



# SUFI WISDOM

*A Source of Inspirational and Traditional Islamic Knowledge*

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## RAMADAN

### ONE HEART LIVING IN HARMONY

Osman Nuri Efendi

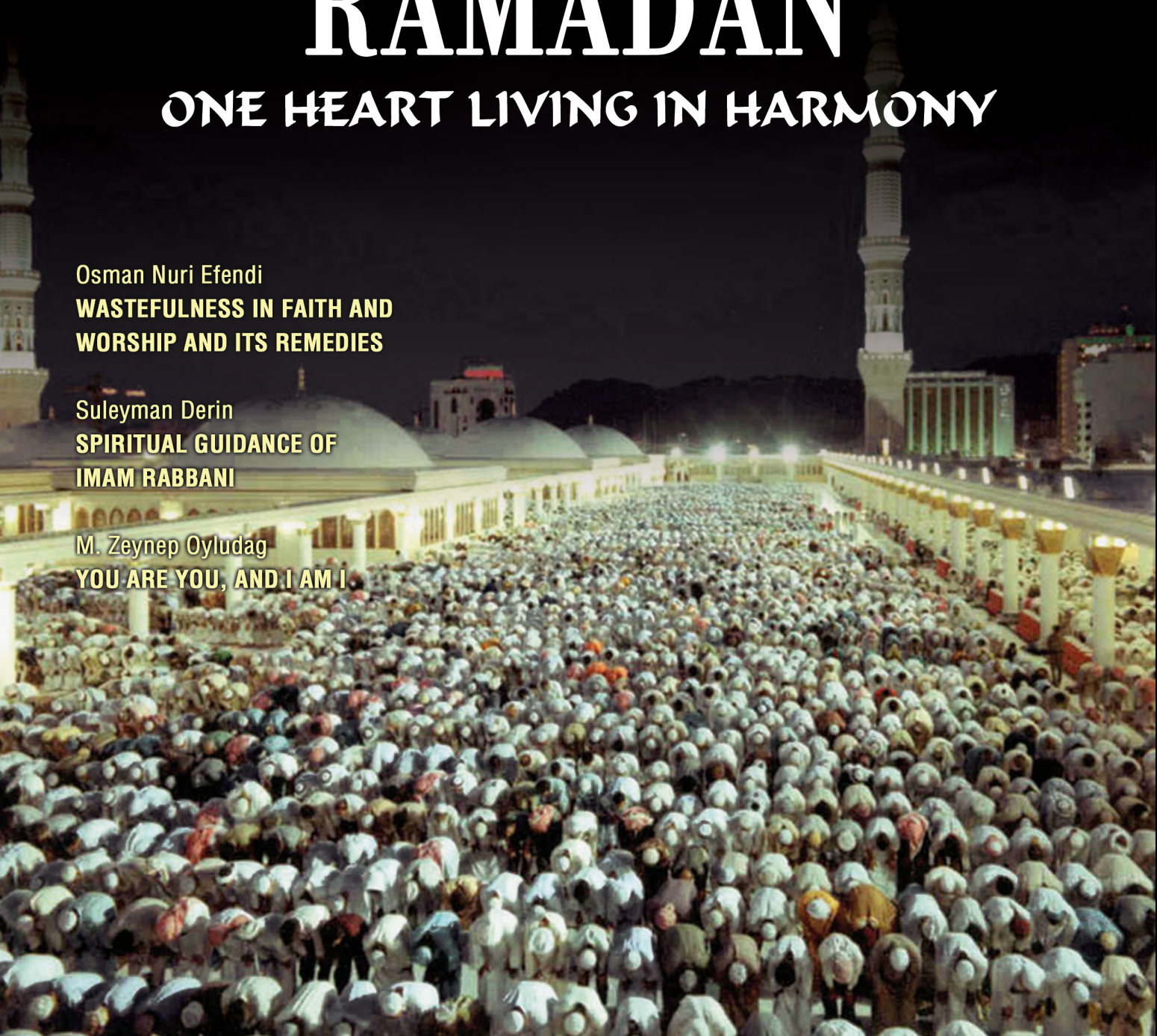
**WASTEFULNESS IN FAITH AND  
WORSHIP AND ITS REMEDIES**

Suleyman Derin

**SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE OF  
IMAM RABBANI**

M. Zeynep Oyludag

**YOU ARE YOU, AND I AM I**









Dear Readers,

This edition has been dedicated to the Holy Month of Ramadan and the very powerful worship of fasting.

Allah the Almighty says in one of the Qudsi Hadith that fasting belongs to Him. Hence there is no other act of worship which can be compared to fasting.

Furthermore, the month of Ramadan, in which fasting is a religious duty from the beginning of the month to the end, is a month of worship full of prosperity, spirituality, compassion, forgiveness and grace.

Our beloved Prophet (pbuh) desired that this holy month be valued spiritually in a profitable and blessed manner, without waste.

In support of this, the Prophet (pbuh) stood at the pulpit and said: "Amen, Amen, Amen." It was asked: "Messenger of Allah, why did you say Amen?" He replied: "Gabriel came to me and said: 'O Muhammad, he is doomed who sees the month of Ramadan come and go and has not been forgiven.' I said Amen. Then he said: 'He is doomed who grows up and both parents or one of them are still alive, and they do not cause him to enter Paradise.' I said Amen. Then he said: 'He is doomed who hears your name mentioned and does not say, Peace be upon you. Say Amen!' So I said Amen." (Hakim, IV, 170/7256)

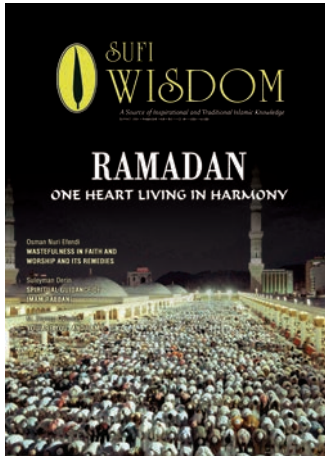
In this edition there is a special section about Ramadan, in which you can read articles about the spirituality of fasting, the importance of Laylat'ul Qadr and how to spend the day of Eid al-Fitr.

This edition also contains an article about our first Sufi Sisters Meeting that was held between the 1st of July and 10th of July in Istanbul and Bursa.

We hope you enjoy reading this edition and have a blessed and a spiritual month of Ramadan.

May Allah the Almighty allow us to value this holy month properly, so that we will be able to benefit from the ocean of compassion and forgiveness that flows alongside us. Amen!

Elif Kapici  
editor@sufiwisdom.net



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Phone: +44 1970617417 • [wales@sufiwisdom.net](mailto:wales@sufiwisdom.net)
- UK - NORMA NOWELL 77 GOULBOURNE STREET  
KEIGHLY BD21 1JR • [england@sufiwisdom.net](mailto:england@sufiwisdom.net)
- US - MAHMUT TUGRUL TASGETIREN 58 TILLINGHAST  
PL BUFFALO NY 14216 • e-mail: [usa@sufiwisdom.net](mailto:usa@sufiwisdom.net)
- US - JACQULINE V. FRANK 8508 So. 71st East Ave.  
Tulsa, OK 74133 USA • e-mail: [oklahoma@sufiwisdom.net](mailto:oklahoma@sufiwisdom.net)
- **Head Office**  
Ikitelli Organize Sanayi Bölgesi, Turgut Ozal Cad. No:  
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# WASTEFULNESS IN FAITH AND WORSHIP AND ITS REMEDIES

OSMAN NURI EFENDI



All the bounties that Our Lord has granted to His creatures are the apparent symbols of His compassion, mercy and love. These Divine bounties have been bestowed by the All-Compassionate Creator as blessings, in other words, without needing to be paid for or earned. In the Qur'an Allah Almighty says:

"And He has made subservient to you, [as a gift] from Himself, all that is in the heavens and on earth. In this, behold, there are messages indeed for people who think!" (Qur'an:45/13)

On the other hand, this does not mean that these bounties can be unconditionally exploited. In another verse it is stated:

"Does man, then, think that he is to be left to himself to go about at will?" (Qur'an:75/36)

Hence, while consuming the bounties bestowed by Allah, we must consider the Divine orders and prohibitions. We must not forget that legitimate actions will be asked about and illicit ones will bring punishment. But we need not only beware of performing forbidden actions; we must be careful not to commit a wrong action merely by exceeding the limit of wastefulness, because wastefulness means disrespect for the Divine creations. Wastefulness entails exceeding the limits in the usage of the blessings, which is a sign of great ingratitude in return for the grace and beneficence of Allah Almighty.



Although wastefulness, as an expression, is generally used for physical possessions, like money and food, here we are looking at the term in a much wider sense. Wastefulness covers every action in which human beings exceed the limits. According to this, in every case when the servant crosses the line that has been drawn by Allah wastefulness occurs.

Namely, wastefulness is the loss of a blessing caused by the misuse of that blessing. Supporting this, Iyas has said: "Everything that goes beyond the order of Allah is wastefulness."

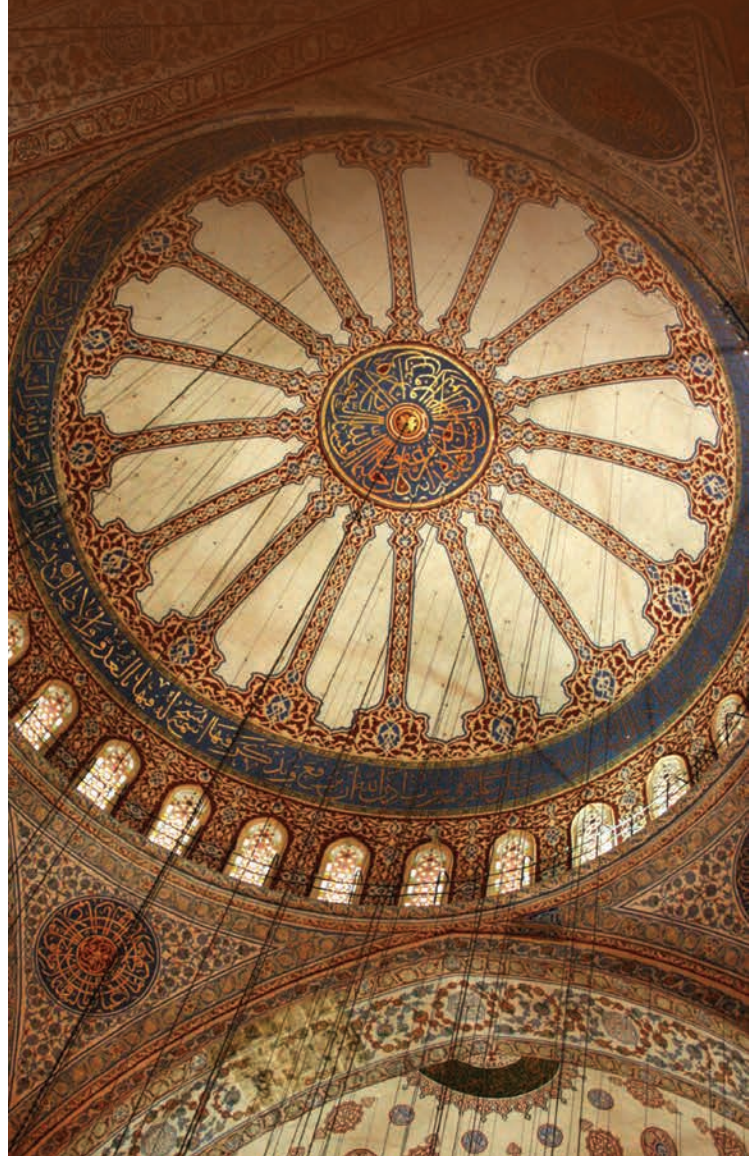
Human beings, because of their egos, are inclined to make excuses for their mistakes. Even murderers who commit the gravest crime try to excuse themselves by hiding behind some reasons or excuses. Extravagant and miserly people fall into the misfortune of being satisfied with their condition. Moreover, most of them cannot free themselves of the danger of thinking that the madness of wastefulness and the misery of miserliness are blessings. That is why one must, in conformity with the divine declarations, fill in the empty frame which is the concept of wastefulness.

In the same way that wastefulness of the physical possessions that have been entrusted to us has been prohibited, in addition, the crude consumption of things that have spiritual values, like creed, worship, wisdom, morality, time and the mind, as well as impetuous attitudes, have also been prohibited; indeed, these have been recognized as the more dangerous losses. Indeed, these attitudes mean wasting and losing eternal felicity for temporal pleasures.

Our Lord has prohibited wastefulness and miserliness in every aspect of our daily life, in things ranging from our need to eat, drink and dress to the values that belong to our spiritual life; we have been ordered to act with temperance. For this, every Muslim has to live a life that is an example of equilibrium between two opposing points, because, if one does not obey the Divine criteria about handling all the physical and spiritual bounties, then one cannot save oneself from falling into the disease of wastefulness or miserliness.

We can list some of the most significant forms of wastefulness that will cause our life in the world and hereafter to drift towards disaster; the ways of getting free from them are also given:

The creeds  
and ideas that  
lack Divine light  
and which are full  
of superstitions  
and myths are like  
candles without  
oil or like bulbs  
without electricity.



### a. Wastefulness in faith and creed:

This is the most horrible form of wastefulness. This is the misspending of eternal felicity by damaging the natural purity of Islam, present in all human beings, as a result of indulging the mind with myths, superstitions and irrational or negative movements; this is caused by an inability to protect the mental and spiritual values.

Attenuation of the faith by losing or misusing the bounty of deep thinking is a spiritual disaster that mostly arises from being close friends with the impious people. Our Lord warns us to save ourselves and others from falling into situations like the following:

"Now, whenever thou meet such as indulge in [blasphemous] talk about Our messages, turn thy back upon them until they begin to talk of other things and if Satan should ever cause thee to forget [thyself], remain not, after recollection, in the company of such evildoing folk" (Qur'an:6/68)

This is because having intellectual closeness and relationships with impious people, over time, will cause a spiritual narrowing, and this in turn causes the destruction of the eternal life by an attenuation of the faith. In the following verses, the main reasons for this wastefulness in faith are expressed as:

"In gardens [of paradise], they will inquire of those who were lost in sin: "What has brought

you into hell-fire?" They will answer: "We were not among those who prayed; and neither did we feed the needy; and we were wont to indulge in sinning together with all [the others] who indulged in it; and the Day of Judgment we were wont to call a lie" (Qur'an:56/40-46)

On the other hand, Our Lord Almighty orders us:

"O you who have attained to faith! Remain conscious of God, and be among those who are true to their word!" (Qur'an:9/119)


In another verse, the necessity of reaching a depth of feeling while thinking about the verses of Allah, in contrast with negligently and aimlessly watching, is stated as:

"And who, whenever they are reminded of their Sustainer's messages, do not throw themselves upon them [as if] deaf and blind" (Qur'an:25/73)

For this reason people who never detect the verses of Allah with the bounty of spiritual comprehension and the eye fall into a wastefulness of sentiments, due to an insensitivity of their emotions. The verse describes the tragic end of wastefulness and lies in the following way:

"..for, verily, God would not grace with His guidance one who has wasted his own self by lying" (Qur'an:40/28)

In addition, there are deviations from the creed, namely immoderate attitudes; one of



Wasterfulness in faith and creed is the misspending of eternal felicity by damaging the natural purity of Islam, present in all human beings.





A maturity of faith depends on a mature mind kneaded by the revelation. The maturity of the mind depends on the light of faith that matures the heart.

the most important and frequently practiced examples of this is that people, while visiting graves of saints, request things directly from them. Indeed, one must request something from Allah Almighty. This should be done with respect for the saints and with thoughts of their elevated status in the sight of Allah, while contemplating the good works they carried out in their life.

