



# The Journey to Allah

An Explanation to the Hadith,

*“Your actions alone will not save any of you”*

being a translation of his *al-Mahajjah fi Sayri'l-Dulja*

al-Hafiz Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali



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# The Author



Hafiz Abu'l-Faraj Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali

He is the Imam and Hafiz, Zaynu'l-Din 'Abdu'l-Rahman ibn Ahmad ibn 'Abdu'l-Rahman ibn al-Hasan ibn Muhammad ibn Abu'l-Barakat Mas'ud al-Sulami al-Hanbali al-Dimashqi. His agnomen was Abu'l-Faraj, and his nickname was Ibn Rajab, which was the nickname of his grandfather who was born in that month.

He was born in Baghdad in 736H and was raised by a knowledgeable and pious family. He died on a Monday night, the fourth of Ramadan, 795H in al-Humariyyah, Damascus.

He learned and took knowledge from the greatest scholars of his time. In Damascus, he studied under Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, Zaynu'l-Din al-'Iraqi, ibn an-Naqib, Muhammad ibn Isma'il al-Khabbaz, Dawud ibn Ibrahim al-'Attar, ibn Qati al-Jabal and Ahmad ibn 'Abdu'l-Hadi al-Hanbali. In Makkah, he heard from al-Fakhr 'Uthman ibn Yusuf al-Nuwayri. In Jerusalem, he heard from al-Hafiz al-'Ala'i. In Egypt, he heard from Sadru'l-Din Abu'l-Fath al-Maydumi and Nasiru'l-Din ibn al-Muluk.

Many students of knowledge came to him to study under him. Amongst the most famous of his students were: Abu'l-'Abbas Ahmad ibn Abu Bakr ibn 'Ali al-Hanbali; Abu'l-Fadl Ahmad ibn Nasr ibn Ahmad; Dawud ibn Sulayman al-Mawsili; 'Abdu'l-Rahman ibn Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Muqri'; Zaynu'l-Din 'Abdu'l-Rahman ibn Sulayman ibn Abu'l-Karam; Abu Dharr al-Zarkashi; al-Qadi 'Ala'u'l-Din ibn al-Laham al-Ba'li; and Ahmad ibn Sayfu'l-Din al-Hamawi.

Ibn Rajab devoted himself to knowledge and spent the vast majority of his time researching, writing, authoring, teaching, and giving legal rulings.

Many scholars praised him for his vast knowledge, asceticism and expertise in the Hanbali school of thought. Ibn Qadi Shuhbah said of him, 'He read and became proficient in the various fields of science. He engrossed himself with the issues of the *madhhab* until he mastered it. He devoted himself to the occupation of knowledge of the texts, defects and meanings of the hadith.' [Ibn Qadi al-Shuhbah, *Tarikh*, vol. 3, p. 195]

Ibn Hajar said of him, 'He was highly proficient in the science of hadith in terms of the names of reporters, their biographies, their

paths of narration and awareness of their meanings.’ [Ibn Hajr, *Inba’u’l-Ghamr*, vol. 1, p. 460]

Ibn Muflih said of him, ‘He is the Shaykh, the great scholar, the Hafiz, the ascetic, the Shaykh of the Hanbali madhhab and he authored many beneficial works.’ [*al-Maqсад al-Arshad*, vol. 2, p. 81]

He wrote many beneficial works, some of them outstanding such as *al-Qawa’id al-Kubra fi’l-Furu’* about which it was said, ‘It is one of the wonders of this age.’ [Ibn ‘Abdu’l-Hadi, *Dhayl ‘ala Tabaqat ibn Rajab*, p. 38.] His commentary to al-Tirmidhi is said to be the most extensive and best ever written so much so that al-‘Iraqi; about whom ibn Hajr said, ‘He was the wonder of his age’; would ask for his help when compiling his own commentary to the same book.

Moreover he has many valuable monographs explaining various ahadith such as: *Sharh Hadith Ma Dhi’bani Jai’an Ursila fi Ghanam*, *Ikhtiyar al-Awla Sharh Hadith Ikhtisam al-Mala’ al-A’la*, *Nur al-Iqtibas fi Sharh Wasiiyah al-Nabi li ibn ‘Abbas*, and *Kashfu’l-Kurbah fi Wasfi Hali Ahli-l-Ghurbah*.

In exegesis his works include: *Tafsir Surah al-Ikhlās*, *Tafsir Surah al-Fatihah*, *Tafsir Surah al-Nasr*, and *al-Istighna’ bi’l-Qur’an*.

In hadith his works include: *Sharh 'Ilal al-Tirmidhi*; *Fathu'l-Bari Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari*; and *Jami' al-'Ulum wa'l-Hikam*.

In fiqh his works include: *al-Istikhraj fi Ahkam al-Kharaj*; and *al-Qawa'id al-Fiqhiyyah*.

In biographies his works include the monumental *Dhayl 'ala Tabaqati'l-Hanabilah*.

In exhortation his works include: *Lata'if al-Ma'arif* and *al-Takhwif min al-Nar*.

# Introduction



*With the Name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Most Merciful*

Bukhari records on the authority of Abu Hurayrah (*radiyAllahu ‘anhu*) that the Prophet (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said, “Your actions alone will not save any of you.” They asked, ‘Messenger of Allah, not even you?’ He replied, “Not even me, unless Allah were to envelop me in His mercy. Be firm; steadfast and balanced; and journey [to Allah] in the beginning of the day, the end of the day, and a portion of the latter part of the night. Moderation, moderation! Through this will you attain your goal!” [Bukhari #6463]

He also recorded this hadith in another place with the wording, “This religion is easy, none makes it hard upon himself except that it overwhelms him; therefore be firm, steadfast, and balanced; upon which have glad tidings! Seek help in this by journeying [to Allah] at the beginning of the day, at the end of the day, and a portion of the latter part of the night.” [Bukhari #39]

He also records on the authority of ‘A’ishah (*radiyAllahu ‘anha*) that the Prophet (*sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) said, “Be firm, steadfast, and balanced upon which have glad tidings for indeed actions alone will not cause one to enter Paradise.” They asked, ‘Messenger of Allah, not even you?’ He replied, “Not even me, unless Allah were to envelop me in His forgiveness and mercy.” [Bukhari #6467]

He also records on her authority that the Prophet (*sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) said, “Be firm, steadfast, and balanced: know that your actions alone will not be a cause for your entry into Paradise and that the most beloved actions to Allah are those that are done continuously and persistently, even if they be few.” [Bukhari #6464]

These noble ahadith [\[1\]](#) detail a great and important principle from which stem many issues related to the journey to Allah while wayfaring along His Path.

