, took the kitten out of the puddle. The poor thing was quivering. Feeling sorry for it, I placed it on my lap and warmed it up, not letting it go until it came back to its senses.

It is because of that small piece of compassion I showed to the kitten that Allah the Almighty graced me with this high rank.”




THE SOCIETY

of the Age of Bliss -IV-

Even under unbearable persecution, the Companions were able to keep a strong hold on their beliefs, exerting an enormous effort just to make sure that this Divine blessings was passed on to future generations.

The Excitement of *Iman* in the Age of Bliss Society

The Companions were in an enthusiastic effort to shape their lives according to their love and excitement of *iman*. At the bottom of this excitement of *iman* were the intense “spirituality and reflection” they had received from the Blessed Prophet (upon him, blessings and peace). Indeed, the inner worlds of the society of Ignorance, which until then were devoid of the truth and moral values, became flooded with the spiritual downpours of mercy and abundance through the Blessed Prophet’s (upon him, blessings and peace) company. The inspiration, spirituality and reflected from the heart of the Blessed Prophet (upon him, blessings and peace) onto theirs, brought about a collection of shining figures to light the way for humankind until the final hour. The unruly, hardhearted man of Ignorance, ruthless enough to bury his own daughter alive turned into a teary-eyed believer, a man of wisdom.



**Famous are the
courageous feats of
Sumayya and her husband
Yasir, who both sacrificed
their lives just to protect
their faith.**

They Ran to Join the Circle of Islam

Young and old, the *Asr-u-Sa'adah* society passionately ran to enter the ranks of the faithful. Abdullah ibn Zubayr (May Allah be well-pleased with him) was the first child born after the Hegira. They immediately brought him next to the Prophet of Allah (upon him, blessings and peace). After chewing a small date in his mouth, the Holy Prophet (upon him, blessings and peace) placed it in the baby's mouth and stroking his head, prayed for him and named him Abdullah.

Once Abdullah (May Allah be well-pleased with him) reached the age of eight, he was sent by his father to the Blessed Prophet (upon him, blessings and peace) to pledge allegiance. Seeing the little Abdullah, the Messenger of Allah (upon him, blessings and peace) smiled and accepted his pledge.

(Muslim, *Adab*, 25)

Abdullah ibn Hisham (May Allah be well-pleased with him) was still six during the conquest of Mecca when his mother Zaynab bint Humayd (May Allah be well-pleased with her) took him to the Blessed Prophet (upon him, blessings and peace) and requested:

“Accept my son's pledge, oh Messenger of Allah, that he is a Muslim!”

“He is still young”, replied the Blessed Prophet (upon him, blessings and peace), after which he stroked the young boy's head and prayed for him.

In his later years, Abdullah ibn Hisham (May Allah be well-pleased with him) would go to the market and buy food items for trading. Upon seeing him, Ibn Omar and Ibn Zubayr (May Allah be well-pleased with both of them) would straight away go next to him and ask him to “...make us partners in these items for the Messenger of

Allah made a prayer of abundance for you!” Abdullah would comply with their requests. There were times when he would send them home with a camel load of profits. (Bukhârî, *Shirkah*, 13)

Abu Kursafah (May Allah be well-pleased with him), also had come to believe at a very tender age. He recounts his experiences below:

“As my mother, my aunt and I were returning home after having pledged our allegiances to the Messenger of Allah, I heard both of them say: ‘We have never seen a man like him in our entire lives. We have never met another person with a more beautiful face, cleaner clothes and softer speech. It is as if it is light that spills from his mouth!’” (Haythami, VIII, 279-280)

They Never Hesitated in Sacrificing Their Lives for Faith

Famous were the courageous feats of Sumayya and her husband Yasir (May Allah be well-pleased with them), who both sacrificed their lives just to protect their faith. Equally legendary is the courage of Ammar ibn Yasir, Bilal Habashi, Habbab ibn Arat, Suhayb ibn Sinan, Zinnira, Amir ibn Fuhayra, Abu Fukayha, Miqdad ibn Amr, Umm Ubays, Lubayna, Nahdiya and her daughter (May Allah be well-pleased with all of them), all of whom were put through the most gruesome forms of torture, in spite of which they held fast to their *iman*.