But, saying "that Saint has interceded for me" and unconditionally relying on the intercession of the saint is a form of superstition; in the Qur'an it is stated that only those "for whom permission has been granted by (Allah) Most Gracious" (Qur'an:20/109) will be able to intercede.

It is another error to say that saints know everything, that they can see what is in the heart. They can know the unseen only if Allah the Almighty informs them; otherwise even prophets do not know everything. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said that, "The one who has been asked is not more informed than the questioner in this subject." For example, the revelation concerned with the Incident of Ifq (slander) revelation came about one month after the event, and during that period the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) was unable to say anything about the truth of the matter. Again, the revelation about three people who hung behind during the battle of Tabook because of negligence came after fifty days.

Narrated by Kharija bin Zaid bin Thabit: Umm'ul Ala, (a sahabah from Ansar) who had given a pledge of allegiance to the Prophet told me: The Muhajirin (emigrants) were distributed

amongst us by drawing lots, and we were given Uthman bin Maz'un. We had him stay with us in our house. Then he suffered from a disease which proved fatal. When he died and was given a bath and was shrouded in his clothes, the Prophet came and I said, (addressing the dead body): "O Uthman! May Allah be Merciful to you! I testify that Allah has honored you."

The Prophet said: "How do you know that Allah has honored him?" I replied, "Let my father be sacrificed for you, O Allah's Apostle! On whom else shall Allah bestow His honor?"

Allah's Apostle said, "As for him, by Allah, death has come to him. By Allah, I wish him all good (from Allah). By Allah, in spite of the fact that I am Allah's Prophet, I do not know what Allah will do to me."

Umm'ul Ala added, "By Allah, I will never attest the righteousness of anybody after that." (Bukhari Tabeer, 27)

In a verse from the Qur'an, it is stated: "Say: I am no new thing among the Messengers of Allah, nor know I what will be done with me or with you. I do but follow that which is inspired in me, and I am but a plain warner." (Qur'an:46/9)

Someone asked Prophet Jacob (pbuh) "O wise prophet whose heart is enlightened! Though you perceived the odor of Joseph's shirt from Egypt, why did not you see him while he was being thrown into the well so close to you?" Prophet Jacob (pbuh) answered, "Our share from Divine destiny is like flashes of lightning. For this reason,



While reading the Qur'an, spiritual cleanliness is as important as physical cleanliness, as it is spiritual diseases that prevent human beings from being with the Qur'an in a proper manner.

sometimes the things far away appear clearly, sometimes the closest things disappear."

Compliments made by people without thinking are part of the prohibited wastefulness as well. The Prophet of Allah (pbuh) stated: "Whoever amongst you has to praise his brother should say, 'I think that he is so and so, and Allah knows the truth, and I do not confirm anybody's good conduct before Allah, but I think him to be thus,' if he really knows what he is saying of him." (Bukhari, Shahadah, 16)

A maturity of faith depends on a mature mind kneaded by the revelation. The maturity of the mind depends on the light of faith that matures the heart. The creeds and ideas that lack Divine light and which are full of superstitions and myths are like candles without oil or like bulbs without electricity. One day, such a mind that lacks of the control of the revelation will be extinguished like a bulb that is run on an unreliable current.

### **b. Wastefulness in worship**

One of the fundamental orders of the religion is to render worship and Islamic practices into spiritually profitable habits by referring to the criteria of moderation. This is because once we have a habit we tend to continue in this way.

The first thing which comes to mind about wastefulness while practicing devotions is using water excessively because of uncertainty while making wudu (the partial ablution) or ghusl (the complete ablution). The Prophet (pbuh) visited Sa'd while the latter was making his ablutions:

"O Sa'd, what wastefulness!" he said. When Sa'd (pbuh) asked: "Can there be wastefulness in ablution?" Our Master answered: "Yes, even if you are in a flowing river!" (Ibn Majah, Taharah, 48)

Attitudes like not praying in congregation, although there is possibility to, practicing the prayer in a way that is removed from spirituality, or evading something that is compulsory are also constituents of wastefulness in worship. The All-Compassionate Creator speaks of those who practice prayer out of submission and deep reverence thus:

"Woe, then, unto those praying ones whose hearts from their prayer are remote." (Qur'an:107/4-5)

Our Master, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) also spoke about the prayers of those who had lost their grounding due to spiritual faults, that is,



those who waste their worship by disregarding the spiritual content, in the following way:

"One servant practices prayer, but a only a half, one-third, a fourth, a fifth, a sixth, a seventh, an eighth, a ninth or indeed one-tenth of their prayer is written on their account." (Abu Davud, Salat, 123-124)

This means that Allah wants us to worship with the spirituality of the mind and heart. With the order "Prostrate thyself and draw close (unto Allah)!" (Qur'an:96/19), Allah is saying that our hearts should be in a state of entreaty and supplication to Him and in a state of practicing prayer as if we see Him (ihsan), as the thing that helps humans to attain the maturity of real Muslims is the simultaneous use of the brain and heart.

It is also a wastefulness to allow the benefits of the fast, one of the five pillars of Islam, to decrease in value by harming it with moral faults like lying, backbiting or gossiping. Our Prophet states:

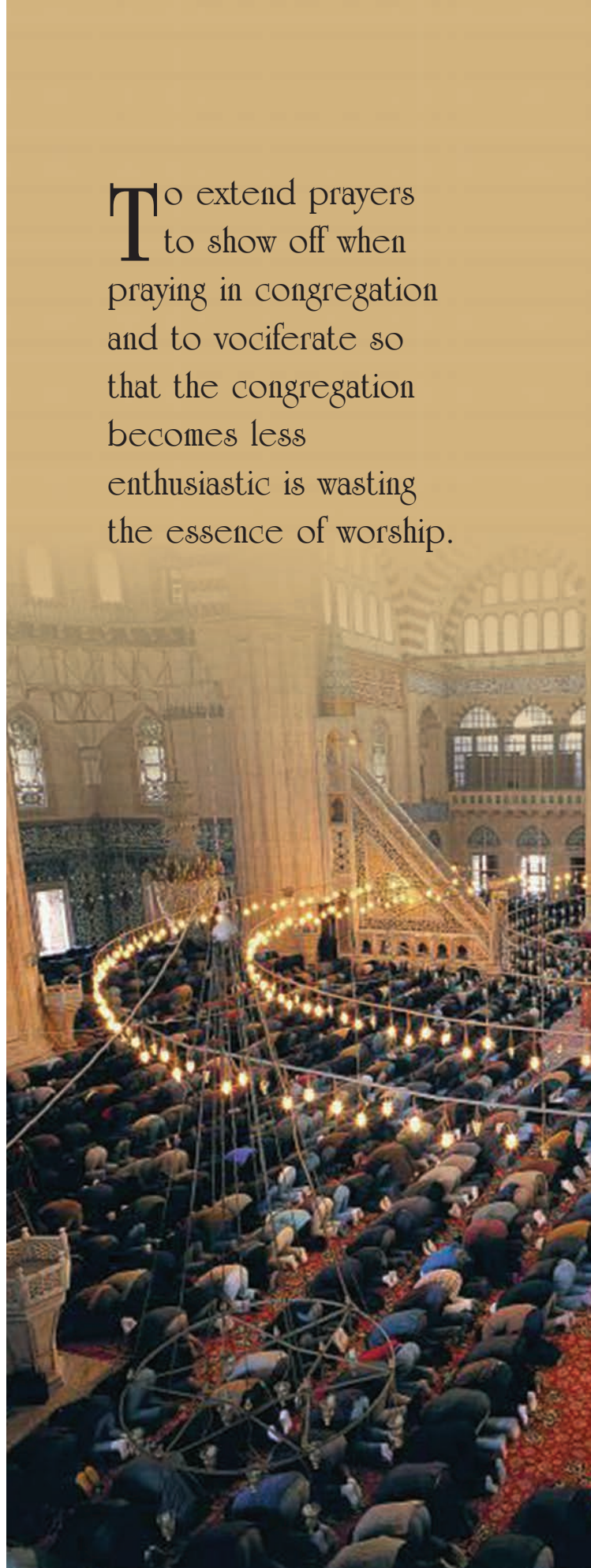
"Allah is not in need of those who do not give up forged speech or evil actions to leave their food or drink." (Bukhari, Sawm, 8)

"There are many who fast who leave nothing but an unwatered hunger! There are many whose prayers at night leave nothing but sleeplessness!" (Ibn Majah, Sawm, 21)

When fasting we must appreciate the bounties which Our Lord has granted us. We should strive to use legitimate things at minimum levels, to seek refuge with the All-Compassionate Creator from acquisitiveness and to abstain from questionable things. By showing clearly how much our inability is with a half-day of hunger, by sympathizing with our brothers who are economically weak, by having our hearts be with them, by knowing them more closely, by giving charity in a humble manner and by being grateful to Allah, an enthusiasm in worship can be attained.

On the other hand, we should be aware that the legitimacy of earned income, the rights of people and behavior that damages spirituality and its profits, that is dealing with meaningless works, can mean the wasting of pilgrimage. In a hadith it is stated that when one who finances the pilgrimage with illegitimately earned money says "Labbayk", he will be answered: "No Labbayk and no Sa'dayk for you because your income is illegitimate, your provisions are illegitimate, your vehicle is illegitimate. Turn back sinner without gaining any good deeds! Be

To extend prayers to show off when praying in congregation and to vociferate so that the congregation becomes less enthusiastic is wasting the essence of worship.



saddened, as you will have to face the thing that you do not like." (Haythami, 3, 209-210)

Wastefulness in zakah and charity is when one awaits gratitude or when one suffers from spiritual diseases like hypocrisy and smugness. Allah says in the Noble Qur'an:

"O you who have attained to faith! Do not deprive your charitable deeds of all worth by stressing your own benevolence and hurting [the feelings of the needy]..." (Qur'an: 2/264)

A Muslim should make a spiritual effort when giving zakah to the truly needy. About this, the All-Compassionate Creator says "Those who are active in deeds of charity" (Qur'an:23/4) about such servants, showing appreciation of them. Giving zakah and charity to the truly needy is a very important task. Trying to discover these people and "recognizing them by their special mark" (Qur'an:2/273) are the most important orders of Our Lord. Indeed, the ability to give anything to the truly needy is dependent on how we earn our money. In other words, the people to whom we give zakah, charity and other donations are mirrors that reflect the legitimacy of our earnings.

The most eminent humans are the people of Muhammad, the most virtuous of these are the Muslims who read, memorize and learn the contents of the Qur'an and practice according

to the Qur'an. Some people bring punishment on themselves; although they have learned the Qur'an, they waste the greatest bounty by not acting and reading the Qur'an properly. Some of them are at a midway point; they sometimes act accordingly, they sometimes neglect to do so. And some of them, by the permission of Allah, forge ahead doing good works.

The Qur'an is the language of the earth and heavens, the treasure of blessings and spirituality for the souls. The Qur'an is a declaration of a miracle addressed to man. The believers who have taken the Qur'an into their hearts are the manifestation of the Creator of the Universe. The human who has taken the Qur'an into their heart enjoys the comfort and felicity of being a miniature world into which this stupendous and magnificent universe fits like a rolled fan. For the person of the heart, the Qur'an is a splendid gate opening to the depths of the world of contemplation.

While reading the Qur'an, spiritual cleanliness is as important as physical cleanliness, as it is spiritual diseases that prevent human beings from being with the Qur'an in a proper manner. Those who are not able to find the compassionate, healing guidance of the Qur'an become greatly frustrated. As the Qur'an expresses the Divine aim, it is those who are close to Allah, who are

The most eminent humans are the people of Muhammad, the most virtuous of these are the Muslims who read, memorize and learn the contents of the Qur'an and practice according to the Qur'an





wary of committing sins and doing good works who can best comprehend the Qur'an. To benefit from the bounties of the Qur'an and then to reach the felicity in this world and the hereafter, it is necessary to refrain from committing sins.

There is another point to be considered; a little service that conforms to the divine aim may surpass many supererogatory (nafilah) devotions. An example of this that occurred in the Time of Happiness (Asr as-Saadah) explains this case well:

Anas reported: We were with the Prophet (pbuh) on a journey. Some of us had been fasting and some of us had not been fasting. It was a hot day, so we lay down in a place. Most of us had the cloth for shelter. There were also those amongst us who sheltered (themselves against the rays of the) sun with the help of their hands. The observers of the fast fell down (on account of weakness). Those who had not observed it got up and pitched tents and watered the mounts. Thereupon the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said: "Those who broke the fast have taken away today's reward" (Muslim, Siyam, 100-101)

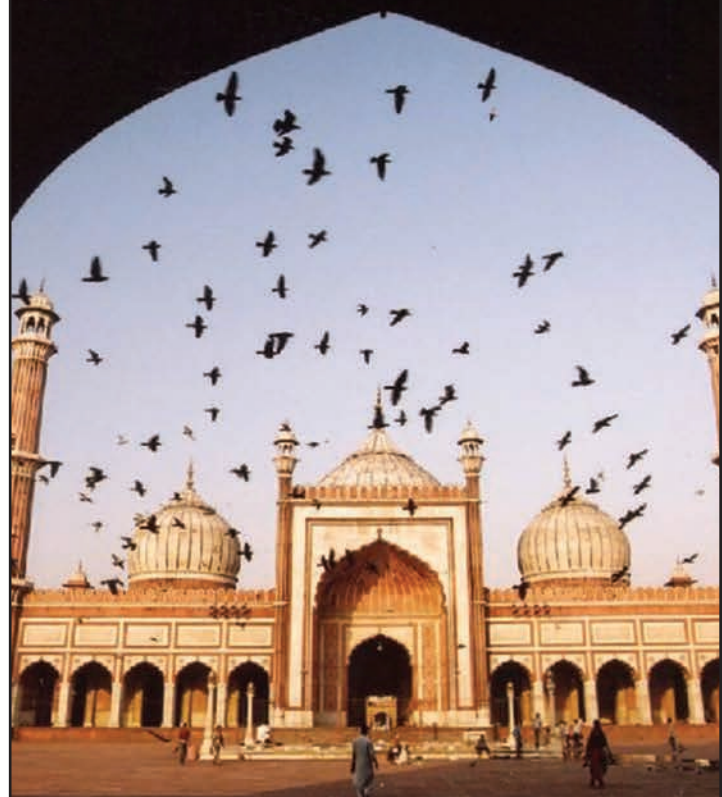
Moreover, to extend prayers to show off when praying in congregation and to vociferate so that the congregation becomes less enthusiastic is wasting the essence of worship. The Messenger of Allah prohibited praying vociferously, stating: "O people! Be merciful to yourselves (i.e. don't raise your voice), for you are not calling a deaf or an absent one" (Bukhari, Jihad, 131)

In conclusion, the All-Compassionate Creator does not want our devotions to be wasted because we are practicing them unconsciously. On the contrary, in the spirituality of ihsan (praying by assuming that we see Allah), Allah desires that our souls become close to Him; that is, that we reach wuslat (reunion with Allah).

May Our Lord allow us to benefit from the showering down of profits and the blessings of Ramadan! By saving us from wasting Divine mercies, like faith, creed, worship and, in particular, Ramadan, may Allah ease our living in the happiness and excitement of complete faith, and in the comfort and pleasure of devotions!..

Amen..!

By showing clearly how much our inability is with a half-day of hunger, by having our hearts be with them, by giving charity in a humble manner and by being grateful to Allah, an enthusiasm in worship can be attained.





# SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE OF IMAM RABBANI

┌ SULEYMAN DERIN, PhD ┐

*I*n the Sufi tradition the giving of spiritual guidance via correspondence holds an important place. Most Naqshi masters used this tradition and today we have some collections of such letters, for example, those of Imam Rabbani and Halid Baghdadi. As these letters were written in order to solve real problems faced by the disciples, they still contain some valuable information about the Sufi tradition. We would like to present some of the relevant letters here for our readers.