## Chapter One

# The Great Principle



As for the principle, it is that the deeds of man are not sufficient to deliver him from Hellfire, or to grant him entry into Paradise; instead this can only come about through the mercy of Allah and His forgiveness. The Qur'an supports this meaning in many places such as His sayings,

Those who migrated and were driven from their homes and suffered harm in My way and fought and were killed, I will erase their bad actions from them and admit them into Gardens with rivers flowing beneath them as a reward from Allah

[*Ali 'Imran* (3): 195]

Their Lord gives them the good news of his mercy and good pleasure and Gardens where they will enjoy everlasting delight, remaining in them timelessly, forever and ever

[*al-Tawbah* (9): 22]

...it is to believe in Allah and His Messenger and to do Jihad in the Way of Allah with your wealth and your selves. That is better

for you if you only knew. He will forgive you your wrong actions and admit you into Gardens with rivers flowing beneath them...

[*al-Saff*(61): 11-12]

Mentioning victory and entry into Paradise alongside forgiveness and mercy thereby proving that this cannot be attained except by these.

Some of the Salaf said, 'The Hereafter consists either of Allah's forgiveness or the Fire; and this world is either a source of Allah's protection or a source of destruction.' On his deathbed, Muhammad ibn Wasi' bid farewell to his companions saying, 'Peace be upon you, either to the Fire or to the forgiveness of Allah.'

[Abu Nu'aym, *al-Hilyah*, vol. 2, p. 348 #199]

As for the saying of Allah,

That is the Garden you will be made to inherit for what you did.

[*al-Zukhruf*(43): 72]

...eat and drink with relish for what you did before in days gone by!

[*al-Haqqah* (69): 24]

the scholars differed concerning the meaning of this, falling into two opinions:

1) Entry into Paradise is accorded by His mercy, but the assignment of ranking and station in Paradise is done in accordance to the deeds one performed [Ibn Hajr, *Fath al-Bari*, vol. 11, p. 295]. Ibn ‘Uyaynah said, “They were of the opinion that salvation from the Fire occurs through the forgiveness of Allah, entry into Paradise occurs by His grace, and the apportioning of ranking occurs in accordance to one’s deeds.’

2) That the *ba* which has been mentioned in His sayings, “*for what you did*”, “*for what you did before in days gone by*” is the *ba* used to indicate causality (*sabab*). Hence the meaning is that Allah has appointed deeds to be the means for entry into Paradise. The *ba* which has been negated in his (*sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) saying, “Actions alone will not cause one to enter Paradise” is the *ba* indicating comparison and compensation (*muqabalah*) and replacing like for like (*mu‘awidah*). The meaning of the hadith would then be that none deserves entry into Paradise by virtue of the deeds he has performed. Through this explanation the erroneous understanding that Paradise is the imbursement of deeds is dispelled: the understanding that the person, by virtue of his deeds alone, has the right to be granted entry into Paradise by Allah; just as one who pays the price for a commodity has the right that it be given him by

the seller. This explanation makes clear that actual entry comes to pass by the grace and mercy of Allah, and that deeds are a cause for the entry into Paradise.

Therefore actual entry into Paradise is dependent upon the grace of Allah, His forgiveness and mercy: He is the one who blessed the person with the means and the result of that means. Hence entry is not a direct outcome of actions in and of themselves. It is recorded in the Sahih that the Prophet (*sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said, "Allah, Blessed and Exalted, said to Paradise: You are My mercy, I show mercy through you to whoever I will of My servants."

*The servants have no right over Him that He must render,  
Never! Neither, in His presence, is any effort wretched.  
If they are punished, then by His Justice; if they are in bliss,  
Then by His beneficence. He is the Kind, the Vast.*

### 1.1 *al-Hamdulillah* is the Imbursement of Every Favour

If it is said: but Habib ibn al-Shahid reports al-Hasan as saying, '*al-Hamdulillah* [All praise is due to Allah] is the imbursement of every favour and *La ilaha illAllah* [There is none worthy of worship save Allah] is the imbursement for Paradise.'

The meaning of this statement has also been reported from the Prophet (sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam) on the authority of Anas, Abu Dharr and others. Even though the isnads of all these ahadith contain weakness [2], the meaning is supported by the saying of Allah,

**Allah has bought from the believers their selves and their wealth in return for the Garden: they fight in the Way of Allah and they kill and are killed. It is a promise binding on Him in the Torah, the Injil and the Qur'an and who is truer to his contract than Allah? Rejoice then in the bargain you have made. That is the supreme triumph.**

[*al-Tawbah* (9): 111]

Here, Paradise has been appointed the imbursement for self and property.

The response to this is that Allah, Glorious and Exalted is He; through His beneficence, mercy, kindness, and generosity; has addressed His servants in a way that would encourage them to obey Him, using language and concepts that they can readily understand and relate to. He placed Himself in the position of a buyer and debtor, and placed them in the position of sellers and creditors. This then encourages them to answer His call and rush to His obedience. In reality, however, everything belongs to Him and is granted by

His grace and mercy: the self and property belong to Him and this is why He commanded us to say at the onset of calamity,

**To Allah we belong and to Him are we returning.** [*al-Baqarah* (2): 156]

Despite this, He commends those who expend their selves and properties for His sake, comparing them to sellers and creditors. Therefore man is likened to someone who has property which he can sell and give as a loan to someone else who does not possess it.

In the same way, all deeds come about as a result of His grace and mercy, yet He commends those who perform them, attributes the deeds to them, and appoints them to be a show of gratitude, and return, for His favours.