Even under unbearable persecution, the Companions were able to keep a strong hold on their beliefs, exerting an enormous effort just to make sure that this Divine blessings were passed on to future generations, safe and sound, even if it meant they had to give up all they had in the way.



The Companions were in an enthusiastic effort to shape their lives according to their love and excitement of iman.

At the bottom of this excitement of iman were the intense “spirituality and reflection” they had received from the Blessed Prophet.



During his days as Caliph, Hazrat Omar (May Allah be well-pleased with him) one day asked Habbab ibn Arat (May Allah be well-pleased with him) to recount the torture he had been made to endure.

“Take a look at my back”, Habbab (May Allah be well-pleased with him) then said to him. After briefly inspecting his back, the chilled Hazrat Omar (May Allah be well-pleased with him) exclaimed, “I have never seen such a mutilated back in all my life!”

“The idolaters used to light a fire”, Habbab (May Allah be well-pleased with him) then continued, “and make me lie on it without any clothes on my back. The fire would only be put out by the fat melting away from my back.”

The idolaters would fasten onto Habbab’s (May Allah be well-pleased with him) back stones charred by fire, and the intensity of the pain would have the meat fall-off from his back, piece by piece. Still, he would not utter even a word of what the idolaters would demand him to say. (*Ibn Asir, Usd’ul-Ghabab*, II, 114-115) Zayd ibn Dasina and Hubayb (May Allah be well-pleased with both of them) who both fell captive to the idolaters were about to be tortured to death. Right before they breathed their last, they were both asked:

“Do you wish the Prophet was in your place right now in return for your life?” Both of them looked at the idolater posing the unfortunate question with pity and said:

“Let alone wishing the Prophet to be in my place right now and I with my family, I would not even want a thorn spiking his foot where he is!”

Petrified before the sight of an exceptional display of loyalty, Abu Sufyan, who was standing by, could not help but remark:

“How strange it is that I have never in my life seen another group of people than the

Companions of Muhammad who love their leader more!” (*Waqidi*, I, 360-362; *Ibn Saad*, II, 56)

In the aftermath of the Battle of Uhud, Saffiya (May Allah be well-pleased with her) wanted to see the mutilated corpse of his brother Hamza (May Allah be well pleased with him). With this intention in mind, she walked towards the corpses of the martyrs. Seemingly, the terrifying sight would have been too much for her to bear. His son Zubayr intercepted her and said:

“The Messenger of Allah advises you to return, dear mother!”

“Why?” she responded. “So I do not see my brother? I know he has been atrociously butchered. He has been subjected to this disaster in the way of Allah... and nothing short of this could have consoled us. Allah willing, I will keep patient and expect its reward from Him!”

Zubayr (May Allah be well-pleased with him) then turned back and recounted her mother’s words to the Blessed Prophet (upon him, blessings and peace).

“In that case, allow her to see him”, was his response.

Safiyya (May Allah be well-pleased with her) said a heartfelt prayer by the side of his brother, who had attained to the honorable rank as “the King of Martyrs”. (See, *Ibn Hisham*, III, 48; *Ibn Hajar*, *al-Isabab*, IV, 349)

Women, who in the Age of Ignorance would mourn for days on end, shredding their clothes and pulling their own hairs, over the smallest piece of bad news they received, had suddenly turned into pillars of composure, thanks to their unshakable belief in Allah, glory unto Him.

One of the most beautiful examples of this was provided by Kabsha bint Ubayd (May Allah be well-pleased with her), Saad ibn Muadh’s (May Allah be well-pleased

The inner worlds of a society of Ignorance, became flooded with the spiritual downpours of mercy and abundance through the Blessed Prophet’s company.