The letter in this issue is taken from the famous *maktûbât* (correspondence) of Ahmad Sirhindî, who was better known as Imam Rabbani. Imam Rabbani was a great scholar, as well as a Naqshi master, who lived in India in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. He opposed the rulers of India who tried to make an eclectic religion combining Hinduism, Christianity and Islam. He protected the integrity of Islam against this movement with great courage. It is for this reason that he gained well-deserved fame among Muslims throughout the world as a defender of religion.

His greatest contribution to Islam was that he prevented the bifurcation of the religion into different paths – that is Sufism and shariah. He ended the dangerous tension between orthodox Islam and Sufism. He strengthened the link between Islamic law, theology and Sufism. He set an important example of how to experience Sufi ecstasy without abandoning even the seemingly trivial practices in Islamic law. The letters he wrote to his disciples, which number around 536, give valuable information about how Sufism can be practiced fully within the limits of Islam.





Attaining perfection by traversing the stations of the Naqshi perfection, which are the soul (ruh), the secret (sır), the inner secret (hafi) and the most secret (ahfa), can be attained by following the Prophet (pbuh).

#### Obedience to the Sunnah of the Prophet (pbuh)

According to Imam Rabbani on the Naqshi path perfection can be attained by following the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad as well as the examples of the first four caliphs.

*Attaining perfection by traversing the stations of the Naqshi perfection, which are the soul (ruh), the secret (sır), the inner secret (hafi) and the most secret (ahfa), can be attained by following the Prophet. Hence you must follow him and his truthful caliphs who came after him; they too have found guidance and have the ability to guide others. They are the beginning of guidance and the suns of sainthood. Those who are blessed with the bounty of following them are considered to be among those who are saved; on the other hand, those who disobey them have fallen into the pit of misguidance. (25<sup>th</sup> letter)*

According to Imam Rabbani the Shariah (Islamic law) contains happiness for both this world and the hereafter. Hence, in the process of Sufi training the disciple should not ignore even the smallest principle of Shariah, that is, the commandments and prohibitions of Islam. A Sufi *tariqah* should be in the service of the Shariah, in other words it should help to fulfill the practice of Islamic regulations. Imam Rabbani goes on to state:

*Religious commandments and acts of worship that make the servant closer to Allah are divided into two parts: the obligatory and the voluntary acts of worship. In comparison with the obligatory*

*acts of worship, the voluntary ones do not have such importance. A unit of five daily prayers fulfilled in its proper time is better than a thousand years of voluntary prayers. This rule does not change for any acts of worship, be they fasting, chanting the names of God, or contemplation, even if they are performed in full sincerity.*

*It is narrated that one day Hadrat Omar, after leading the fajr prayer turned back and supervised the Companions. He could not see one of his friends in the congregation and asked: where is such and such person? His friends answered, he normally spends all night in voluntary prayers, hence he might oversleep just before the fajr prayer. Having heard this, Hadrat Omar commented: I wish he would sleep all night but participate in the (obligatory) fajr prayer with the congregation. (29<sup>th</sup> letter)*

According to Rabbani avoiding even the minor disliked actions is better than many Sufi practices, such as the *dhikr*, contemplation and spiritual concentration. Imam Rabbani's warnings have particular relevance to our modern times when Sufism has become to be considered an alternative to Islam. Sufism is not an alternative to Islam; it is only an assistant to Islam. Hence, those Sufi groups, both in the West and the East, that ignore the requirements of Islam and only emphasize some Sufi practices cannot be considered to be from within the Islamic perspective.

*"To give a penny as zakat (obligatory charity in Islam) is better than giving a mountain of gold or*



*silver as big (as a voluntary act)."*

However, we must understand Imam Rabbani correctly here. He is not opposed to voluntary acts of worship; rather what he is against is ignoring Allah's obligatory commandments and overemphasizing the voluntary acts of piety. The latter are only valuable after the fulfillment of one's obligations towards Allah as prescribed in the Qur'an. In order to learn one's prior obligations, Imam Rabbani advises his followers to read books of *fiqh* (Islamic law);

*In our Sufi gatherings books on Islamic law should be read as well as Sufi books... there is no harm in not reading Sufi books in the sohbet, since Sufism is not mere words but rather is a spiritual state. Hence, words have no effect in the spiritual realm (not to the extent that the states have). However, ignoring the study of fiqh can harm one's religion..."*

With these words, Imam Rabbani establishes the significance of the law in Sufism. Again, his words should not be misunderstood; he is not against reading Sufi books in the *sohbet*, but he is opposed to neglecting the study of *fiqh* in Sufi circles.

This point is important; as Sufism is a science of spiritual states, merely reading Sufi books could harm some of the disciples. Some people will continue to speak of lofty spiritual states without realizing the inner meaning. He warns the disciples of the Sufi path in the following words:

*The friends of Allah inherit the knowledge of*

*spiritual states by following the legal injunctions. Only those who follow the deeds of the law diligently can reach the states which are directed by Sufism. This means learning how to establish the five daily prayers, fasting, and the requirements of interactions such as marriage divorce and commerce. Such knowledge can be attained by studying and reading and it is necessary for all Muslims to learn about them...*

It can be understood from Rabbani's words above that one needs to learn the obligatory knowledge for worshipping God as well as those in interactions with others. If one ignores the knowledge that is easily attainable from books, then how can they attain the more difficult knowledge of spiritual realities? If one engages with the Sufi practices of *jazba* (spiritual ecstasy), *sakr* (spiritual drunkenness), or *irfan* (gnosis) without learning the obligatory knowledge of Islamic law then these states are not beneficial; furthermore, it is highly probable that such a person's feet will slip from the true path of Allah.

Imam Rabbani also advises the leaders of the Sufi path, warning them about some questionable behavior which can possibly be misunderstood by the general public:

*A trusted person informed me that one of our representatives allowed the disciples to prostrate before another as a sign of respect. The ugliness of such an act is as clear as the sun. Prevent him from this practice. Those who are the leaders of the people are obliged to refrain from such acts.*

As Sufism is a science of spiritual states, merely reading Sufi books could harm some of the disciples. Some people will continue to speak of lofty spiritual states without realizing the inner meaning



*People will imitate their conduct and they all fall into fitnah (disorder, heresy).*

This practice prostrating before another person was an innovation at that time in India to show respect to the leaders. It is narrated that Imam Rabbani was imprisoned because he did not prostrate before King Jihangir of India. In this way, Imam Rabbani forbade the unnecessary show of respect before another human being, something that is common in many Sufi circles today. Real respect to leaders means following the guidance of Islam and following their guidance to Islam. They should not be turned into idols.

Because of Imam Rabbani's strong stance against the movement to corrupt Islam he was very successful and even later influenced the royal family. King Jihangir understood his sincerity and even allowed his son, the prince of the royal family, to be educated by him. Imam Rabbani prevented the Sufi paths from being abused as a way to include non-Islamic practices into the religion.

Imam Rabbani and the month of Ramadan:

*The month of Ramadan gathers all kinds of blessing and good in it. In comparison to the blessing of Ramadan, other good deeds carried out in other months are like a drop of water. If one can unite their scattered will in this month, they can easily keep it in for the rest of the year. However if one cannot adapt himself to this holy month, their discord will continue throughout the rest of the year.*

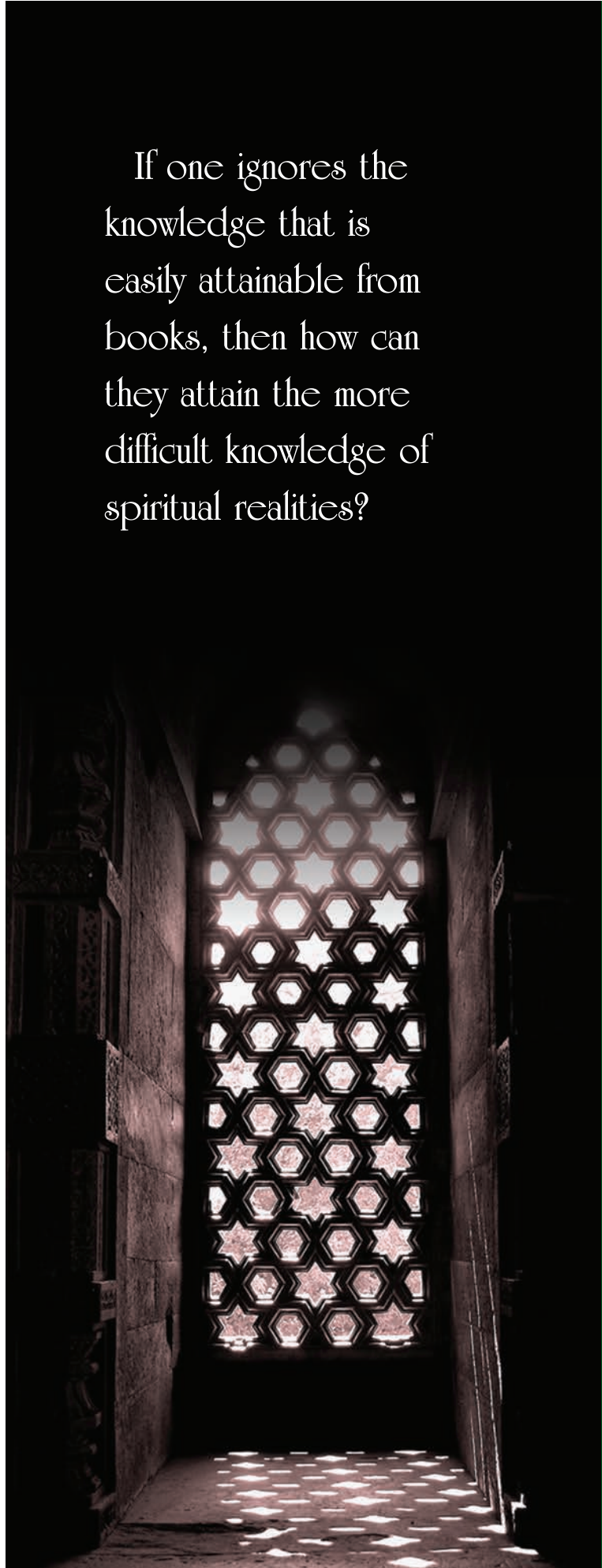
*What a good person one is who gives the month of Ramadan all its rights. Woe to those who offend the month of Ramadan. Such people have deprived themselves of a great good and salvation.*

According to Imam Rabbani, the month of Ramadan has so many blessings that the goodness of its days and nights cannot be compared with days in other months.

In the above words Imam Rabbani calls our attention to the blessings of Ramadan and advises us to take the opportunity to reach salvation in this month with all manner of good deeds, including the reading of the Qur'an from first page to the last (*khatm*).

I pray that Allah the Almighty will enable us to follow the true path of Islam and heed the warning of the scholars and saints of Allah.

If one ignores the knowledge that is easily attainable from books, then how can they attain the more difficult knowledge of spiritual realities?





# YOU ARE YOU,

FASTING:  
SAVING  
OURSELVES  
FROM SLAVERY  
TO THE MATERIAL  
WORLD

# AND

# I AM I

└ M. ZEYNEP OYLUDAG ┘

*When Allah created the nafs, He called it to come before Him. He asked the nafs, "Who am I and who are you?" To this question the nafs responded, "You are You and I am I." This was not the response that Allah wanted so he placed the nafs in the hell-fire for 1,000 years. At the end of the term he called the nafs to come before Him again.*

*Again Allah asked, "Who am I and who are you?" Again the nafs responded, "You are You and I am I." Still not receiving the answer He wanted from the nafs, Allah returned the nafs to the hell-fire for another 1,000 years. At the end of this term, He again called for the nafs to come to Him.*

*For a third time, Allah asked, "Who am I and who are you?" For the third time the nafs replied, "You are You and I am I." At this Allah ordered the nafs to go hungry for the duration of one day. At the completion of this day the nafs answered the question, "You are You, and You are my Lord."*

A well known awliyah (saint) once gave this advice to his students: 'Do not sacrifice the shadow of the sheep!' When asked how one can sacrifice the shadow of a sheep, this beloved teacher explained that this is what happens when a person sacrifices something without putting their heart into it. It is only when a human does a deed completely from their heart that this deed can succeed in coming to fruition. Upon reflection, this appears to be the best advice as the month of Ramadan approaches, the month of great sacrifice.



**W**hen the focus of the Muslim is to obtain the pleasure and acceptance of Allah, his *nafs* becomes lower and his *taqwa* is raised.

The main aim of fasting during Ramadan is to both increase *taqwa* (piety) and to gain control of the *nafs* and its selfishness by applying discipline. When a Muslim is able to complete their fast in a way that is conducive to worship and reflection upon the bounties of Allah, these two aims become realized and all of the blessings and benefits of the fast are achieved. When the focus of the Muslim is to obtain the pleasure and acceptance of Allah, his *nafs* becomes lower and his *taqwa* is raised.

In a hadith Qudsi, Allah says about the fast of Ramadan: *"Fasting is mine and it is I who will give the reward for it. A man gives up his passion, his food and his drink for my sake. Fasting is like a shield, and he who fasts has two joys; a joy when he breaks his fast and a joy when he meets his Lord."* Allah wants every Muslim to understand the brevity of his fasting, and thus He reminds the Muslims that neither the *dunya* (this world) nor any one else can give a reward to those who fast. Thus, it is understood that through fasting the ties to the *dunya* should be cut and that one who is fasting should turn completely and whole heartedly to Allah seeking His pleasure and mercy.

Although the outward fast is not eating and drinking, inwardly it is abstaining from so much more. Fasting is avoiding those things that are desirable to the *nafs*, such as getting involved in deeds which can draw the heart away from Allah, or being obsessed with items that are of little value for gaining success in the next life. Fasting is also abstaining from saying or doing things that are harmful to others. It is about such things that Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)

said: *Whoever does not give up false speech and evil actions, Allah is not in need of his abstaining from food and drink."* This hadith makes it clear that fasting is not something to be done merely with the body, the mouth and the stomach. It is something to be done with the heart, a heart full of pure and clean intentions, inclined toward Allah's pleasure.

Fasting is also the avoidance of wastefulness and heedlessness, both of which are clear signs that a Muslim is being controlled by his *nafs*. These are not easy vices to overcome, nor is the battle with the *nafs* an easy battle. Certainly it is not a battle to be attempted half-heartedly. Thus, one should not take fasting lightly, as it is a valuable weapon in the struggle which Prophet Muhammad called the "large jihad"; the struggle for self-control.

Once a Muslim removes the desires of the *nafs* from his heart they then become beneficial to society. The reason for this is because all class separations have been removed from such a person, and they start to see no one as being less in value than themselves. Such a person no longer sees people as poor, old, or lowly. Indeed, by gaining control over the *nafs*, they are able to eliminate all the values they had once placed on themselves and their property, thus breaking the ropes of arrogance. This is what allows a Muslim to make the greatest sacrifices, and allows these sacrifices to be made easily, without hesitation.

Arrogance, as Allah warns in the Qur'an, is something which no Muslim can ever keep in their heart and still obtain Paradise. Allah warns: *"Truly Allah knows all that they keep secret as well as all they bring into the open – behold, He*



**T**hus, one should not take fasting lightly, as it is a valuable weapon in the struggle which Prophet Muhammad called the 'large jihad'; the struggle for self-control.

does not love those who are given to arrogance." (Qur'an:16/23) The heart, however, is the thing that separates the deed done well and the deed done in vain.

Abu Hurairah once reported that he had heard Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) say: "Perhaps a fasting person will gain nothing from his fast save hunger, and perhaps the one who stands to pray at night will get nothing from his standing save sleeplessness." (Ibn Majah)

Fasting, when completed with the heart and for the sake of Allah alone, is a form of worship that can teach the Muslim the value of all that Allah provides. It teaches patience with hardship and satisfaction with material possessions, even when they are meager.