## 1.2 Elucidation of the meaning of ‘favours’

Ibn Majah records on the authority of Anas that the Prophet (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said, “There is no favour which Allah bestows upon His servant for which he says, ‘*al-Hamdulillah*,’ except that which he gave was better than that which he took.” [Recorded by ibn Majah #3805 ]. This was also stated by ‘Umar ibn ‘Abdu’l-‘Aziz [Bayhaqi, *Shu‘ab al-Iman* #10038], al-Hasan

[Bayhaqi, *Shu'ab al-Iman* #4406 and Ibn Abi al-Dunya, *al-Shukr* #111] and others from amongst the Salaf [Such as Bakr ibn 'Abdullah, *ibid.* #4408].

The meaning of this has troubled a great number of scholars, past and present, but if it is understood in the light of our preceding discussion, its meaning is obvious. The meaning of favour mentioned in the hadith is worldly favour and the statement of praising Allah is one of the religious favours. Religious favours are better than worldly favours. Now, because the favour of praising Allah has been attributed to the servant since he articulated it, Allah considers him as giving the greater favour as a return for the original favour. This is why it is mentioned in a narration, '*al-Hamdulillah*, with a praise that befits and suffices His favours; represses His retribution; and acts as return for His addition.' [3]

When understood in this light, the statement of praise is the imbursement of Paradise.

### 1.3 Both Paradise & Deeds are from the Grace of Allah

Therefore, to be correct, both Paradise and deeds are granted to the believing servants by the grace and mercy of Allah. This is why the inhabitants of Paradise will say upon entering it,

Praise be to Allah who guided us to this! We would not have been guided had Allah not guided us. Verily the Messengers of our Lord came with the Truth.

[*al-A'raf*(7): 43]

After they acknowledge that it was through the favour of Allah that they were granted Paradise, and that it was through His favour that they were they granted the accord to enact the means leading to it, i.e. His guidance, and after having praised Him for this, they are rewarded with the call,

**Behold! This is the Garden you will be made to inherit for what you did.**

[*al-A'raf*(7): 43]

Their deeds were attributed to them and they were shown appreciation for them.

It is with this overall meaning that some of the Salaf said, ‘When a servant commits a sin and says, “My Lord, You decreed this for me!” His Lord will say, “You are the one who sinned and disobeyed Me!” Now if the servant says, “My Lord, I erred, committed a sin, and wrought evil,” Allah will respond by saying, “I decreed this upon you and I will forgive you.”’

## 1.4 Misery and Felicity occur Through His Justice and Mercy

The true purport of his (*sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) words, “Your actions alone will not save any of you”, “Actions alone will not cause one to enter Paradise” can be further understood when it is realised that the reward of good deeds, multiplied manifold, only comes about by the beneficence and grace of Allah, Mighty and Magnificent. He recompenses a good deed tenfold to seven-hundred fold to whatever He wills [Muslim #131/338]. Were He to recompense a good deed with its like, in the same way that He does for an evil deed, good deeds would never have the strength to render void the evil deeds, and one would surely be destroyed.

Ibn Mas‘ud (*radiyAllahu ‘anhu*) said, while describing good deeds, ‘If one is an ally (*wali*) of Allah, and there remain an atoms weight of good [after the mutual recompense], Allah would increase this manifold such that he enter Paradise through it [4]. If he be one for whom misery is decreed, the Angel says, “My Lord, His good deeds have vanished yet many more people remain seeking [mutual recompense].” He will reply, “Take their evil deeds and add them to his evil deeds, then prepare for him a place of torment in the Fire!” [Abu Nu‘aym, vol. 4, p. 224 #5328; ibn al-Mubarak, *al-Zuhd* #1416]

Therefore it becomes clear that Allah multiplies the good deeds of those He wishes felicity for until they are able to pay off any penalties [from any who seek mutual recompense]; and if, after all this, there remains even an atoms weight worth of good, Allah will multiply this until He enters Paradise through it. All this by His grace and beneficence! However, whoever Allah has decreed misery for; his deeds will not be multiplied to the extent that they are able to pay off his penalties. Instead any good deeds performed by this latter person will only be multiplied ten-fold, apportioned amongst his creditors who will accept them all and yet still require further repayment for remaining injustices, and therefore their bad deeds are piled onto his, thereby causing him to enter the Fire. This by His justice! [5]

It is in this light that Yahya ibn Mu'adh said, 'When He extends His grace, not a single evil deed remains for that person! When His justice is brought forth, not a single good deed remains for that person.' [Abu Nu'aym, vol. 10, p. 69 #14593]

It is also established in Bukhari and Muslim that the Prophet (*sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said, "Whoever's account is scrutinised will be destroyed" [Bukhari #6537 and Muslim #2876/7227, 7228], in another narration, "...will be punished" [Bukhari #6536 and

Muslim #2876/7225 ] and in another narration, “...will be defeated.” [6]

Abu Nu‘aym records on the authority of ‘Ali that the Prophet (*sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) said, “Allah revealed to a Prophet amongst the Prophets of the Children of Israel, ‘Say to those who obey Me amongst your nation that they should not overly rely on their deeds for on the Day of Judgment I will not settle the accounts of a servant I wish to punish except that I will punish him. Say to those who disobey me amongst your nation that they should not despair for I readily forgive even the great sins” [7]

‘Abdu’l-‘Aziz ibn Abu Rawwad said, ‘Allah inspired Dawud (*‘alayhis-salam*) saying, “Dawud, give glad tidings to the sinners and warn those who give in charity.” Surprised, Dawud said, “My Lord, why should I give glad tidings to the sinners and warn those who give in charity?” He replied, “Give glad tidings to the sinners that there is no sin that I find too grievous to forgive (even *shirk* if one repents from it) and warn those who give in charity that there is no servant upon whom I mete My justice and judgment except that he is destroyed.” [Abu Nu‘aym, vol. 8, p. 211 #11906]

Ibn ‘Uyaynah said, ‘Scrutiny here means to undergo the evil of a thorough examination such that nothing is leftover.’

Ibn Yazid said, ‘The severe reckoning is that which contains no pardoning and the easy reckoning is that in which ones sins are forgiven and good deeds accepted.’ [Tabari #34361, 36738]

All of these narrations show that that servant cannot possibly succeed without forgiveness, mercy and the overlooking of his faults. They also show that when Allah enacts pure justice upon the servant, he will certainly be destroyed.