The inspiration, spirituality and reflected from the heart of the Blessed Prophet onto theirs, brought about a collection of shining figures to light the way for humankind until the final hour.

with him) mother.

Having received heavy wounds at the Battle of Uhud, the Messenger of Allah (upon him, blessings and peace) was returning to Medina on horseback, with Saad ibn Muadh (May Allah be well-pleased with him) holding its reins, when Kabsha bint Ubayd (May Allah be well-pleased with her) began approaching them.

“This is my mother, Messenger of Allah”, said Saad (May Allah be well-pleased with him).

“Peace be to her”, replied the Blessed Prophet (upon him, blessings and peace).

Drawing closer to the Holy Prophet (upon him, blessings and peace) and gazing at his face, she then said,

“May my parents be ransomed for you, Messenger of Allah. All troubles mean nothing to me, now that I have seen you safe and sound!”

After giving his condolences to her over her son Amr ibn Muadh (May Allah be well-pleased with him), martyred on the battlefield of Uhud, the Blessed Prophet (upon him, blessings and peace) added, “I give you and your entire household glad tidings.

Every single martyred member of your tribe (twelve all up) has now come together in Paradise. They have also been given permission to intercede on behalf of their families!”

“We are satisfied, Messenger of Allah. Who would shed tears over them after now?”, she responded before pleading, “Please pray for those of us who are left behind, too!”

So the Noble Messenger (upon him, blessings and peace) prayed:

“Allah... Rid their hearts of sorrow and give them their rewards over their troubles! And protect those who have been left behind in the best way!”

The Messenger of Allah (upon him, blessings and peace) then continued on his way. The Companions were following in his wake. Their love for the Prophet (upon him, blessings and peace) prevented them from going home; they much preferred to remain by his side. Sensing the situation, the Blessed Prophet (upon him, blessings and peace), addressing Saad (May Allah be well-pleased with him), said:

“There are plenty of people from your tribe who have been heavily wounded. On the Day of Judgment, they shall all emerge with blood flowing from their wounds. Its color will be

that of blood but will smell of musk. Tell them to return home and treat their wounds. Let nobody follow us from hereon. Tell them that this is an imperative order!"

"It is the Messenger of Allah's (upon him, blessings and peace) imperative command that no wounded person from the Banu Ashal tribe shall follow us from hereon!"

Saad (May Allah be well-pleased with him) called out. The wounded warriors, thirty all up, had no other choice than to return unwillingly. They spent the entire night dressing their wounds around fires which remained lit until morning. (*Waqidi*, I, 315-316; *Diyarbakri*, I, 444)

Another female Companion who put on a display of fortitude almost beyond human capacity was Sumayra (May Allah be well-pleased with her). On the Day of Uhud, Medina trembled with the news that the Prophet (upon him, blessings and peace) had been martyred. Panic broke loose as screams reached the Heavens. Such that despite being told that her husband, two sons, father and brother had been martyred. Panic broke loose

as screams reached the Heavens. Such that despite being told that her husband, two sons, father and brother had been martyred on the battlefield, Sumayra (May Allah be well-pleased with her), an Ansari woman, remained indifferent, concerned only to be comforted with the news of the Blessed Prophet's (upon him, blessings and peace) well being, as she continuously kept on asking:

"Is he all right?"

She eventually got the reply she was hoping for, from the incoming Companions:

"Yes. Alhamdulillah he is alive and well!"

But Sumayra (May Allah be well-pleased with her) was only a little contented.