The one who is fasting gains confidence in their ability to endure difficulties, even if they include poverty and hunger. Through fasting, the Muslim saves themselves from a hideous form of slavery, that is, slavery to the material world, and they gain the freedom of self-control. This kind of fast teaches the Muslim the truth of the *ayat*: "*And most certainly shall we try you by means of danger, and hunger, and loss of worldly goods, and loss of life and of the fruits of ones labors. But give glad tidings unto those who are patient in adversity –*" (Quran:2/155)

Through fasting a Muslim gains knowledge of another form of servanthood, that of being a grateful servant to Allah. The fast that teaches this is done with careful attention to all of the components of fasting; the *suhur* (morning meal), the *tarawih* (night prayers), reading the Qur'an, making humble and earnest prayers, and remembering the names and attributes of Allah. All of these things were indicated by the Prophet (pbuh) as clear signs of gratefulness and devotion to Allah.

Finally, it is important to realize the value of fasting as a tool for healing and caring for the heart, mind and body.

There are ten benefits of fasting mentioned by the great teachers of Sufism:

- In moderate hunger there is a clearness of mind and heart, while being full brings forgetfulness and foolishness.

- In moderate hunger there is gentleness of the heart, which takes pleasure in worship, while being full bring insensitivity.

- In moderate hunger there is softness of the heart and humility, while being full brings insolence, conceit, pride and bragging.

- In moderate hunger there is attention to the poor and hungry, while being full makes one forgetful of those who are in need..

- In moderate hunger the desires of the *nafs* are broken, while being full causes the *nafs* to become strong and the desires find strength.

- In moderate hunger the body becomes agile and aware, while being full causes sleepiness and carelessness.

- In moderate hunger one feels ready to worship and give service to Allah, while being full makes the body feel lazy and lax.

- In moderate hunger the body is generally healthier, while being full causes the body to feel worn out or even sick.

- In moderate hunger the body feels light, spacious and cheerful, while being full makes one heavy and irritable.

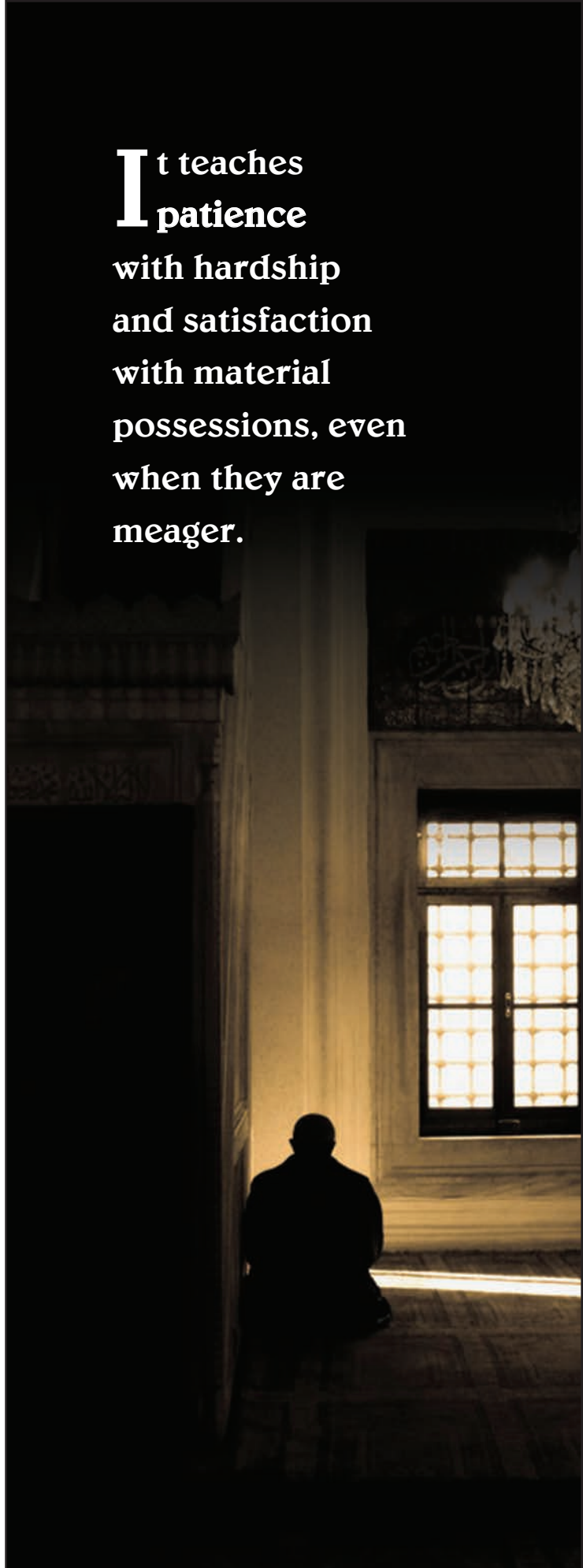
- In moderate hunger one feels more generous and charitable, while being full decreases ones' understanding of the poor, causing them to become wasteful or stingy.

In other words, a full stomach can cause one's *nafs* to be active and increase the amount and strength of its desires, but fasting opens the mind to *tefekkur* (meditation) and makes the heart sensitive to the creation of Allah and His Divine realities. As Taberani once said: "*Fast and find health.*"

May Allah guide us through a Ramadan of blessings and mercy and lead us on a Divine path that raises our level of *taqwa* and our understanding of real sacrifice.

May Allah protect us from a single day of fasting completed without heart, so that our sacrifices are not merely sacrificing the shadow of the sheep! May we finish our Ramadan and reply, "You are You, and you are my Lord"

**I**t teaches  
**patience**  
**with hardship**  
**and satisfaction**  
**with material**  
**possessions, even**  
**when they are**  
**meager.**





*There Is A Gate In Paradise Called  
Ar-Rayyan, And Those Who Observe  
Fasting Will Enter Through It On The  
Day Of Resurrection And None Except  
Them Will Enter Through It.*

PROPHET MUHAMMAD (PBUH)





# SERMON OF THE PROPHET (pbuh) ABOUT RAMADAN

A great month, a blessed month, a month containing a night which is better than a thousand months has approached you people.

Allah has appointed the observance of fasting during this month as an obligatory duty, and the passing of its nights in prayer as a voluntary practice. If someone draws near to Allah during this month with a good act they will be like one who fulfills an obligatory duty in other months, and he who fulfills an obligatory duty in this month will be like one who fulfills seventy obligatory duties in any other month.

Every breath you take in this month has the reward of praise of Allah. Your sleep is worship, your good deeds are accepted and your invocations answered.

Or shall we say : "Your sleep is accounted as worship"

Therefore, you must invoke your Lord in earnest, with hearts that are free from sin and evil, and pray that Allah helps you to fast, and recite the Qur'an. Give alms to the poor and the needy. Pay respect to your elders, have sympathy for youngsters and be kind toward your relatives and kinsfolk.

Guard your tongue against unworthy words, and your eyes from scenes that are not worth seeing and your ears from sounds that should not be heard.

Understand well that Allah has promised in

the Name of His Majesty and Honor that He will not take to task those people who perform prayer (*salah*) and prostration (*sajdah*) and that He will guard their bodies against the fire of hell on the Day of Judgment

Ramadan is the month of endurance and the reward of endurance is Paradise. Ramadan is the month of sharing with others and it is a month in which the believer's provision is increased. If someone gives one who has been fasting something with which to break their fast it will provide forgiveness for any wrong actions and save them from the hell fire, and they will have a reward equal to the fasting man's reward without the other's reward being diminished in any way...

Allah gives this reward to anyone who gives one who has been fasting some milk mixed with water, or a date, or a drink of water with which to break his fast; anyone who gives a full meal to one who has been fasting will be given a drink by Allah and will not be thirsty until they enter Paradise.

Ramadan is a month whose beginning is mercy, whose middle is forgiveness, and whose end is freedom from the hell fire. If anyone makes things easy for a slave during this month, Allah will forgive them and free them from the hell fire.

Narrated by Salman al-Farsi





# FASTING: THE SUFI APPROACH

**A**t the beginning of his Kitâb Asrâr al-Sawm in *Ihyâ Al-Ghazali* presents some considerations on the value of fasting. Referring to some well-known traditions he points out the high esteem in which Allah holds fasting. He gives as a reason for this that fasting is a passive act which no one but Allah is aware of and also that it is a means of defeating the enemies of Allah, that is the human passions. These are Satan's means of attaining his ends, and are stimulated by eating and drinking. Fasting is the best way to block Satan's means for encouraging man to commit sin. Allah Almighty says in the Qur'an that if man helps the cause of Allah He will help His slave. *O you who believe! If you help (the cause of) Allah, He will help you and make firm your feet. (Qur'an:47/7)* Fasting is therefore "the gateway to the service of Allah."

After having enumerated the regulations regarding fasting, Al-Ghazali declares that these are not actually what is essential. He distinguishes three steps in the fast. The first step is that of the *awâm* (*saw al-umûm*), the second step is the fast of the chosen (*sawm al-khusûs*) and the third is that of the Prophets, the Companions and those who have been brought into the proximity [of Allah] (*al-muqarrabûn*).

1-The fast of the *awâm*: Most people think that fasting consists of refraining from food and

drink and intimate acts. These are the necessary elements of fasting, however, there is more to it. Fasting is not mere hunger. It must include the control the physical body in its entirety. The rest of the body should also join in the fast. But the second step is important for the pious; this consists in keeping one's sensory organs and limbs free from sin and from all things that detract from Allah. The subjection of the passions is the real object of fasting, it is not mere abstinence.

2- The fast of the *khawâs*: This is the second grade of fasting, which is called the fast of *khawâs* by al-Ghazali. In this kind of fast all the limbs of a person fast as well. The eyes fast by refraining from looking at what has been forbidden. According to a Prophetic tradition looking at nude pictures or human beings with sexual desire breaks one's fast. The fast of the tongue is to refrain from saying useless or harmful things, or from lying, backbiting, slander or hurting other people with rude or obscene words.

As narrated by Abu Huraira:

The Prophet said, "Whoever does not give up false speech or evil actions, Allah is not in need of his abandoning his food and drink (i.e. Allah will not accept his fasting.)" (*Bukhari*)

The Prophet (pbuh) stated that a believer should not even retaliate in a verbal argument, advising him only to say "I am fasting".



The Prophet said, "Fasting is a shield. So, the person observing the fast should avoid sexual relations with his wife, and should not behave foolishly or impudently, and if somebody fights with him or abuses him, he should tell him twice, 'I am fasting.'" The Prophet added, "By He in Whose Hands my soul is, the smell emanating from the mouth of a fasting person is better in the sight of Allah than the smell of musk. (Allah says about the fasting person), 'He has left his food, drink and desires for My sake. This fast is for Me. So I will reward (the fasting person) for it and the reward of good deeds is multiplied ten times.'" (Bukhari)

The fast of the stomach is to refrain from forbidden or doubtful food. In particular believers who live in the West must be careful when selecting our food. Some products contain pork by-products. We must read the labels so as to understand the ingredients of the food we choose. In this regard, fasting is also an opportunity to give up bad habits, such as smoking or drinking. Ramadan gives us a chance; if one can refrain from smoking one day they can surely not smoke for a week or even for a month. Al-Ghazali also adds that at the *iftârî* times (the time to break the fast) one should not eat excessively. We should eat reasonably otherwise the fast will be of no benefit in fighting the temptations of Satan. During Ramadan the believers invite each other for *iftârî* meals in their houses and restaurants. Hence, there are many opportunities to eat excessively. This contradicts the spirit of fasting.

3-The fast of the *khawâsal-Khawâs*: Al-Ghazali calls this fasting the fast of the heart. In this kind of fast the believer separates his heart from all worldly desires. On this level, if the believer thinks about worldly concerns or material interests, their fast is broken. For example, to think about what they will eat later when fasting in this way breaks the fast, as this implies a lack of trust in Allah. Al-Qushayri calls this the group that fasts thus *Ârifîn*

(Gnostics). The reward of fasting, refraining from food and family life, is Paradise, but the fasting of the heart, which means removing all worldly concerns from the heart and dedicating it wholly to Allah, necessitates His vision. Al-Quahayri goes on to explain the hadith "start fasting when you see it/him and give up fasting when you see it/him (*li ru'yatihî*)". The Arabic pronoun *hu* (he/it) refers to the crescent of the new moon in the understanding of the scholars. So the hadith is stating that when you see the crescent of the Ramadan moon you should start fasting and when you see the crescent of the Shawwal moon you should stop fasting. Al-Qushayri says that

the pronoun *hu* refers to Allah, and the meaning of this hadith can be further interpreted as: when you see Allah start fasting, and when you see Him stop fasting. Al-Qashani, like Ibn Arabi, emphasizes the meaning of Ramadan: the word Ramadan comes from the root *ramada* meaning to burn: Hence, the mystic should burn his animal soul/ego in the Lord and annihilate their existence. Hence, Ramadan is a month for burning the ego and its bad habits. Only then can the Qur'an be our guide as stated in the following verse:

*The month of Ramadan, in which the Qur'an was revealed (is), a guidance for mankind, and a clear proof of the guidance, and the Criterion (of right and wrong).*

(Qur'an:2/185)

If one cannot achieve this goal, i.e. the burning of the ego, then such a person is unwell and they must make up their fasting after the annihilation, that is after being present with Allah: *And whosoever of you is present, let him fast the month, and whosoever of you is sick or on a journey, (let him fast the same) number of other days. Allah desireth for you ease; He desireth not hardship for you; and (He desireth) that ye should complete the period, and that ye should magnify Allah for having guided you, and that peradventure ye may be thankful.* (Qur'an:2/185)

*Whoever  
does not give  
up false speech or  
evil actions, Allah  
is not in need of his  
abandoning his food  
and drink (i.e. Allah  
will not accept his  
fasting.)*

*Hadith*



# HADITH ABOUT RAMADAN

• *Ramadan, a blessed month, has come to you during which Allah has made it obligatory for you to fast. In it the gates of the Garden are opened, the gates of the Fire are locked, and the rebellious Shaytan is chained. In it Allah has a night which is better than a thousand months. He who is deprived of its good indeed suffered deprivation.* wAbu Huraira

• *By Him Who holds my life in His hand the breath of the fasting man's mouth is more fragrant before God and better pleasing to Him than redolent musk.*

Muslim

• *O people! If anyone among you arranges Iftar for any believer, then Allah will reward him and forgive him his previous sins.*

*A companion of the Prophet (pbuh) asked: "But not everyone among us have the means to do so." The prophet replied: "Do it even if it be with half a date or some water if you have nothing else."*

• *Paradise has a gate which is called al-Rayyan through which not one shall enter except those who have observed the fast.*

Bukhari

• *Very good deed will be rewarded from ten to seven hundred fold except fasting which is endured for My sake and which I shall reward.*

Hadith Qudsi - Bukhari

• *He who fasts during Ramadan with faith and seeks his reward from Allah will have his past sins forgiven; he who prays during the night in Ramadan with faith and seeks his reward from Allah will have his past sins forgiven; and he who passes Lailat al Qadr in prayer with faith and seeks his reward from Allah will have his past sins forgiven*

Bukhari and Muslim

• *In Ramadan a reward or requital of a thing is multiplied by 700 times more than actually due.*

• *Two joys are prepared for him who observes the fast, the joy of breaking the fast and that of meeting his Lord.*

Bukhari and Muslim



# LAYLAT'UL QADR (THE NIGHT OF POWER)

Allah has given us, as a gift, some days and nights that are very special times in which believers pray to Him. Such occasions occur in Ramadan, particularly on the *Lailatul Qadr* (the Night of Power), which occurs during the last ten days of Ramadan.