### 1.5 Allah’s Blessings can Never be Truly Repaid

This is further clarified by His saying,

**Then you will be asked that Day about the pleasures you enjoyed.**  
[*at-Takathur* (102): 8] [8]

This verse shows that the servants will be asked about the pleasures they enjoyed in this world: did they show gratitude for them or not? Anyone who is required to display gratitude for every favour such as good health, sound senses, good livelihood, and, moreover, will be thoroughly examined, should know that all of his deeds taken together cannot repay even some of these favours. Hence that person would be deserving of punishment.

Khara'iti, *Kitab al-Shukr*, records on the authority of 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr that the Prophet (sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said, "The servant will be summoned on the Day of Judgment and he will stand before Allah, Mighty and Magnificent. He will say to His Angels, 'Look at the deeds of My servant and the favours I bestowed upon him.' They will look and say, 'They do not even amount to one of Your favours granted him.' Then He will say, 'Look to his evil deeds and good deeds.' They will look and find them the same whereupon He will say, 'Servant of Mine, I have accepted your good deeds and forgiven you your evil. My favours, I have gifted you'" [Khara'iti #57]

Tabarani records on the authority of ibn 'Umar (*radiyAllahu 'anhuma*) that the Prophet (sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said, "A person will be brought on the Day of Judgment with such deeds that would burden a mountain were they to be placed on it! Then just one favour from amongst the favours of Allah would be displayed and would almost extinguish all those deeds were Allah not to distend them through His mercy." [Tabarani, *al-Awsat* #1604]

Ibn Abi al-Dunya records on the authority of Anas that the Prophet (sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said, "On the Day of Judgment, blessings will be brought forward as well as good deeds and bad deeds. Allah will say to just one of His blessings, 'Take your due

from his good deeds,' and it will take all his good deeds." [Ibn Abi al-Dunya #24]

He also records that Wahb ibn Munabbih said, 'A servant worshipped Allah for fifty years. Allah inspired him with the words, "I have forgiven you." The servant asked, "Lord, what have you to forgive, I have committed no sin!" Thereupon Allah ordered a vein in his neck to throb painfully such that he could not pray or sleep. After a while it was cured and an angel came to him, and to him he complained about the vein. The angel said to him, "Your Lord, Mighty and Magnificent says: your worship for the last fifty years equates to the soothing of that vein.'" [Abu Nu'aym, vol. 4, p. 70 #4784; and ibn Abi al-Dunya #148]

Hakim records on the authority of Jabir that the Prophet (sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said that Jibril said, "A servant worshipped Allah on the top of a mountain, in the middle of an ocean, for five hundred years. Then he asked his Lord to let him die in the state of prostration. We used to pass by him each time we would descend and ascend and we would find written in the (pre-eternal knowledge) that he would be resurrected on the Day of Judgment and would stand before Allah, Mighty and Magnificent. The Lord would say, 'Enter My servant into Paradise by virtue of My mercy.' The servant will say, 'My Lord, rather by virtue of my deeds!' This will happen three times, then Allah will say to His angels, 'Weigh

my favours against his deeds,' and they will find that the blessing of sight alone takes up all the deeds he did during his five hundred years of worship, with the other bodily blessings still remaining. He will say, 'Enter My servant into the Fire!' He will be dragged towards the Fire and will cry out, 'Enter me into Paradise by virtue of Your mercy! Enter me into Paradise by virtue of Your mercy!' Thereupon he shall enter Paradise." Jibril went on to say, "Muhammad, things only happen by the mercy of Allah." [Hakim #7637]

Whoever understands all of what has preceded will realise that his deeds, even if they are great, are not sufficient to merit his success and entry into Paradise or salvation from the Fire in and of themselves [9]. As such, he will no longer overly rely on his deeds or be impressed by them, even if they be great and wonderful. If this is the case of great and many deeds, what then would one think of the paltry deeds of the many? Such a person should ponder his deficiency in worship and devote himself to penitence and repentance!

## 1.6 One of the Greatest Blessings is Gratitude

As regards one whose deeds are great and many, he must busy himself with showing gratitude for them, for the accord to show

gratitude is one of the greatest blessings Allah bestows upon His servant. It is obligatory upon him to meet these deeds with gratitude and realise his deficiency in displaying due gratitude.

Wahb ibn al-Ward, when asked about the reward of a particular deed, said, 'Ask not about its reward, but ask about the gratitude due upon one who was guided to it.' [Abu Nu'aym, vol. 8, p. 155]

Abu Sulayman would say, 'How can an intelligent person be amazed with his deeds? Deeds are one of Allah's blessings, as such it is upon him to show gratitude and to show humility. It is only the Qadariyyah who are amazed at their deeds!' [Abu Nu'aym, vol. 8, p. 155 #13896] i.e. those who do not believe that the actions of the servant are created by Allah, Mighty and Magnificent.

How excellent is the saying of Abu Bakr al-Nahshali on the day that Dawud al-Ta'i died. After his burial, ibn al-Sammak [Abu Nu'aym, vol. 8, p. 223 #11949] stood and praised him for his good deeds and wept causing all present to weep as well and testify to the truth of what he said... Abu Bakr al-Nahshali stood and said, 'O Allah, forgive him and show mercy to him and leave him not to his deeds!' [Abu Nu'aym, vol. 7, p. 396 #10977]

Abu Dawud records on the authority of Zayd ibn Thabit (*radhiyAllahu 'anhu*) that the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu 'alayhi

wa sallam) said, “Were Allah to punish the inhabitants of the heavens and the inhabitants of the earth, He could do so without having oppressed them in any way. Were He to show them mercy, His mercy would be better for them than their deeds.” [Abu Dawud #4699 and ibn Majah #77]

Hakim records on the authority of Jabir (*radīyAllahu ‘anhu*) that a man came to the Prophet (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) and said, ‘Sins, sins!’ repeating this two or three times. The Messenger of Allah (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said, “Say: O Allah, Your forgiveness is vaster than my sins and I have more hope in it than I do my deeds.” He said this and the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said, “Repeat it.” He did so and he was ordered to repeat it again which he did. Then he (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said, “Stand for you have been forgiven.” [Hakim #1994]

*My sins, were I but to ponder them, are copious.*

*But greater yet is my Lord’s forgiveness:*

*In my righteous deeds lies not my expectation,*

*But in the mercy of Allah have I anticipation.*

## 1.7 Acknowledging the Grace of Allah

Now that this noble principle has been established, it is known that deeds, in and of themselves, do not necessitate salvation from the Fire and entry into Paradise, let alone necessitating the ascension to the uppermost levels of Paradise: the levels of Those Brought Close, and seeing the face of the Lord of the worlds, and it is known that this can only come to pass through the mercy of Allah, His grace, and forgiveness. This then requires the believer to abandon thinking highly of his deeds and to look solely to the grace of Allah and His blessings.