"Show him to me so my heart rests at ease", she implored. When they did, she rushed to the Prophet of Allah (upon him blessings and peace), and holding him by the edge of his shirt, exclaimed:

"May my parents be sacrificed for you, Messenger of Allah... I have nothing to worry about so long as you're alive!" (*Waqidi*, I, 292; *Haythami*, VI, 115)



**The unruly,
hardhearted man
of Ignorance,
ruthless enough
to bury his own
daughter alive
turned into
a teary-eyed
believer, a man
of wisdom.**

Sufi Maxim for Self-Authenticity:

Never Crave To Become Another Person, Just Be Your Honest Self!

All our experiences are provided by Allah to us so that by reflecting upon the alternating of pain and joy, suffering and happiness, we will be able to know who we truly are and we will discover the deep truth of ourselves and of others.

It is really futile to compare ourselves with others—be it in our success or in our failures. How could we ever compare ourselves with others? They are not us and we are not them! Our paths of life are totally different from each other. We cannot even judge another person until we are truly able to see the experiences he or she went through in life. How could we ever envy the success of another when we have not seen the struggles, the hurts and the pains that the person went through before he or she reaches that particular level of success in his or her life? Are we willing to go through what the other went through—all those blood, sweat, fatigue, stress, hurts, pains and tears that one has expended in his life that made him or her reach the goal?

In their philosophical treatises, existentialists always emphasize on what they termed “human situatedness” as part and parcel of our existence as persons. We are all unique, the existentialists say, because in our birth, we are simply “thrown” into the world without our permission. This is why we all have different and unique circumstances; and our experiences in a particular time-and-space situations within a particular culture, and our coping mechanisms in the midst

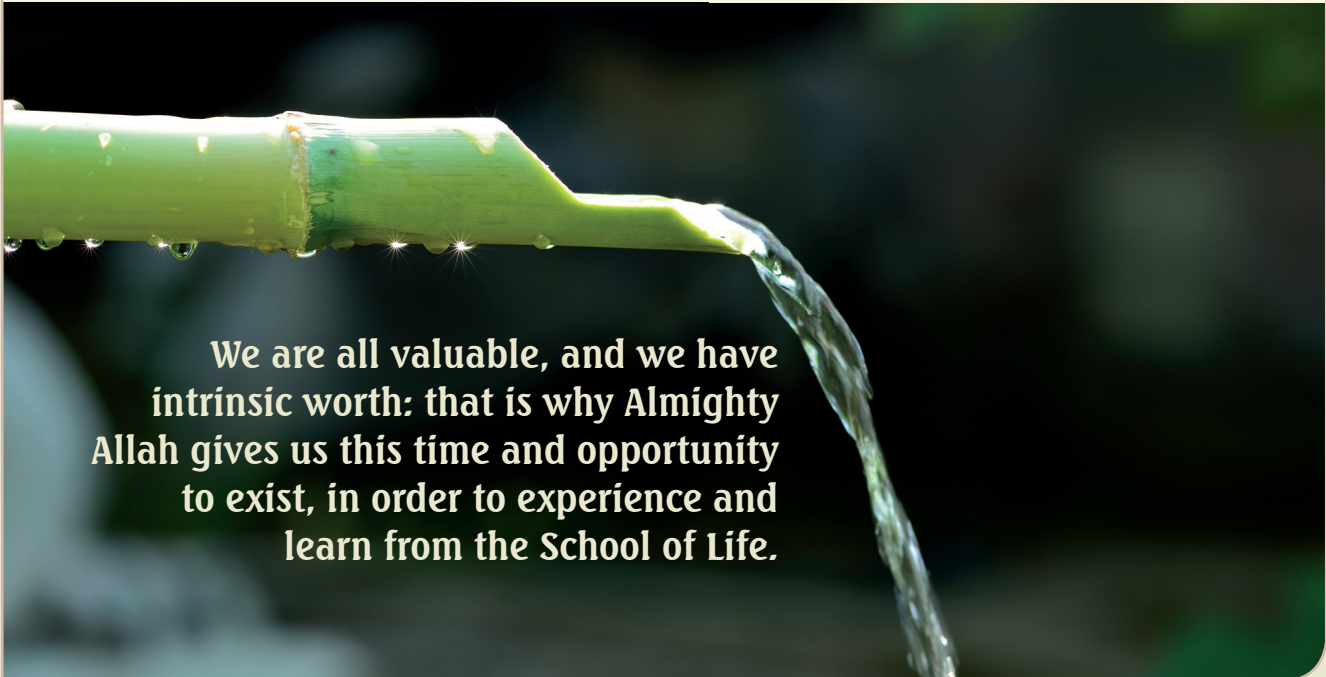
of our “thrown-ness” made us all unique, unrepeatable and irreducible individuals. As humans, we are endowed with individual freedom to be able to cope-up with our various situatedness: yet it is precisely this individual freedom to act in the midst of the varied challenges in our life’s circumstances that made us incommensurably and irreplaceably unique as individuated persons.