It was on this night that the most important event on earth unfolded; after the Holy Qur'an had been preserved in the *Lawh-i Mahfuz* (Immutable Tablet), Gabriel descended with the blessed book to reveal it, upon Allah's command, to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

The Qur'an tells us of the importance of this Holy Night: "*Lailatul Qadr* is better than a thousand months" (Qur'an:97/3) This one night has greater value than 30,000 nights. The most authentic account of the occurrence of this Night indicates that it may occur on any one of the last ten odd-numbered nights of Ramadan.

The fact that the exact night is unknown reflects Allah's will in keeping it hidden. Indeed, the Prophet (pbuh) was prevented from telling us its precise time.

One day, the Messenger of Allah came out to tell his companions the exact night. On the way he saw two men arguing with each other. By the will of Allah, he (pbuh) forgot and only remembered later. Afterwards the Prophet (pbuh) was instructed not to divulge this information. "Had I been allowed," he once remarked, "I would have told you (of its exact time)." (Imam Ahmad)

However, Allah and His Messenger (pbuh) provided us with some signs of when it occurs. Allah Almighty describes the night as "... (one of) peace until the rise of the dawn." (Qur'an:97/5)

In various sayings, the Prophet (pbuh) describes the night as tranquil, and peaceful. The sun at sunrise appears reddish and without its normal blazing or sharp rays. The Prophet (pbuh) adds that "the angels of earth on that night of

Qadr will be more numerous than all the pebbles of the earth."

We should spend the last third of this night awake and ask for forgiveness from Allah. The Prophet (pbuh) warned us of the importance of such moments in the night: "Our Lord comes down to the lowest heaven during the last third of each night and announces: Whoever prays, I shall answer it. Whoever asks for something I shall grant it; and whoever seeks forgiveness, I shall forgive him." (Bukhari)

Abu Huraira narrated that the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said: "Whoever stands (in qiyam) on *Laylat ul-Qadr* out of faith and expectation (of Allah's reward), will have all of his previous sins forgiven." (Bukhari and Muslim)

## PRAYER FOR THE LAYLAT'UL QADR

2 rakah optional prayer should be read and in each rakah surah Ikhlas is to be read 7 times after surah Fatiha. After completing prayer, make repentance 70 times.

Then, this supplication is to be read.

سُبْحَانَ مَنْ هُوَ قَائِمٌ يَسْهَرُ سُبْحَانَ مَنْ هُوَ دَائِمٌ  
لَمْ يَزَلْ سُبْحَانَ مَنْ هُوَ حَافِظٌ لَا يَغْفُلُ سُبْحَانَ مَنْ هُوَ  
جَوَادٌ لَا يَنْحُلُ سُبْحَانَ مَنْ هُوَ رَحِيمٌ لَا يَعْجَلُ سُبْحَانَ  
اللَّهِ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ وَلَا حَوْلَ  
وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ الْعَلِيِّ الْعَظِيمِ. سُبْحَانَ يَا عَلِيمُ يَا عَظِيمُ  
اغْفِرْ لِي الذَّنْبَ الْعَظِيمَ.

Sayyidina Aisha reported that she asked the Prophet (pbuh), "O Messenger of Allah! If I knew which night was Laylat ul-Qadr, what should I say during it?" And he instructed her to say:

O Allah! You are forgiving, and you love forgiveness. So forgive me." (Ibn Majah)



# EID AL-FITR: OUR FEAST

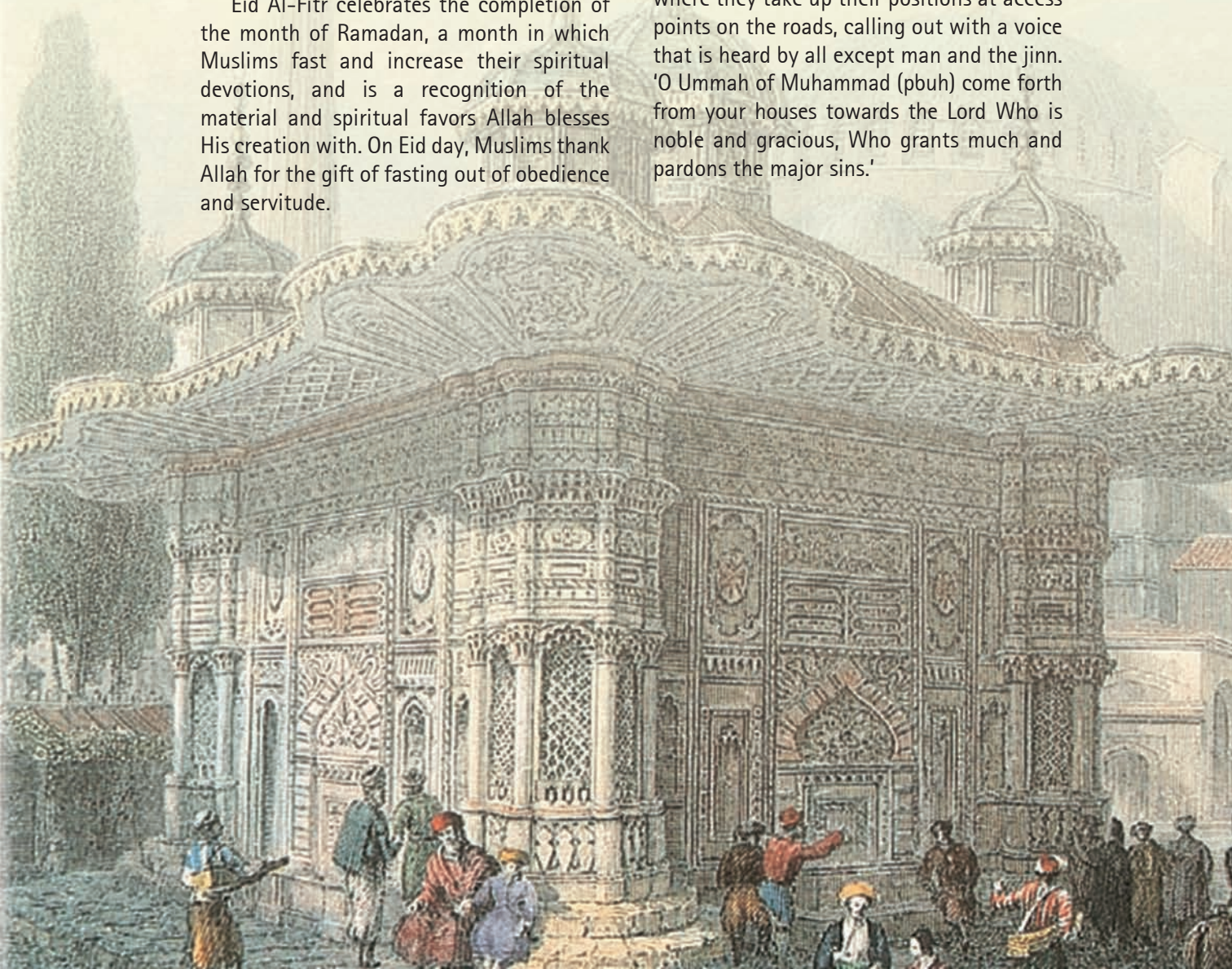
﴿ *For every people there is a feast and this is our feast.* ﴾

Prophet Muhammad

The word Eid is an Arabic word, the root meaning of which is 'that which comes back, time after time' and 'rejoicing.' Its particular usage in Islam for the two major holidays is because these two days are days of rejoicing.

Eid Al-Fitr celebrates the completion of the month of Ramadan, a month in which Muslims fast and increase their spiritual devotions, and is a recognition of the material and spiritual favors Allah blesses His creation with. On Eid day, Muslims thank Allah for the gift of fasting out of obedience and servitude.

In a hadith narrated by Ibn Abbas says that the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said: "The night of Eid Al-Fitr, the night that is called Laylat'ul Jaa'izah, (the night of prize giving), comes along. On the morning of the Eid, Allah sends down the Angels to the earth where they take up their positions at access points on the roads, calling out with a voice that is heard by all except man and the jinn. 'O Ummah of Muhammad (pbuh) come forth from your houses towards the Lord Who is noble and gracious, Who grants much and pardons the major sins.'





When people proceed towards the places for their Eid prayer, Allah says to the angels: 'What indeed is the reward of that servant who has rendered his services?' The angels reply, 'O Lord and Master, it is only right that he should receive his reward in full for his services.'

Allah then says, 'I call you as witness, O My Angels, that for having fasted during the month of Ramadan, and for having stood before Me in prayer at night, I have granted My pleasure to them and have granted them forgiveness. O My servants ask now of Me, for I swear by My greatness, that whatsoever you shall beg of Me this day in this assembly of yours for the needs of the Hereafter, I shall grant you; and whatsoever you shall ask for worldly needs, I shall look at you favourably. As long as you obey My commands, I shall cover your faults. By My Honour and My Greatness do I swear that I shall never disgrace you among the evil-doing ones or the disbelievers. Depart now from here, you are forgiven. You have pleased Me and I am pleased with you.'

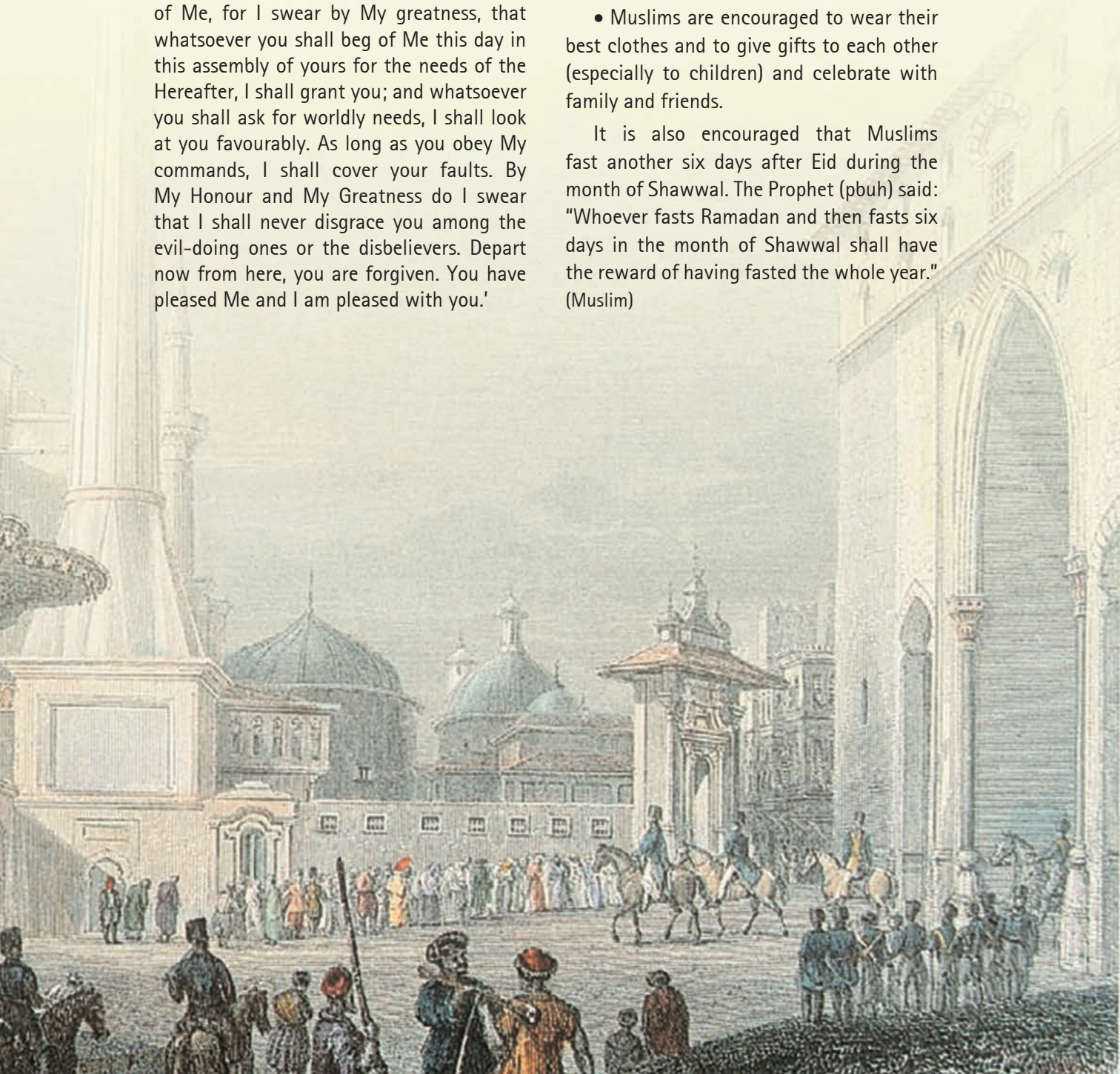
Upon seeing this great reward bestowed by Allah upon the Ummah of Muhammad (pbuh) on the day of Eid Al-Fitr the angels are greatly pleased and happy."

- Muslims start the day by having a bath after dawn on the Eid day, then go to the short Eid prayer and sermon that takes place early in the morning.

- On the Eid day, it is especially recommended to give to charity; the best time to do so is before going to the mosque or masjid in the morning.

- Muslims are encouraged to wear their best clothes and to give gifts to each other (especially to children) and celebrate with family and friends.

It is also encouraged that Muslims fast another six days after Eid during the month of Shawwal. The Prophet (pbuh) said: "Whoever fasts Ramadan and then fasts six days in the month of Shawwal shall have the reward of having fasted the whole year." (Muslim)





# SUPPLICATIONS FOR RAMADAN

MAHMUD SAMI EFENDI

## • THE PRAYER FOR THE INTENTION TO FAST

وَبِصَوْمٍ غَدٍ نَّوَيْتُ مِنْ شَهْرِ رَمَضَانَ

wa bisawmi ghadin nawaytu min shahri  
Ramadan

I intent to keep fast today for the month of  
Ramadan

## • THE SUPPLICATION FOR BREAKING THE FAST

The main rule in breaking the fast is to remember  
why you have been fasting and what you hope to  
obtain by the fast.

There are several prayers (*dua*) for breaking the  
fast which remind us of this reality, one of which is:

اَللّٰهُمَّ لَكَ صُمْتُ وَبِكَ اٰمَنْتُ وَعَلَيْكَ تَوَكَّلْتُ  
وَعَلَى رِزْقِكَ اَفْطَرْتُ

Allahumma laka sumtu wa bike amantu wa alaika  
tawakkaltu wa ala rizqika aftartu

O Allah! I fasted for You and I believe in You,  
and I break my fast with Your Sustenance, so forgive  
me my past and present wrong actions. O Lord of the  
Worlds!

## • THE VIRTUES OF THE TIME OF SAHAR

(the last third of the night)

Abu Huraira narrated that the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said, "Our Lord, the Blessed, the Superior, comes down every night to the heaven nearest to us during the last third of the night, and he says, '(Is there anyone) who invokes Me (demands anything from Me), so that I may respond to his invocation? (Is there anyone) who asks Me for something, so that I may grant him his request? (Is there anyone) who seeks My forgiveness, so that I may forgive him?'" (Bukhari, Tahajjud, 14)

This hadith indicates that the last third of the night is the time when Allah accepts our invocations.

"In the middle of the night the doors of the nearest heaven are open. And a caller says, 'Is there anyone supplicating? It will be answered. Is there anyone wanting something? It will be given. Is there anyone who is in trouble? They will be saved.'