One of the Gnostics was asked, 'Which deed is best?' He replied, 'Realising the grace of Allah, Mighty and Magnificent.' He then recited,

*If quantities were able to aid in any way,  
They would join the obtuse with the judicious.*

When all of this is understood, it is obligatory upon the believing the servant; the servant who desires salvation from the Fire and entry into Paradise, who desires to be close to His Master and to look on at His face; to seek all of this by taking to the means that lead to Allah's mercy, pardon, forgiveness, pleasure, and love. It is in this way that he will attain His munificence. The means are the various deeds Allah has appointed: only those deeds that He has legislated upon the tongue of His Messenger: only those deeds that

His Messenger told us would serve to draw us closer to Allah: those deeds that He loves and lead to His pleasure and forgiveness. Allah, Exalted is He, says

**Allah's mercy is close to the good-doers.**

[*al-A'raf*(7): 56]

**My mercy extends to all things but I will prescribe it for those who have *taqwa*...**

[*al-A'raf*(7): 156]

So it is obligatory upon the servant to seek out those traits of *taqwa* [\[10\]](#) and goodness that Allah has legislated in His Book or upon the tongue of His Messenger (*sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*), and having done so, draw closer to Allah, Mighty and Magnificent, through enacting them. There is no other path that can lead to the goal of the believing servant.

## Chapter Two

# The Most Beloved Deeds to Allah



The Prophet (*sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) indicated the most beloved of deeds to Allah in the hadiths of ‘A’ishah and Abu Hurayrah quoted at the beginning of this treatise. They are of two types:

1) Those that are done continuously and persistently, even if they be few. This was the description of the deeds of the Prophet (*sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*), and the deeds of his family and wives after him. He would prohibit the severance of deeds saying to ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘As (*radhiyallahu ‘anhu*), “Do not be like such-and-such a person who used to pray by night and then left it.” [Bukhari #1152 and Muslim #1159/2733]

He (*sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) said, “The supplication of one of you will be answered so long as he is not hasty and impatient, saying, ‘I have supplicated and supplicated but have not been answered,’ so he despairs and abandons the supplication.” [Bukhari #6340 and Muslim#2735/6934-6936]

al-Hasan said, ‘When Shaytan looks at you and sees you persistent in your obedience to Allah, Mighty and Magnificent, he will do his utmost to deceive you; if he still sees you persistent, he will give up on you and leave. However, if he sees you alternating between this and that, he will have hope in you.’

2) Those deeds that are done with steadiness, balance, and ease as opposed to those that entail hardship and undue striving. Allah, Exalted is He, says,

**Allah desires for you ease; He desires not hardship for you.**

[*al-Baqarah* (2): 185]

**Allah does not wish to place you in a difficulty.**

[*al-Ma'idah* (5): 6]

**He has chosen you and has not laid upon you in religion any hardship.**

[*al-Hajj* (22): 78]

The Prophet (*sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) would say, “Make things easy and do not make them difficult.” [Bukhari #3038 and Muslim #1732/4525-4526]

He (*sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said, “You have been sent to make things easy, you have not been sent to make things difficult.” [Bukhari #220 and Abu Dawud #380]

Ahmad records on the authority of ibn 'Abbas (*radīyAllahu 'anhu*) that it was asked of the Messenger of Allah (*sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*), ‘Which of the religions is most beloved to Allah?’ He replied, “The easy and natural religion.” [11]

Ahmad records on the authority of Mihjan ibn al-Adra‘ that the Prophet (*sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) entered the *Masjid* to see a man standing in prayer. He asked, “Do you think him to be truthful?” It was said, ‘Prophet of Allah, this is so-and-so, he is the best of the residents of Madinah and the most frequent of them in prayer!’ He said, “Do not let him hear you lest you render him to ruin [12] - he said it two or three times - you are a nation from whom ease is desired.” [13]

Another narration has the wording, “The best part of your religion is the easiest of it.” [Ahmad #18976]. Another narration has the wording, “You will not attain this matter through excess and trying to overcome it.” [Ahmad #18971]

This hadith was also recorded by Humayd ibn Zanjawayh and his version adds, “...do such actions as you are able to bear, for Allah

does not stop (rewarding you) until you grow tired and give up, and upon you is a journey [to Allah] at the beginning of the day, at the end of the day, and a portion of the latter part of the night.” [The first part of this hadith is also recorded by Bukhari #43-1151]

Ahmad records on the authority of Buraydah (*radīyAllahu ‘anhu*) who said, ‘I went out only to see the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam), so I joined him. We saw a man in front of us praying many prayers and he (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) asked, “Do you think he is showing off?” I said, “Allah and His Messenger know best.” He released his hand from mine and joined both his hands together, lowering and raising them saying, “Stick to a middle path for whoever makes this religion difficult will find that it overwhelms him.” [Ahmad #19786,-22963]

This hadith is also recorded as a mursal report and it mentions that the Prophet (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said, “This person has taken to the way of difficulty and not to the way of ease.” He then pushed the man in his chest and left and that man was not seen in the *masjid* again. [Ahmad #13052]

The Prophet (*sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) objected to those who wished to continuously live a life of a hermit, to be castrated, to pray through the whole night, fast every day, and recite the whole Qur’an every night such as ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘As, ‘Uthman ibn

Maz'un, al-Miqdad, and others. He (*sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said, "...but I fast, and I break my fast; I pray by night and I sleep; and I marry women: whoever turns away from my Sunnah is not of me." [Abu Dawud #1369]

He finally advised 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr to recite the Qur'an completely every seven days, and one narration mentions that he finally advised him to complete it once every three days. He (*sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said, "The one who recites it in less than three days has not understood it." With regards fasting he (*sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) finally advised him with the fast of Dawud saying, "There is no fast better than that." With regards praying by night he (*sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) advised with the prayer of Dawud. [14]

## Chapter Three

# The Meaning of “*Saddidu wa Qaribu*”



His (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) saying in the hadith of Abu Hurayrah and ‘A’ishah, “Be firm, steadfast, and balanced,” [*Saddidu wa Qaribu*] *Saddidu* means to act with firmness and fortitude. It means to take a balanced path in worship, not being deficient by leaving off what one has been commanded with, or by taking on more than one can bear. Nadr ibn Shumayl said, ‘*al-sadad* means to take the path of balance in the religion.’