Our experiences with the daily struggles in this world leave indelible imprints in our soul that would make us uniquely different from another soul. We arrived in this world “thrown” into a particular set of circumstances, cultures, creeds, ethos, families and life situations. Moment by moment, we cope-up with Life in a variety of ways, for Life comes to treat us in different ways just as well. Some are treated nicely by Life; but for others, Life can be downright cruel at worst. Each experience we have brings us precious lessons in life... And Life is an expert teacher, for all her lessons are individualized-different lessons for different souls, and no lessons are ever the same for everyone. So in this case, can we truly, really, and honestly judge someone or his/her life? Can we ever bring ourselves to compare with others? “Judge ye not; so that ye be not judged”, thundered the voice of the Prophet Jesus the Messiah, in the Gospel. (See St. Matthew 7:1).

As of this juncture, I remember fondly

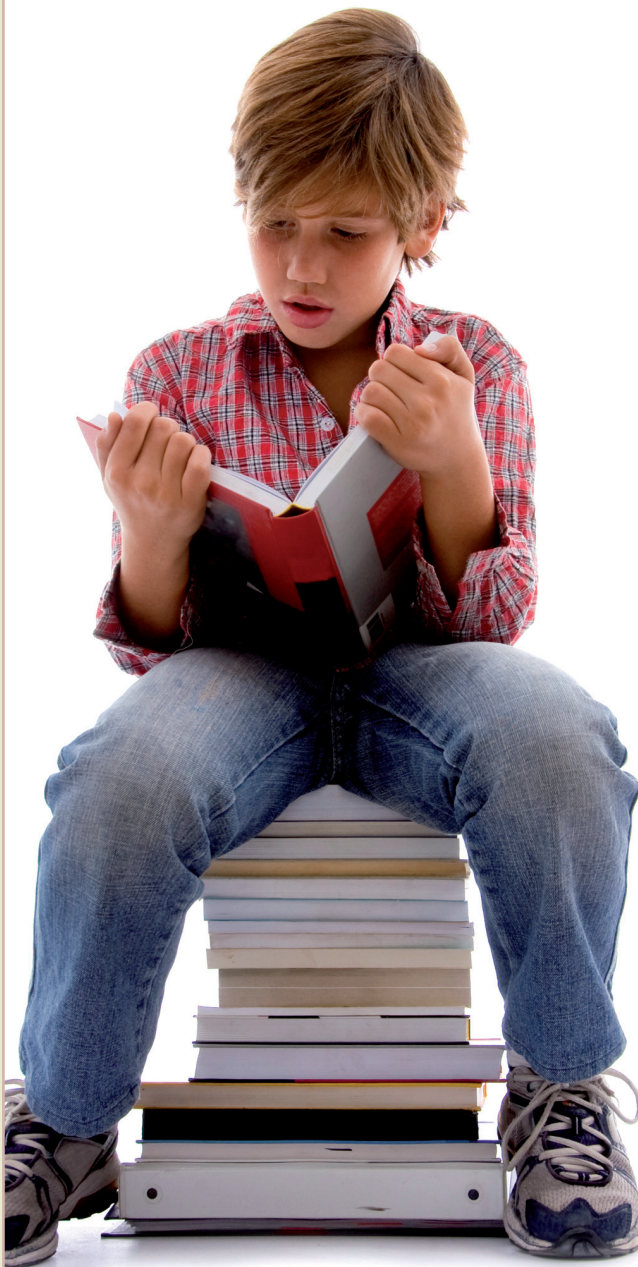
an ancient prayer attributed to Hazrat Muinuddin Chishti Ajmeri, an 11th century Sufi saint from India, which I prayed every time I am tempted of criticizing or judging my fellow human being: “Lord, teach me not to judge anyone if I have not walked a day or two in their sandals. Lord, teach me to withhold my tongue in criticizing someone if I have not walked a day’s journey with him”.