There is no Muslim who makes a supplication or who wants something whom Allah does not answer, except for the inveterate sinner." (Ibn Hanbal, Musnad, 4/217)

"There is an hour each night when if any Muslim were to ask for something in this world or the next it will be granted if they catch the specific moment. And this occurs every night." (Tirmidhi, Witr, 16)

"The best hours are the last part of the night." (Ibn Hanbal, Musnad, 4/385)

"There are three kinds of people who are protected from Satan and his soldiers:

1) those who remember Allah much during the night and the day

2) those who pray for forgiveness during the hours before daybreak

3) those who weep from the fear of Allah." (Imam Suyuti, Al Jami'us Saghir)

## • THE SUPPLICATION OF TAHAJJUD (PRE-DAWN PRAYER)

اللَّهُمَّ لَكَ الْحَمْدُ أَنْتَ قَيِّمُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ  
وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ وَلَكَ الْحَمْدُ أَنْتَ نُورُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ  
وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ وَلَكَ الْحَمْدُ أَنْتَ مَلِكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ  
وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ وَلَكَ الْحَمْدُ أَنْتَ الْحَقُّ وَوَعْدُكَ حَقٌّ  
وَلِقَاؤُكَ حَقٌّ وَقَوْلُكَ حَقٌّ وَالْجَنَّةُ حَقٌّ وَالنَّارُ حَقٌّ وَالنَّبِيُّونَ  
حَقٌّ وَمُحَمَّدٌ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ حَقٌّ وَالسَّاعَةُ حَقٌّ  
اللَّهُمَّ لَكَ أَسْلَمْتُ وَبِكَ آمَنْتُ وَعَلَيْكَ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَإِلَيْكَ  
أَنْبَتُ وَبِكَ خَاصَمْتُ وَإِلَيْكَ حَاكَمْتُ فَاعْفُ عَنِّي مَا  
قَدَّمْتُ وَمَا أَخَّرْتُ وَمَا أَسْرَرْتُ وَمَا أَعْلَنْتُ أَنْتَ الْمُقَدِّمُ  
وَأَنْتَ الْمُؤَخِّرُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ وَلَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ

Narrated by Ibn Abbas: "Whenever the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) got up at night to offer the *tahajjud* prayer he (pbuh) used to say:

"O Allah! All praise is for You: You are the Holder of the heavens and the earth and whatever is in them. All praise is for You: You are the light of the heavens and the earth and whatever is in them. All praise is for You: You are the king of the heavens and the earth and whatever is in them. All praise is for You: You are the Truth, and Your promise is the Truth, and meeting with You is the Truth. Your words are the truth, and Paradise is the Truth, and Hell is the Truth, and all the Prophets are the Truth. And Muhammad is the Truth, and the Hour (of the Day of Resurrection) is the Truth. O Allah, I surrender to You, I believe in You and depend on You and repent to You and with Your help I argue (with my opponents, the disbelievers) and I take You as a judge (to judge between us). Please forgive me my past and future sins, and whatever I concealed and whatever I reveal. You are the One Who makes (some people) advanced and some backward, there is none who has the right to be worshiped but You." (Bukhari)

# THE INNER MEANING OF PRAYER ACCORDING TO RUMI

Rumi, by stating that a prayer is form of consultation with Almighty Allah, reminds us that we should be in a state of spiritual contemplation when praying.

When a servant of Allah says "Allahuakbar" at the beginning of the prayer, he should abandon the material world, like a sheep being sacrificed.

He should feel, 'O Allah! We sacrifice ourselves for you.' When a sheep is sacrificed, it also says: 'Allahuakbar'. Therefore we should utter the same *dhikr* 'Allahuakbar' in order to kill our *nafs* (ego).

We stand in rows as if we are standing before Allah on the Day of Judgment. While we are standing (*qiyam*), we are reminded of how Allah will address us on the Day of Judgment. Allah will say: "What have you brought?" "What deeds have you performed during the life time that I gave you? Where have you spent all your physical energy? Where have you used your eyes? Where have used your intelligence? What good have you done? What have you done with your hands and feet?"

After hearing thousands of troubling questions, the believer is ashamed of these questions and does not have the power to stand anymore, thus he bows (*ruku*). He starts remembering Allah while bowing. Allah says to him again:

"Raise your head; answer your Lord's questions properly."

Thus he stands up again and stand before his Lord. He says "*semi Allahu limen hamidah*" and then prostrates. The order of Allah comes again,

"Raise your head from prostration, think of your deeds, your actions."

Again the ashamed servant raises his head. He sits a while before the next prostration, then he prostrates again, ashamed. Allah calls to him again and says:

"Raise your head up and give account of yourself."

The servant sits on the ground. Allah asks: "I have given you blessings. Where is your thanksgiving? Show me your profit from the capital I have given you."

Finally the servant salutes, turning their head to the right side, in expectation of the intercession of the prophets, particularly that of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). He says: "O Exalted Ones! Intercede for me, for I am in trouble, help me."

The Prophets reply: "The time of testing has passed. You should have performed these tasks in the world. Now, everyone fears in their true selves."

Upon this, the servant turns his head to his left, expecting help from their friends and kin. But these too reply: "Do not expect anything from us. Who do you think we are? We too are struggling with our account."

When the servant realizes that no help will come from either side, he starts to pray and say to his Lord:

"O My Lord! There is no hope for me from others. You are the only One who can help me. You are the First and the Last!"

Thus, the daily prayers must be carried out with this wisdom and with such contemplation.

Allah says in the Qur'an "prostrate and come closer"; we should pray and answer His call in the proper way. The physical condition of the prayer should be completed with the ablution, and the internal condition of the prayer is completed with harmony.

Allah says in the Qur'an: "Successful indeed are the believers, who are humble in their prayers." (Qur'an: 23/1-2)

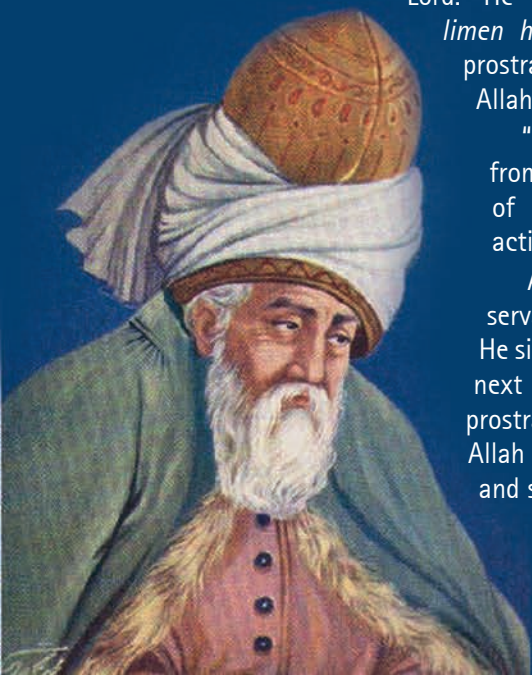
When a prayer is read with humility and harmony, it becomes a spiritual shield for us. Thus, it is stated in the Qur'an:

"Lo! Worship preserveth from lewdness and iniquity..." (Qur'an: 29/45)

In the Qur'an it is said to those whose prayers are far removed from tranquility and spiritual harmony:

"Ah, woe unto worshippers, who are heedless of their prayers." (Qur'an: 107/4-5)

(Mathnawi III / 174 - 2141)





# THOSE WHO TRAVELED

*"The believers whose lives Allah has purchased are those who repent to Allah, who worship Him, who praise Him, who go out in Allah's Cause, who bow down, who prostrate themselves... And give glad tidings to the believers"*

(Qur'an: 9/112)

# (FOR) ALLAH

...السَّائِحُونَ...



Traveling for the sake of learning, according to Islam, is of such a high value that any time a Muslim is offered the opportunity to do just that, they should act on it instinctively. This summer that is exactly what happened for a group of sisters from all over the world. These sisters in Islam, many not knowing each other in the past, came across oceans and far tracts of land to fulfill the call of the verse to travel for the sake of learning wisdom and in order to open their ears to the call of Allah. For ten days they trusted in Allah alone to fulfill their needs and they put their daily lives on hold, so that they could learn the knowledge of the heart, and take it home to their families and friends.

From July 1<sup>st</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup>, these sisters lived, learned, traveled, cried and laughed together. They came from Hungary, America, England, Russia, Spain, Belgium, France, as well as across Turkey to listen to a series of *sohbets* (lessons) on many religious topics by various scholars, and to visit places of extremely great spiritual benefit. All of the places were of great spiritual benefit and importance to the study of the heart because

of the level of *taqwa* (piety) and *ikhlas* (sincerity) of the people with whom these places were associated. Each place was a reminder of the person whom a Muslim should strive to imitate in order to be successful on the last day. They came to fulfill the hadith of the Prophet (pbuh):

Narrated by Abu Umamah: A man said, "Apostle of Allah, allow tourism for me." The Prophet (pbuh) replied, "The tourism of my people is striving for the sake of Allah, the Exalted."

The first breakfast of the group was enjoyed in the rose garden of the Aziz Mahmud Hudayi Mosque. Aziz Mahmud Hudayi was a spiritual guide and his works and words act as teacher for the group; this garden quickly became the spiritual center for the rest of the journey. During the breakfast the group learned the story of Aziz Mahmud's life, about his coming to be a servant to Allah, and even a few stories of his continued service. In addition, they learned about the *wakif* (foundation) that today bears his name and the benefit it is still gives to the community, even so long after his death. After that they set out on a journey of complete spiritual emersion.

One of the first places visited was the Eyup District of Istanbul and the Eyup Sultan Mosque. It was a day of enjoying the spiritual energies of the burial place of one the most well-known *sahaba* (Companions), Abu Ayyub Al-Ansar. He was the *sahaba* at whose house the blessed Messenger of Allah stayed when he made his *hijr* (emigration) to Madina from Mecca. In the spirit of the Sunnah, it only seemed fitting that the first visit of this group would also be to this blessed person, the first host of the Prophet (pbuh).



The group was guided through the mosque accompanied by the story of the events which brought Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) to Abu Ayyub's home in Madina, the reason for his burial so far from Medina, and the more modern events that took place at this site. They were awestruck to see the Footprint of the Prophet, which is housed in the tomb, as well as some other artifacts that belonged to Abu Ayyub Al-Ansar, the revered host of the Prophet.

From the Mosque the group went on to visit two other places of high spiritual value. The first place was the cemetery at the foot of the Pierre Loti Café, which is the final resting place of many of the *sahaba* who came along on the first attempt to conquer Istanbul by the Muslim army, as well as many *Awliya* (saints). Pierre Loti Café is well known by tourists for its view of the Golden Horn.

Another place visited on this day was the very walls of Istanbul where the blood of so many martyrs and *sahaba* had been spilled for the sake of Allah. It was here that they visited the turbes (graves) of Abu Sheybetul Hudri, the milk brother of the Prophet Muhammed (pbuh), Hamidullah Al-Ansar and Ahmet Al-Ansar, the son and grandson of Abu Ayyub Al-Ansar, who also came during the first journey. Also near the walls they visited the Masjid Al-Kab, the tomb of Kab ibn Malik.

On the second day the journey took on a more grand feeling. The group was ushered in and around the large mosques of the Golden Horn, the Fatih Mosque, the Suleymaniye Mosque, and the Blue Mosque with its six beautiful minarets. Again, the history and spiritual energy of these places carried the group away to distant times

which are still so close to the heart of every Muslim. It was because of this very spirit that one of the ladies in the group remarked, pointing at the tourists, "they come...millions every year... to see the places built for the sake of Allah, and inspired by the love of Qur'an. Do they understand the power that built these?" Surely anyone can understand the level of spirituality that was reached.



**BLUE MOSQUE**



**SULAYMANIYE MOSQUE**





## AT THE CASTLE OF YOROS, BOSPHORUS

After a couple of days of visiting smaller tombs of saints, and sitting in on some very interesting *sohbets*, the group went on another journey to the past. They went a little further back in time by visiting the burial place of Yusha (Joshua), the aid of the Prophet Moses. His burial place is well renowned as a place of great peace and calm, and it was both of these on the day of the visit. Afterwards they made a visit to the meetings of two seas, the edge of the Bosphorus and the Black Sea, the Castle of Yoros at Anadolu Kavagi.

Here the group was reminded of the story of Khidr and Prophet Moses written in the Qur'an:

*"Now tell them the story of Khidr to whom Allah has given special knowledge. The Prophet Musa was asked to go to him and learn from him. When Moses set out to meet him at an appointed place, he said to his young servant: 'I will not give up my journey until I reach the junction of two seas or until I have spent ages in travel.'" (Qur'an:18/60)*

This was the very knowledge that the group had come to learn! It was as if, in a spiritual way, the group had come to live this verse of the Qur'an. This added to the spiritual depth of the journey, which had already brought everyone to a closeness that one could only share with a life-long companion. The entire group remarked on the significance of this spot in light of this understanding.

The next day the group embarked on the greatest leg of the journey. They boarded a bus in the wee hours of morning to go to Bursa. Bursa is the founding city of the great Ottoman Empire, an empire that was based on the morals, principals and spirit of Islam. Bursa is the final earthly resting place of many of the leaders of the early years of the empire. These were leaders who used the Qur'an and the Sunnah as their guide for life, and governing. These leaders used Prophet Muhammed (pbuh) as their spiritual guide, and reflected their love for him in many ways.



During the course of the day, the ladies visited the Yildirim Mosque, the Green Mosque, the Emir Sultan Mosque, and of course the Ulu Mosque, the home of some of the most famous Qur'anic calligraphy in the world. The Ulu Mosque is full of spiritual energy because of this calligraphy, so much so that it is widely believed that Khidr still visits the Mosque twice a day!

As the close of the program approached, the ladies finished off their visit with some time for bonding and sharing. A time of quiet reflection and group discussion occurred about the events that had passed during the trip and what wisdom had been gained from all of it.

May Allah guide those whom He pulled from ignorance and heedlessness to a place that is perfect and pure. May Allah stay with those whom he called and those who cared for them while they answered this call. May Allah reward those who responded like the *Ansar*, giving freely of their time, property and heart, feeling love for His sake alone.



# TO *A* JOURNEY FROM ATHEISM SLAM

*Norma Nowell*

*I took Shahadah  
when my heart  
was sure and I  
was so incredibly  
and unbelievably  
happy that tears  
were streaming  
down my face.*

I remember that at an early age I was disappointed to discover there was no such person as Father Christmas. Christmas is of course the Christian celebration of the birth of Christ and it is also when children are given gifts allegedly from Father Christmas or Santa Claus. This disappointment was associated with God, because for me if people pretended about Santa why should I believe them about the birth of Jesus Christ or God?

At around the age of nine I took myself to the local Baptist church to Sunday school and was also unimpressed that a God who was all powerful, mighty and who was everywhere would have a son by a woman.

In my middle to late teenage years my physics teacher explained about 'the big bang' theory and  $E=mc^2$ . I was thus convinced there was no God and that all existence was as a result of massing energy. Of course, I was still slightly troubled by the question of the source of the energy ....

For many years I felt secure in my atheism and I would happily discuss my theories and proofs of the non-existence of God. But one day I was walking with a scientist friend who ruffled my vision when he told me that science had proved that the speed of light was not a constant. This had been a mainstay of my so-called proof that all matter derived from energy. But again, I managed to gloss over that quake in the foundations of my atheism.

This state of ignorance continued until at the not so tender age of 37 I was studying for professional accountancy qualifications at Leeds Metropolitan University. There I met and was befriended by Muslims in the form of Waleed and Faiza. We were having a discussion and both Faiza and Waleed remarked that they would never marry anyone who did not believe in God. This made me think. I respected both of them for their intelligence and intellect. How could they believe



*Christianity had been my starting point, though it had failed to satisfy me when I was younger and seeking to belong. I felt it was clear that with the doctrine of The Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost the Oneness was not there*

in God? I wanted to know, but it appeared to me that faith and belief was a personal thing so I did not expect to gain any insight from asking them further. I therefore looked again at my own belief and how my proofs still held up.