Similarly, *Qaribu* means the same thing: taking to a path between deficiency and excessiveness. As such they are two words carrying the same or similar meanings. This is the meaning of his (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) words in the other narration, “Stick to a middle path.”

His (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) saying, “...upon which have glad tidings,” means that whoever obeys Allah upon firmness and balance, for him are glad tidings because he will reach the goal and outstrip the one who expends a great deal of effort in performing deeds. The path of balance and firmness is better than all other

paths; being balanced in following the Sunnah is better than striving hard in other than it, “The best guidance is the guidance of Muhammad (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam).” [Muslim #867/2005] Whoever traverses his path will find it closer to Allah than any other path. Virtue is not attained by doing a great deal of outward deeds, rather it is attained by deeds being sincere for Allah and being correct in that they are done in accordance to the Sunnah, and through gnosis of the heart and its actions.

Whoever has more knowledge of Allah, His religion, and His ordinances, and has more fear, hope, and love for him is better than one who has not attained his level, even if the latter do more outward deeds. This understanding is derived from the hadith of ‘Aishah, “Be firm, steadfast, and balanced upon which have glad tidings for indeed actions alone will not cause one to enter Paradise. The most beloved deeds to Allah are those that are done continuously and persistently, even if they be few.”

Therefore he ordered us to take a middle path in deeds and to add to this knowledge of the most beloved deeds to Allah, and he informed us that deeds alone will not cause one entry into Paradise.

It is for this reason that some of the Salaf said, ‘Abu Bakr did not outstrip you by virtue of much fasting or prayer, but rather because of something that had taken root in his heart.’ [Muslim #867/2005]

Some of them said, 'What was in the heart of Abu Bakr (*radiyAllahu 'anhu*) was the love of Allah and sincerity to His servants.'

Some of the Gnostics said, 'None who reached the heights did so through a great deal of fasting and prayer, rather through generosity of soul, soundness of heart, and sincerity to the nation,' [Abu Nu'aym, vol. 8, p. 103] some added, 'and censure of their own souls.' One of them said, 'The difference in their ranking lay in their objectives and intent, not in a great deal of fasting and prayer.'

The long life of the children of Israel and their great efforts in worship was mentioned to Abu Sulayman to which he said, 'Allah wants from you only a truthful intention for what lies with Him,' [Abu Nu'aym, vol. 9, p. 263] or words to that effect.

Ibn Mas'ud said to his companions, 'You fast and pray more than the Companions of Muhammad (*sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) but they were better than you.' They asked, 'How so?' He replied, 'They were more abstinent of this world than you and more desirous of the Hereafter.' [Abu Nu'aym, vol. 1, p. 136] Hence he indicated that the superiority of the Companions lay in the attachment of their hearts to the Hereafter, their desire for it, their turning away from this world, and their thinking little of it even if it be readily available to them. Their hearts were empty of the world and filled with the

Hereafter. This is what they inherited from their Prophet (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam). He (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) was one whose heart was most devoid of the world and most attached to Allah and the Abode of the Hereafter, this despite his outwardly interacting with the creation, fulfilling the duties of Prophethood, and implementing the politics of the religion and world.

This was the state of the *Khulafa’* who came after him and those who followed them in goodness such as al-Hasan and ‘Umar ibn ‘Abdu’l-‘Aziz. There were, in their times, those who fasted more than them and prayed more than them, but their hearts had not attained the levels of theirs in terms of leaving the world and turning to the Hereafter, and settling there.

### 3.1 A Noble Principle

The best of people are those who traverse the path of the Prophet (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) and the elite of his Companions such that they are moderate in the bodily actions of worship and strive to correct the affairs and states of the heart. This is because the journey to the Hereafter is cut short by the journey of the hearts, not the journey of the bodies.

A man came to one of the Gnostics and said, 'I have journeyed long and hard to reach you.' He replied, 'This matter is not about arduous journeys, rather, with one step, distance your lower self from you and then will you find the accomplishment of your objective.'

Abu Zayd said, 'I saw the Lord of Might in a dream and I asked Him, "My Lord! How does one traverse the path to You?" He replied, "Abandon yourself and come with welcome!"' [Ibn al-Jawzi, *Sifatu'l-Safwah*, vol. 4, p. 111 #179]

No nation has been given what this nation has been given and that by virtue of its following its Prophet (sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam). He was the best of creation and his guidance was the best of guidance, through him Allah made the religion easy, and through him He unburdened his nation of many a hardship and difficulty. Whoever obeys him has obeyed Allah and followed His guidance, and He will, in turn, love him.

### **3.2 The Ease of this Religion**

Some examples of the ease that resulted through his (sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam) blessings is that the one who prays 'Isha in congregation, it is as if he has prayed half the night, and the one who prays Fajr in congregation, it is as if he has prayed the whole

night [15]. Hence the night prayer is recorded for him while he lies asleep on his bed, and more so if he goes to sleep in a state of purity and remains in the remembrance of Allah until his eyes close. Whoever fasts three days of every month it is as if he has fasted the whole month [Bukhari #3418 and Muslim #1159/2729]. Hence he is regarded to be fasting the remaining days of the month in the record of Allah even though he is eating and “the one who is eating and grateful has the reward of the one who is patiently fasting.” [Tirmidhi #2486 and Ibn Majah #1765 ] Whoever has the intention of waking up to pray by night but is overcome by sleep will have the reward of the night prayer recorded for him and that sleep of his would be a charity from Allah. [Abu Dawud #1314 and Ibn Majah #1344]

Abu'l-Darda' said, 'Excellent indeed is the sleep of the intelligent and their breaking of fast! Look how they outstrip the night vigil and the fasting of the obtuse!' [Abu Nu'aym, vol. 1, p. 211.]