(Cited in Mahmud Chishti Sabiri, *Gharib e-Nawaz Sobbat o’ Nasihat* [Conversations with and Advices of the Refuge of the Poor], p.19). Take this very clearly: we must not even compare our pains with the pains of another for they are totally different. Let us stop living our lives in the fallacy of “*Non-Sequitur*” (it does not follow)! My life is my life and the other has his/her own life and it does not follow that I compare myself with him/her. When we envy another person for what he or she has achieved in life, when we become covetous of what one has that we do not have, we are in truth saying that our life has no worth and that our existence is a nothing—we are in effect saying that the other’s existence is worth more than ours! But we are all valuable, and we have intrinsic worth: that is why Almighty Allah gives us this time and opportunity to exist, in order to experience and learn from the School of Life. If we always look at our own sadness, and covet the happiness of others, thereby allowing envy to consume and burn us from within, we are living a life of misery, a life



We are all valuable, and we have intrinsic worth: that is why Almighty Allah gives us this time and opportunity to exist, in order to experience and learn from the School of Life.

**Life is an expert teacher,
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of a lie, an illusory, deceptive and pathetic existence. Come to think of it: try as we may, we will never be the other person and the other person will never be us!

What spiritual relevance does this present reflection on the uniqueness of one's existence bring us? The realization that we need to tolerate others and the need to accept the differences we have as individual human existents. But above all, we also learn the profound truth that my life is mine alone and I cannot live the life of another. Envyng another's life is illogical and coveting the success of others is idiotic. There is a very beautiful saying of the Prophet Muhammad: "Each person is given the measure of failure and success, pain and joy according to his capacity to bear them. The cycle of pain and happiness in life are lessons for us to contemplate upon, so that we will remember that this present life is not the real goal, but Almighty Allah is the true Goal of one's existence" (Cited in *At-Tarjum al-Bayhaqi fi Sahib-Ain* [Commentary of Imam Al-Bayhaqi on Sahih Bukhari and Muslim], xx:9; p. 147).

I like very much the abovementioned prophetic quotation (*hadith*) from the wisdom of the Prophet of Islam. For the present readers of my article who are more of a secular bent or of a philosophical temperament; let me translate what the Prophet Muhammad, in effect, said from an existentialist perspective. The Prophet is saying that all our experiences are provided by Almighty Allah to us so that by reflecting upon the alternating of pain and joy, suffering and happiness, we will be able to know who we truly are-and through the varied circumstances in our life (be they painful or joyful), we will discover the deep truth of ourselves and of others. It is only through sufferings and difficulties that one can attain mastery in life, and can hone one to be a person of genuine character and self-authenticity. This was also what Hazrat Maulana Rumi, the famous 12th century Turkish mystic, meant when he says that one should be grateful of our own life's experiences instead of hankering and coveting

the success of another. To quote from Hazrat Maulana Rumi: “Allah turns you from one feeling to another and teaches you by means of opposites, so that you will have two wings to fly-and not just one.” (*Mathnawi Selections*, Islamabad, Pakistan: Ruhaniyyat Press, 1985; p. 76).