For many days, in the course of my daily walks to and from my studies, I sifted through my personal 'proofs' and recalled the many instances that I felt were relevant to my views. Then I pondered my own philosophy about how the world and creation fits together. I had experienced some telepathy in my life and had had a 'visit' from my father at the time of his death with no prior understanding that he was dead. These incidences were phenomena that were as yet unexplained by science but I was confident they would be. They indicated to me a connection outside of our normal senses and thus the philosophy I arrived at was that we are all connected in some way. This is as human to human, and human to animal and also to the earth and plants, with the air and space, making us all one. If we were one then this **One** had to be all knowing as it would need to regulate and understand itself. Rather shakily I understood there had to be a God as my own home-spun philosophy showed me.

Having acknowledged, if somewhat grudgingly, the existence of God, I then had to know how to deal with this. I needed to know which of the existing religions fit my philosophy, if any. Once again I pondered the approaches of the mainstream religions as far as my limited understanding and experience allowed me.

My understanding was simplistic, but I used

my instincts to help guide me. Christianity had been my starting point, though it had failed to satisfy me when I was younger and seeking to belong. I felt it was clear that with the doctrine of The Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost the Oneness was not there.

Judaism was not a religion I knew too much about, but I did know that it was fairly exclusive and my philosophy was that everyone and everything should be encompassed, so that did not fit the bill.

Buddhism was a fit in many ways, but I felt it was lacking in practicality. We had to work and live in the real world with a basic need to kill animals for food.

Islam was unknown to me so I asked my Muslim friends. I thus learned about the oneness of Allah, and His creation, His books and how it was possible for anyone to become Muslim. I also learned about having respect for creation, the ritual prayers, fasting for benefit, and the social order of following an Islamic way of life. Everything I heard fit my home-spun philosophy.

Thus, I understood that there was One God and Islam was the religion.

My own philosophical view of the whole of creation cannot compare to the complete Reality but it served as a signpost towards the light.

I took Shahadah when my heart was sure and I was so incredibly and unbelievably happy that tears were streaming down my face. I was given my first copy of the Qur'an in English and Arabic. That was on Sunday 16 October 1994 in Newcastle upon Tyne...





## AL-MUTAKABBIR

He Who Reveals His Greatness in Everything

「SARAH NUR」

Allah describes His greatness through examples in the Qur'an.

When Prophet Moses (pbuh) requested "My Lord, show me Yourself so that I may look at You!"

Allah replied: "You will not see Me, but look at the mountain. If it remains firm in its place, then you will see Me."

The rest of the account is related, as follows:

... But when His Lord manifested Himself to the mountain, He crushed it flat and Moses fell unconscious to the ground. When he regained consciousness, he said: "Glory be to You!..."

(Qur'an:7/143)

When Prophet Abraham (pbuh) said: "My Lord, show me how You bring the dead to life," Allah replied: "Take four birds and tame them to turn to thee. Then put a portion of them on each mountain and call to them; they will come rushing to you. Know that Allah is Almighty, All-Wise." (Qur'an:2/260)

In this way, Allah showed Abraham His greatness.

Allah told Prophet Lot (pbuh) to leave his city early in the morning with the believers and not to look back. That morning, He destroyed the unbelieving nation and rescued Prophet Lot (pbuh).

Allah made the fire coolness and peace for Prophet Abraham (pbuh). By the hands of Prophet Jesus (pbuh), He healed the blind and brought the dead to life.

In the time of Prophet Moses (pbuh), He parted the sea and drowned the Pharaoh's army. This is how Allah manifests His greatness and part of His infinite power.

Allah openly reveals His greatness and power at every moment and in every incident. At dawn, He sends a hurricane toward those who feel attached with greed to this life of the world, or He turns their cities upside down and makes them uninhabitable. In this way, Allah strips such people of their possessions and goods.

He submerges an entire city by pouring heavy rain upon it, or ruins it by sending a great earthquake.

The skies and the ground, the wind and the rain, all of which act under His surveillance, bring unseen destruction to that city, and its people witness Allah's overwhelming power. No doubt, Allah is Al-Mutakabbir.

In the face of His power and strength, no one can be arrogant. He is the sole authority before Whom all will prostrate.



## THE VALUE OF TIME IN ISLAM (II)

### ‘The Sufi Is The Child Of The Moment’

┌ RABIA BRODBECK ┐

**J**ohn Arabi gives us further suggestions: *"After you perform your morning prayer, stay with your Lord until sunrise, and after your afternoon prayer stay in His Presence until sunset. These are two periods of time when spiritual powers and enlightenment flow in abundance. There is great virtue and merit in performing extra worship consisting of twenty cycles of prayer between the afternoon and evening prayers and between the evening and night prayers...."*

He continues: *"Do not sleep until you are unable to stay awake. Do not eat until you are hungry. Dress only to cover your body and to protect it from cold and from heat...."*

Needless to say this is highly educational advice!

Some of the greatest saints of Islam have said the following: *"The Sufi is the child of the moment"* and *"Time is a sword; if you do not cut it, it cuts you."* And our blessed master has advised us: *"Part of the excellence of a man is paying no attention to that which does not concern him."*

Proper behavior means spending time doing meaningful, beneficial actions. Therefore, the faults of other people should be of no concern to us; we should be concerned only with our own imperfections. We have to use our time with great respect, and give it the utmost care and value. This means giving the entire concentration of our mind and heart towards living the moment and trying to increase our sensitivity to the

sacredness of the moment. The Qur'an states; *"He is every moment at work."* Such people are His beloved saints who witness the ongoing affairs of Allah with every moment. They feel and live in His Presence ceaselessly, without interruption; they are aware of His Gaze. These are the Sufis, the sons of the moment, who see without veils. They have cleared the mirror of their hearts where the divine secrets of Allah are reflected in full splendor. They are able to gain the vision of the values of Allah's bounties and blessings. They have mastered the mystery of spiritual poverty. Their heart is aware in perfect consciousness. They are in constant prayer and remembrance. This state of the beloved of Allah is called *ihsan*, sincerity, the highest characteristic of a believer.

As our blessed Prophet (pbuh) told us when asked by the Archangel Gabriel, *"What is divine benevolence?"* He answered: *"To pray and glorify Allah as if you are in His Presence; as if you see him. For if you are unable to see Him, He certainly sees you."* They will experience constant awe, wonderment and admiration and will sense the beauty of the moment and feel the tender words of our beloved master who often said: *"O Lord I cannot count Your blessings"*

The leader of the Gnostics, Sayyidina Ali, said: *"Your cure is within you, but you do not know, your illness is from you, but you do not see. You are the 'Clarifying Book' through whose letters the manifest becomes the hidden. You suppose*





*We should give  
the entire  
concentration of our mind  
and heart towards living  
the moment and try to  
increase our sensitivity  
to the sacredness of the  
moment*

*that you are a small body but the greatest world unfolds within you. You do not need what is outside yourself if you only would reflect upon your self, but you do not reflect."*

In the Qur'an it says: *"What you seek is in your own self. Will you not then see?"*

We are the key and the door for personal salvation, but at the same time we are the hindrance, the obstacle. The cage of existence, our body, prevents us from spiritual evolution, but at the same time it is our means to reach the One and Only. In other words, through our temporal existence we can find our true existence. The human being can realize eternity through their limited existence; through our self we can reach selflessness. This means, if we can overcome the material self we gain access to the true, spiritual self; we cure ourselves with our own selves. We have to see the world as a plain of the Hereafter! The fruit of eternity and divine harmony can only be earned through the struggle of daily life. Our blessed master said; *"Struggling makes one witness the Sacred Essence."*

This principle is especially effective in terms of time. With the correct use of time, we can reach timelessness; respectively, through the utmost precision in time, we can transcend time and place and reach the realms of infinity. This is the treasure of the religion of Islam. It opens all the doors for the spiritual fulfillment of life on earth.

The religion of Islam is the call to perfection. Its method and doctrine give the prescription for sainthood and give the agency to human beings to carry out Allah's will on earth. Therefore, the

religion of Islam teaches the wisdom of time like no other religion. Islam reveals the perfect order and total measures of all creation, the furthest reaches of outer space, the mysteries of the universe and the furthest reaches of inner space. All of creation, that is the material universes, is divided into micro-cosmos; the human being and the macro-cosmos, the universe, are governed by the eternal laws of Allah the Highest. All creation demonstrates perfect order. As stated in the Qur'an; *"It is not given to the sun to catch up with the moon, nor can the night outstrip the day. Each swims along in (its appointed) orbit."* (Qur'an:36/40)

In order to establish harmony within ourselves, in order to grow towards spiritual maturity, we need to conform ourselves to the divine order of the cosmos. To submit towards the eternal laws of nature requires subtle guidance. Therefore the All Glorious One gave us a miraculous prescription to reach the ultimate goal, the Sacred Law, the Shariah. This should be understood as the foundation for the spiritual realization for the human being; within it lies the whole inner wealth of the religion. A believer's life without the pillars of the religion is like a house without walls. A religion without this source of strength degenerates to a life-philosophy.

Our Prophet was lifted up to the highest station of all human beings, but Allah sent him to perfect the lowest level of human evolution. He became the Sultan of the Shariah because he was sent to perfect good behavior and he was sent as a mercy to the whole world. The Prophet was sent to teach nothing other than the sacredness of Shariah, because the way of human purification

ends in simple conformity with the Sacred Law. Our blessed master therefore represents the illumination of our earthly existence! As Sheikh Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi says:

*"Sainthood is earned through works of the Sacred Law, not those of thinking." "True Sufism consists of the five prayers and the expectation of death." "The way of perfection ends paradoxically in pure and simple conformity with the Law."*

The ritual prayer, fasting, charity, service to the needy and the pilgrimage are all designed to exercise our sensitivity to the unseen worlds, the divine realms. Being preoccupied with the world in superficial occupations, sensual pleasures, excessive sleep, bad habits or laziness distances us from sacred realms. We have to cut the attachments to the world, like intense consumerism and idle occupations, and reduce eating, sleeping and talking.

This can be realized by being attentive to how we spend our time. Islam gives perfect measures for all believers in how to spend their time within the 24-hour routine, in both spiritual and material matters. The use of our time has to be in accordance with a spiritual training, namely fasting from the activities of the world and increasing the activities of the Hereafter. Increase our worship, remembrance and service towards our Lord and decrease the satisfactions of the lower self and we will reveal qualities like patience, peace, contentment, tranquility, endurance and silence in our hearts.

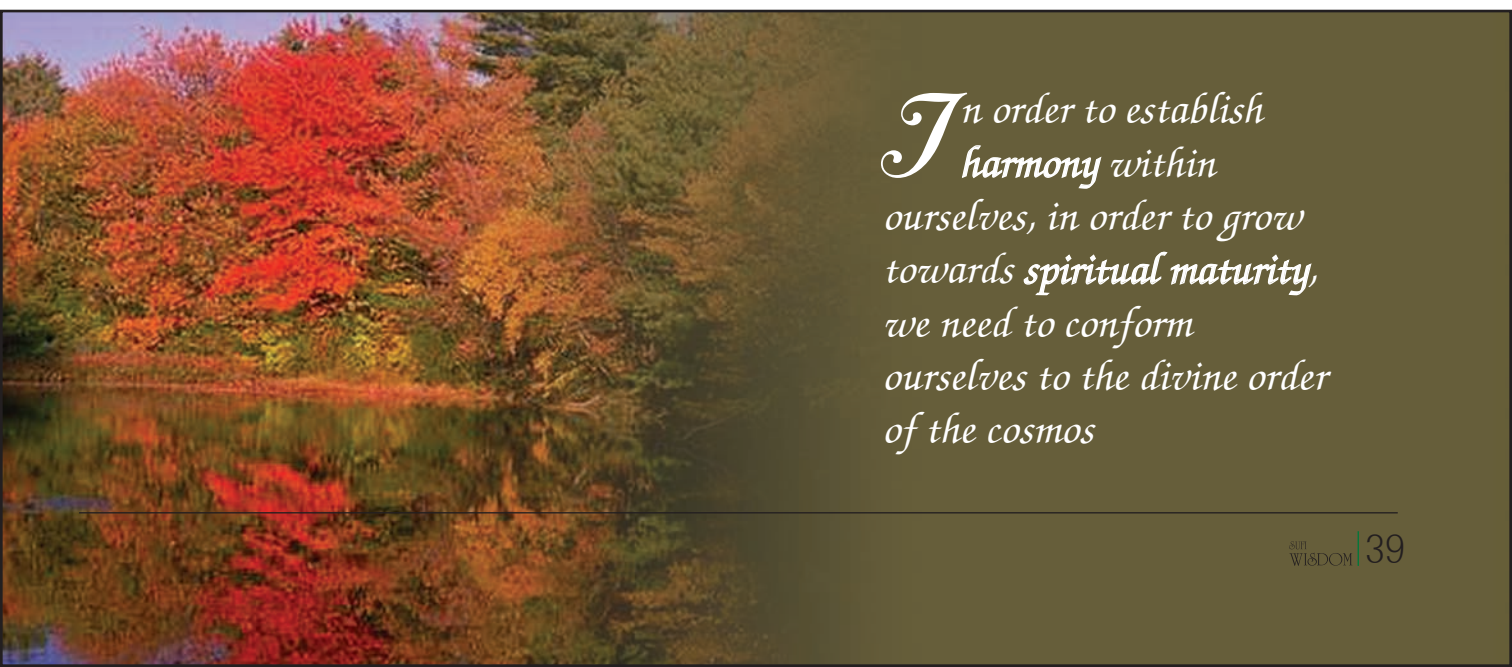
Prophet Muhammad was asked: *"What is worldliness?"* He answered *"Everything that makes you heedless and causes you to forget your Lord."* Again, our blessed master said; *"Whoever prefers*

*the world over the Hereafter is made to suffer three things; an unbearable load that is never lightened; poverty that never becomes richer, and an ambition, a hunger that is never satisfied."* A wise man said: *"True comfort is freedom from the desires of the lower self. Your prison is your own lower self. As soon as you escape from it, you will live in the comfort of eternity."* The great saint Abd al- Qadir al-Jilani gives us the following advice: *"Spiritual culture, Sufism, is not acquired through long conversations, but through going hungry and giving up things that are familiar and pleasant."*

Submission is the key to the secrets that lie between Allah the Highest and human beings. Therefore, without submission to the sacred law, the Sunnah and the hadith of the Prophet there can be no results! Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said: *"If you love Allah, follow me, then Allah will love you."*

If we obey wholeheartedly, with the submission of a loving slave, we will surpass the perfection of obedience and reach the perfection of love!

When we meet Allah's contentment, we will arrive at the door of His intimate conversations. Such lovers are waiting impatiently after having performed one ritual prayer for the next one to come. This state of eager expectation for the next 'rendezvous' is the greatest sign of love. They are waiting to be led into the Divine Presence of their beloved Lord; when they are praying they have reached the ultimate wisdom of a believer and they are able to stand in front of the Light of Allah!