It is for this reason that the authentic hadith mentions, “It is well possible that one who prays by night gets nothing from it save weariness and a person fasting gets nothing from it save hunger and thirst.” Recorded by Tabarani and Ahmad.

Someone said, ‘Many are the ones seeking forgiveness but their lot is anger, and many are the ones who are silent but their lot is mercy.

The first seeks forgiveness yet his heart remains the heart of a rebellious sinner and the second remains silent but his heart is engrossed in the remembrance of Allah.' Another said, 'The issue is not about praying by night, rather the issue is of one who sleeps on his bed but awakes having outstripped the vanguard.' In this regard it has been said,

*What have I to do with your faltering journey -  
Walk with ease and at the fore will you be!*

## Chapter Four

# The Meaning of “the beginning of the day”, “the end of the day,” & “a portion of the latter part of the night”



His (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) saying, “Journey [to Allah] in the beginning of the day, the end of the day, and a portion of the latter part of the night” has the meaning of his (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) saying in another narrations, “Seek help in this by journeying [to Allah] at the beginning of the day, at the end of the day and a portion of the latter part of the night.”

The meaning of this is that these three periods are times of journeying to Allah through performing actions of obedience. These are the end of the night, the beginning of the day, and the end of the day. Allah, Exalted is He, has mentioned these times in His sayings,

**Remember the name of thy Lord at morn and evening, and worship Him (a portion) of the night, and glorify Him through the livelong night.**

[*al-Insan* (76): 25-26]

And glorify your Lord - all the while praising Him - ere the rising of the sun and ere the going down thereof. And glorify Him some hours of the night and at the two ends of the day: that you may be well pleased.

[*Ta Ha* (20): 130]

And glorify your Lord - all the while praising Him - before the rising of the sun and before its setting; and in the night-time glorify Him, and after the (prescribed) prostrations.

[*Qaf*(50): 39-40]

Allah, Most High, mentions the remembrance of Him at the two ends of the day in numerous places in His Book such as,

O you who believe! Remember Allah with much remembrance and glorify Him morning and evening.

[*al-Ahzab* (33): 41-42]

And ask forgiveness for your sin, and glorify your Lord - all the while praising Him - at the fall of night and in the early hours.

[*Ghafir* (40): 55]

Repel not those who call upon their Lord at morn and evening, seeking His face.

[*al-An‘am* (6): 52]

He said concerning the remembrance of Zakariyyah (*‘alayhis-salam*),

...and signified to them: Glorify (your Lord) at morning and fall of night.

[*Maryam* (19): 11]

...and glorify (Him) at the fall of night and in the early hours.

[*Ali ‘Imran* (3): 41]

Out of these three times there are two which are at the beginning of the day and the end of the day. At these two times one finds both obligatory and optional actions to do. The obligatory actions are the prayers of Fajr and ‘Asr and these two are the best prayers of the five daily prayers. These are the prayers prayed “at the two cool periods,” and whoever preserves these two prayers shall enter Paradise [Bukhari #574 and Muslim #635-1438]. It is said about both these prayers that they are the “Middle Prayer.” [16] As for the optional deed then it is to remember Allah after the Fajr prayer until the sun rises and after ‘Asr until the sun sets, there are many texts concerning the excellence of this. Likewise there are many texts concerning the remembrances to be said in the morning and

evening and concerning the excellence of one who remembers Allah when awaking and when sleeping.

Ibn ‘Umar reports that the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said, “Son of Adam, remember me for an hour in the beginning of the day and an hour at the end and I will forgive you your sins committed between them save any major sins for which you must repent.” [Abu Nu‘aym, vol. 8, p. 213]

The Salaf would place greater emphasis on the end of the day than the beginning. Ibn al-Mubarak said, ‘It has reached us that the one who remembers Allah at the end of the day will be recorded as having performed remembrance throughout the day.’ Abu’l-Jald said, ‘It has reached us that Allah, Exalted is He, descends to the lowest heaven during the eve of every day and looks at the deeds of the children of Adam.’

One of the Salaf saw Abu Ja‘far al-Qari’ in a dream saying to him, ‘Tell Abu Hazim - al-A‘raj i.e. - the ascetic and highly perspicuous person - that Allah and His Angels look to your gathering in the evenings.’ [Ibn al-Jawzi, vol. 2, p. 167 #185.] It seems clear that Abu Hazim used to narrate stories to people at the end of the day.

A hadith mentions, “Remembrance after Fajr is more beloved than freeing four slaves and remembrance after ‘Asr is better than freeing

eight slaves.” [Ahmad #22185-22254]

The end of the day of Jumu‘ah is better than its beginning due to its containing an hour wherein the supplication is answered [Bukhari #935 and Muslim #852-1969-1975]. The end of the Day of ‘Arafah is better than the beginning because the end of the day is the time for standing. The end of the night is better than the beginning of the night as was stated by the Salaf and they adduced the hadith of the Descent as proof. [17]

All of these facts strengthen the opinion of those who say that ‘Asr is the “Middle Prayer.”

The third period is the *duljah*: journeying in the last part of the night. The meaning here is performing deeds at the end of the night which is the time for asking forgiveness. Allah, Exalted is He says,

**And those who ask forgiveness in the early hours of the morning.**

[*Ali Imran* (3): 17]

**And ere the dawning of each day would seek forgiveness.**

[*al-Dhariyat* (51): 18]

The period referred to in these verses is the last part of the time of the Descent in which Allah fulfils the needs of those asking and grants forgiveness to the penitent. The middle of the night is reserved for the lovers who wish to spend time in intimacy with their Beloved and the end of the night is reserved for the sinners to seek forgiveness for their sins. Whoever is unable to join the striving of the lovers in the depth of the night should at least join the penitent at the end of the night.