For Maulana Rumi, life is characterized by the alternating movements of opposites: conflict and peace, peace and conflict, happiness and sufferings, sufferings and happiness, joy and pain, pain and joy... so on and so forth. Allah designs this alternating psycho-spiritual dynamics in the inward soul for the moral, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual development of each human existent. All human beings have their own sets of joys and sadness, happiness and sufferings, success and failures so that it is indeed futile to covet another's life without being able to experience the other's difficulties and failures. From the point of view of Islamic spirituality known as Sufism, our experiences of suffering make us more resolute, spiritually mature and holy, since the experiences of pain and suffering will prod us to place our reliance solely on the All-Benevolent Allah (*Ar-Rahman*) Who allows us to experience difficulties for the good of our souls: in order to mature us and to make us truly unique, individuated, self-actualized and God-conscious persons.

Therefore, the next time we begin scratching this itch of comparing ourselves with others and of competing with their achievements, let's recall the undeniable truth that we cannot be the other person—we can only be ourselves. Covetousness is a grave sin, and the Torah of Prophet Moses sternly warns us: “Thou shalt not covet!” (See Exodus 20:17). Competition should only be with ourselves—that is, how we can better our own selves. Let us learn to see ourselves as having intrinsic worth because our eternal value does not come from what we have accomplished or will ever achieve in the future, but from who we really are in the goodness of our heart and in the purity of our intentions. So how about it? Something worth pondering upon in our present existence.

“Allah turns you from one feeling to another and teaches you by means of opposites, so that you will have two wings to fly-and not just one.”



Quiz For Children



1. How many times in the Qur'an, is the Prophet addressed as Ya ayyu han Nabi?
 - a. 9
 - b. 10
 - c. 11
 - d. 12
2. Where in the Qur'an has the Prophet been named 'Ahmed'?
 - a. Surah Saffat
 - b. Surah Saff
 - c. Surah Yasin
 - d. Surah Ta-Ha
3. Name the Prophet whose name is mentioned and discussed most in the Qur'an?
 - a. Musa
 - b. Ayyub
 - c. Yaqub
 - d. Hud
4. Who was the first person who counted the verses of the Qur'an?
 - a. Sayyidina Aisha
 - b. Sayyidina Hafsa
 - c. Sayyidina Safiyya
 - d. Sayyidina Sawda
5. On whose advice did Abu Bakr decide to compile the Qur'an?
 - a. Sayyidina Talha
 - b. Sayyidina Uthman
 - c. Sayyidina Fatima
 - d. Sayyidina Umar
6. On whose order was the Qur'an compiled completely in written form?
 - a. Sayyidah Aisha
 - b. Sayyidina Abu Bakr
 - c. Sayyidah Hafsa
 - d. Sayyidina Ali
7. Who confined the recitation of the Qur'an on the style of the Quraysh tribe?
 - a. Sayyidina Zubair
 - b. Sayyidah Aisha
 - c. Sayyidina Umar
 - d. Sayyidina Uthman
8. Which is the first and the most ancient Mosque according to the Qur'an?
 - a. Kabah
 - b. Masjid Aqsa
 - c. Ayyubi Mosque
 - d. Hagia Sofia
9. Who is the relative of the Prophet whose name is mentioned in the Qur'an?
 - a. Abu Sufyan
 - b. Abu Lahab
 - c. Abu Abbas
 - d. Abu Hurayra
10. Which Prophet has been called by his mother's name in the Qur'an?
 - a. Yusuf
 - b. Ismail
 - c. Ibrahim
 - d. Isa

Hey Kids! Maybe you can win a prize!

The first 25 entries that answers the questions correctly will win. Encircle your answers, fill out the form, and mail to: Wisdom - Quiz, 8508 So. 71st East Ave. Tulsa, OK 74133 USA.

Name: Age:

Address:

Parent's Name (for consent purposes only):

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