*In order to establish  
harmony within  
ourselves, in order to grow  
towards spiritual maturity,  
we need to conform  
ourselves to the divine order  
of the cosmos*





# PEARLS OF

*Keep yourselves far from envy,  
because it eats up and takes away  
good actions, like the fire that eats up  
and burns wood.*

*Prophet Muhammad*

*All your suffering comes from  
desiring things that cannot be  
had. Stop desiring and you won't  
suffer.*

*Rumi*

*Knowledge is of two kinds: that  
which is absorbed and that which is  
heard. And that which is heard does  
not profit if it is not absorbed.*

*Imam Ali*

*Being on the way of Allah  
means gaining the hearts of others,  
not hurting them.*

*Osman Nuri Efendi*

*Reflection is the lamp of the heart;  
if it departs the heart will have no  
light.*

*Imam Al-Haddad*

*Be with Allah as if there were no  
creation, and be with the creation as  
if you had no ego.*

*Shaykh Abdul Qadir Jilani*

# WISDOM

*The life of this world and the Hereafter, in the heart of a person, are like the two scales of a balance, when the one becomes heavier the other becomes lighter.*

*Amr bin Abdullah*

*The world is the farmland of the hereafter. Whoever plants good in it will harvest joy, and whoever plants evil in it will harvest regret.*

*Prophet Muhammad*

*Taking pains to remove the pains of others is the true essence of generosity.*

*Abu Bakr*

*Patience is to dwell in tribulation with the best of conduct.*

*Ibn Ata'illah*

*There is nothing that deserves to be imprisoned more than the tongue.*

*Abdullah bin Masud*

*If you are looking for a friend who is faultless, you will be friendless.*

*Rumi*

*If someone's state does not lift you up, and his words do not lead you to Allah - then do not keep his company.*

*Ibn Ata'illah*

*The sign of Allah's love is to bestow three attributes on His lover:*

*A generosity like that of the sea, a kindness like that of the sun, and a humility like that of earth.*

*Bayazid Bistami*



# PREPARATIONS FOR THE MONTH RAMADAN

「MARYAM SCHOLTEN」

On my way home, I hear the sound of the azan "Allahu Akbar Allahu Akbar..." coming from the mosque in our district; it's time for the 'Asr prayer. Looking at the mosque, I am surprised to see that the grey dome-shaped roof of the mosque has different colors today. Looking more carefully I see that many carpets are lying on the roof and drying in the sun. Yes of course, we are in the month Rajab and in this month many preparations for the month of Ramadan are made.

In Turkey, where I have lived for 10 years the women in particular are very active during the months of Rajab and Shaban. They voluntarily help to clean the mosque of their district, in addition they clean their houses because of the many guests they will receive during Ramadan.

They also are very busy preparing food for this holy month. For example they make *yufka*. 'Yufka' is a sort of thin pancake baked on a hot plate. Last week we were baking these yufkas with some women; we sell them to earn some money for the Qur'an school in our district.

We do this work only for the sake of Allah, not to make money for ourselves. For this reason we take great care to perform this work with *Adab*, so we all perform it with *wudu*, we talk little, we do not delay our prayers in spite of all the work.

While we were cooking these yufkas something very extraordinary happened. A friend put a thin dough slice on the hotplate and suddenly we heard a hissing noise coming from the dough. We looked and we saw that something was written on the dough. It looked like the name Allah, in Arabic.

We were all perplexed and very silent. The friend carefully took the yufka of and lay it on a plate and put on a new dough slice.

We were waiting anxiously and YES..... the same hissing sound; this time it looked like the name of our Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) The third time it looked like a *besmele*. This went on for about ten minutes.

We were all very quietly and grateful, feeling that Allah was very close to us; it felt like He was with us all the time. Then suddenly a woman from outside of our group came in and talked in a very noisy voice and immediately the hissing sound stopped..... May those blessed yufka fill our stomachs and hearts with the blessings of Allah!

Fasting in the month Ramadan is something very special for almost every Muslim, whether they practice Islam or not. It is amazing, Muslims who do not actually not practice Islam still fast during Ramadan and come to the mosque to pray the voluntary *tarawih* prayers. I call such people 'Ramadan Muslims'. That is why the mosques are full during the nights of the Ramadan. It is proof of the words of our Prophet (pbuh):

"When the month of Ramadan starts, the

gates of heaven are opened and the gates of hell are closed and the devils are chained."

The devils are chained, but our *nafs*, our ego, is still active. When I asked some so-called Ramadan Muslims: "These *tarawih* prayers which you pray- may Allah bless you- are voluntary prayers. Are you also going to pray the 5 daily compulsory prayers?"

They answered evasively: "Let's see, Insh'Allah".


I continue: "But what do you think of high school students who only follow the art and music lessons, paying no attention to mathematics, physics or English?"

They answer: "Such students are not acting logically and wisely; they will never get their diplomas or a job to earn money."

I respond: "So please, be logical or wise too and start to pray the 5 daily prayers, because with them you will also earn more blessings in this world and in the Hereafter..."

May we Muslims be obedient to Allah's order to pray our 5 daily prayers and fast and pray the *Tarawih* prayers during the month Ramadan and may we receive many blessings!

Amen!



Muslims who do not actually practice Islam still fast during Ramadan and come to the mosque to pray *tarawih* prayers. I call such people 'Ramadan Muslims'





# A SINCERE SERVANT OF ALLAH

*I*t was narrated that in the days that Prophet Moses wandered with the Bani Israel in the desert an intense drought befell them. Together, they raised their hands towards the heavens, praying for the blessed rain to come. Then, to the astonishment of Moses and all those watching, the few scattered clouds that were in the sky vanished, the heat poured down, and the drought intensified.

It was revealed to Moses that there was a sinner amongst the tribe of Bani Israel who had disobeyed Allah for more than forty years of his life. "Let him separate himself from the congregation," Allah told Prophet Moses. "Only then shall I shower you all with rain."

Moses then called out to the throngs of humanity, "There is a person amongst us who has disobeyed Allah for forty years. Let him separate himself from the congregation and only then shall we be rescued from the drought." That man, waited, looking left and right, hoping that someone else would step forward, but no one did. Sweat poured forth from his brow and he knew that he was the one.

The man knew that if he stayed amongst the congregation all would die of thirst and that if he stepped forward he would be humiliated for all eternity.

He raised his hands with a sincerity he had never known before, with a humility he had never tasted, and as tears poured down on both cheeks he said: "O Allah, have mercy on me! O Allah, hide my sins! O Allah, forgive me!"

While Prophet Moses and the people of Bani Israel awaited for the sinner to step forward, the clouds hugged the sky and the rain poured down. Moses asked Allah, "O Allah, you blessed us with rain even though the sinner did not come forward." And Allah replied, "O Moses, it is for the repentance of that very person that I blessed all of the Bani Israel with water."

Moses, wanting to know who this blessed man was, asked, "Show him to me O Allah!" Allah replied, "O Moses, I hid his sins for forty years, do you think that after his repentance I shall expose him?"



## GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS

A certain *sheikh* once had a disciple whom he favored above his other disciples, thus causing their envy. One day the *sheikh* gave each of them a fowl and told each to go and kill it in a place where no one could see him.

Accordingly, each killed his bird in some remote spot and brought it back, with the exception of the *sheikh's* favorite disciple, who brought the bird back alive, saying, "I have found no such place, for Allah *Subhanahu wa Ta'ala* is everywhere."

The *sheikh* said to the others, "You see now this youth's real rank; he has attained the constant remembrance of Allah."

## ROAD TO MECCA

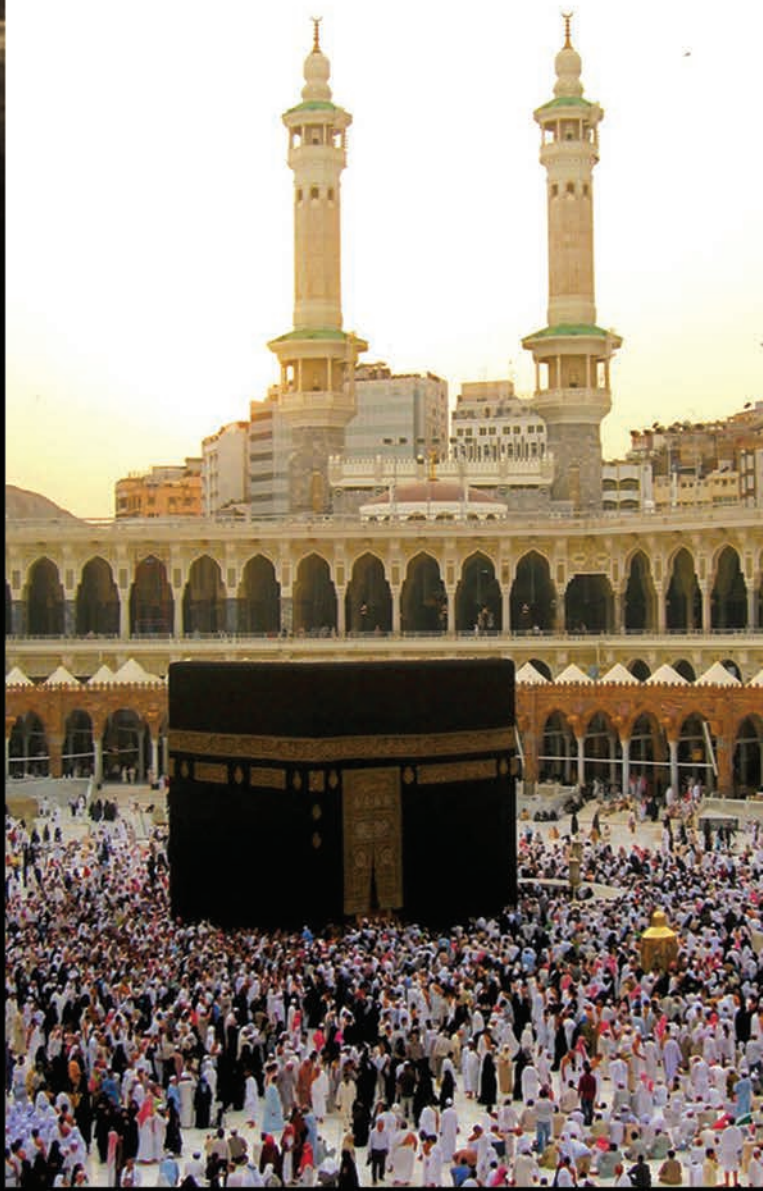
There was an ant with only three legs who decided to go on Hajj. On the road from Damascus to Mecca, he came to the Hijaz desert. He had traveled for some distance in the desert when he came across another ant, returning from Mecca.

The second ant looked at the three-legged ant and asked, "Where are you going?"

The three-legged ant replied, "I am on my way to Mecca."

The other ant said, "You'll never make it! It's a terribly difficult journey, even for an ant with six legs. You'll die along the way!"

The three-legged ant looked at him. He thought for a moment. Then he smiled and said, "What does it matter if I die? At least I'll die on the road to Mecca."





# ARIF RIVEGERI

Arif Rivegeri was a man of moderate height, with a round face and large eyes. His eyebrows were thin and slightly arched. The color of his skin was that of a dried rose, not overly pale and not too ruddy. From his body emanated a pleasant and gentle scent. He was man of wisdom, clemency, piety (*taqwa*), mortification, worship and reliance on the Sunnah.

Arif Rivegeri was the link in the chain after Sheikh Abdulkhaliq Gujduwani, the noble of the Hajagan way, the master of the *hafi dhikr* (silent recitation of Allah's names) and the founder of the "eleven principles". Arif Rivegeri was Gujduwani's fourth caliph. The *dhikr* of the Hajagan way, which is the introduction to the Naqshbandi tariqah, was reestablished as *jahri dhikr* (recitation of Allah's names aloud) by Rivegeri. He was born in the city of Rivegeri, a village six miles from Bukhara and one mile from Gujdwani, in 560/1165.

After completing his education in formal knowledge (*ilm al-zahir*), Arif Rivegeri affiliated with Abdulkhaliq Gujduwani, the grand sheikh of his time. After this affiliation in his youth, Rivegeri was accepted for *irshad* (spiritual guidance) after only a very short period. At the age of thirty-five he became the master of the tariqah when his sheikh died. He continued the service of *irshad* for many years. Although many state that he lived for one hundred and fifty years, this seems an exaggeration; if we accept that he lived for one hundred years then we can calculate that he died in 660/1262. His grave is in the town of Safirkan, which is a distance of forty kilometers from Bukhara.



*Rivegeri  
wanted to  
save the people from  
the gloom of negligence  
and to warn them  
with the grandeur of  
dhikr.*

Rivegeri, who expended great efforts to bring the torch lit by Gujduwani to every region of Turkistan, is considered to be "from the *etkiya* (the most religious of Turkish sheikhs). However, there is limited information about his life. It is the same for some of the other great sheikhs whose names are mentioned in the *golden chain* of the Naqshbandi. There is a little written information about them, as either they did not have any written works or their works have not reached us; or, perhaps when they were alive, their characteristics were well-known and thus, they were not described in written form. Indeed, the destiny of those who are well-known is to be unknown. Yet, Arif Rivegeri was the light of the garden of truth, the favorite son of the *tariqah*.

Rivegeri made the shift from *hafi dhikr* to *jahri dhikr* in his latter years. He wanted to save the people from the gloom of negligence and to warn them with the grandeur of *dhikr*. That is why he is known as the leader of those with knowledge of the truth in the golden chain.

The writer of *Jami-ul'karamat al-awliya*, Nabhani, narrates an epic story concerned with Arif Rivegeri:

"In the beginning, Hodja Arif used to attend the lectures of a scholar in Bukhara. One day, he encountered Abdulkhaliq Gujduwani at the bazaar. Gujduwani had bought meat from butcher and was leaving the shop. Hodja Arif, who was affected by the maturity and beauty

of the older man, immediately approached him, offering to help and said: "If you would allow, may I help you by carrying the meat you have in your hands?"

Shaykh Abdulkhaliq accepted this offer and said: "Alright my son, take the package and let's go home together."

They came to the entrance of the house together and Abdulkhaliq Gujduwani said: "Thank you for your help. I will expect you in an hour for lunch."

When they sat down for lunch an hour later, the admiration of Hodja Arif for Gujduwani increased more and more until finally he abandoned his education and started to attend Gujduwani's gatherings.

However, the scholar to whom Hodja Arif had been going was not pleased with these matters and wanted him to return back to his lectures. Thus, he began to make negative speeches about *tasawwuf* and men of *tariqah* everywhere. Arif used his endurance and patience and was not provoked by these words. At last, Arif saw his former teacher in his dream; the latter was doing a bad thing in the dream. The next day, when Arif encountered his former instructor, who was still speaking badly about men of *tasawwuf*, Hodja Arif said: "You do bad things and are trying to keep us away from the true way."

Upon hearing this, his former teacher blushed with shame and became a student of Abdulkhaliq Gujduwani, alongside his former student.



# QUIZ FOR CHILDREN

1. What is the name of the morning meal during Ramadan?  
a. Sawm                      b. Sabah                      c. Suhur                      d. Subhanallah
2. What is the name of the special night prayers during Ramadan?  
a. Tajweed                      b. Tarawih                      c. Tickle                      d. Tahajjud
3. How long is the fast of Ramadan?  
a. 1 day                      b. 1 week                      c. 1 month                      d. 1 year
4. It is necessary to see what in order to start and end Ramadan?  
a. Crescent Moon                      b. Crescent Roll                      c. Planet Mars                      d. Bright Star
5. What ibadet (worship) is most closely related to Ramadan?  
a. Iman (belief)                      b. Prayer                      c. Fasting                      d. Tawaf
6. How many holy months are there in Islam?  
a. 1                      b. 2                      c. 3                      d. 4
7. Which Eid follows Ramadan?  
a. Eid al-Fitr                      b. Eid az-Zakat                      c. Eid al-Adha                      d. Eid al-Adl
8. What is the evening meal called during Ramadan?  
a. Dinner                      b. Infak                      c. Iftar                      d. Breakfast
9. What did the Prophet prefer to use to break his fast?  
a. apples                      b. grapes                      c. dates                      d. barley
10. At what time are you allowed to break your fast?  
a. Sunset                      b. Sunrise                      c. Noon                      d. Midnight

Hey Kids! Maybe you can win a prize!

The first 25 entries that have all of the questions correct will win. Circle your answers, fill out the form, and mail to: Sufi 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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