Some narrations mention that the Throne quivers during the last part of the night. Tawus said, 'I cannot imagine that someone would sleep during the last part of the night!' [ibn al-Jawzi, vol. 2, p. 285; and Abu Nu'aym, vol. 4, p. 6.] In a hadith recorded by Tirmidhi it mentions, "Whoever fears will travel by night and whoever travels by night will reach his destination." [Tirmidhi #2450]

Journeying in the last part of the night cuts short the journey of the world and the Hereafter as is mentioned in the hadith recorded by Muslim, "When you journey, journey at the end of the night for the earth is compacted by night." [18]

One of the nobles said,

*The burdens of journeying by night with patience bear,  
Return with the morning finding you firm in obedience.*

*Be not faint of heart and desist not from the aspiration  
For resolve dissipates in the face of despair and exasperation.  
I know - and the days have practically demonstrated -  
That patience has results truly meritable.  
Say: Whoever strives after a matter desired  
With patience accompanying him, will surely succeed.*

It is reported that al-Ashtar entered upon 'Ali ibn Abu Talib (*radiyAllahu 'anhu*) after resting part of the night and found him standing in prayer. He said, 'Leader of the Believers, fasting by day, praying by night, and toil between the two!' When he had finished his prayer he said, 'The journey to the Hereafter is long and it needs to be cut short by journeying by night,' - this is the *duljah!*

The wife of Habib - Abu Muhammad al-Farisi - would wake him at night time and say, 'Awake O Habib for the path is long and our provision is paltry. The caravan of the righteous has passed ahead of us and we have been left behind!'

*O sleeper by night for how long will you lie?  
Awake my beloved for the Promised Time draws nigh.  
For a portion of the night your Lord deify -  
For sleep begets neither rest nor equanimity.  
Whoever in slumber deep spends the night,  
Will not have striven or arrived at the Destination right.*

## Chapter Five

# The Meaning of Moderation



His (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) saying, “Moderation, moderation! Through this will you attain your goal!” contains encouragement towards moderation in worship such that one avoids excess and deficiency. It is for this reason that he (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) repeated it twice. al-Bazzar records the hadith on the authority of Hudhayfah (*radiyAllahu ‘anh*) that the Prophet (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said, “Excellent indeed is moderation in poverty. Excellent indeed is moderation in affluence. Excellent indeed is moderation in worship.” [19]

Mutarraf ibn ‘Abdullah ibn Shikhkhir had a son who would strive greatly in worship so he said to him, ‘The best of affairs is the middle one, the good deed lies between two evil deeds and the worst of journeys is the one where one strives so much that he kills his mount and is left stranded.’ [Bayhaqi #3888; and Abu Nu‘aym, vol. 2, p. 209]

Abu ‘Ubaydah said: He means that excessiveness in worship is evil, deficiency is evil, and moderation is praiseworthy.

This meaning is supported by the hadith reported on the authority of ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Amr (*radīyAllahu ‘anhu*) that the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said, “This religion is powerful so walk in it with gentleness and let not the worship of Allah become burdensome for you for the one who falters and is unable to continue has neither shortened the journey nor preserved his mount [20]. Work the deeds of a man who believes that he will die as an old man and beware of the fear of a man who believes that he will die tomorrow.” Recorded by ibn Zanjawayh and others. [Bayhaqi, *Sunan al-Kubra* #4520-4521, *al-Shu‘ab* #3886]

In his (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) repeatedly mentioning the command to moderation lies an indication that one should persist in this moderation. This is because a strenuous journey in which one strives greatly is prone to end suddenly without completion; a moderate journey, however, is more likely to reach its goal. This is why the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) stated that the end result of moderation was the achievement of the objective, “and whoever travels by night will reach his destination.”

In this world, the believer is travelling to his Lord until he reaches Him,

You, verily, O man, are working towards your Lord - painfully toiling - and you shall meet Him.

[*al-Inshiqaq* (84): 6]

And worship your Lord till the certainty comes to you.

[*al-Hijr* (15): 99]

al-Hasan said, ‘People! Persistence, persistence! Surely Allah has appointed the time of cessation of deeds to be just before death,’ and then he recited the above verse. He also said, ‘Your souls are your mounts so tend to your mounts, in this way they will convey you to your Lord, Mighty and Magnificent.’

The meaning of tending to one’s mounts is to be easy on them, to keep them fit and healthy, and not to overburden them. Therefore if one feels his soul is coming to a halt in its travel, he tends to it by inculcating in it the desire to finish the journey or by inculcating in it the fear of not finishing the journey, as the situation may demand. One of the Salaf said, ‘Hope is the guide and fear is the driver and the soul is between the two like a headstrong animal.’ So when the guide has grown tired and the driver is unable to have effect, the soul will stop and it will then need gentle treatment and “song” to provoke it into recommencing its journey. In this respect the camel leader, who drives on his herd by singing, said,

*Its guide gave it glad tidings saying:*

*Tomorrow shall you see bananas and mountains.*

Fear is like a whip and when a person excessively whips the animal, it could well die. As such one must also strike it with “songs” of hope that would encourage it to eagerly revitalise its efforts until it arrives at the destination. Abu Yazid said, ‘I have persistently guided my soul to Allah without letting up, it weeping all the way, then I urged it on until it laughed.’ [ibn Mulaqqin, *Tabaqat al-Awliya*, p. 278 #117] It is said,

*When it complained of the burdens of the journey,*

*he promised it*

*Of the relief of arrival so it revitalised its efforts.*

## 5.1 Travelling the Path of Allah, Mighty and Magnificent

Khulayd al-‘Asari said, ‘Every lover desires to meet his beloved, so love your Lord and travel to Him with a fine journey: neither arduous nor lax. This journey will take the believer to his Lord and whoever does not know the path to his Lord will not traverse it and there is no difference between such a person and an animal.’ [Abu Nu‘aym, vol. 2, p. 232]

Dhu'l-Nun said, 'The lowly are those who do not know the path to their Lord and nor do they seek to know it.' [Abu Nu'aym, vol. 9, p. 372]

The path to Allah is to traverse His Straight Path with which He sent His Messenger (sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam) and for which He revealed His Book [21]. It is this Path that He commanded the whole of creation to traverse. Ibn Mas'ud said, 'The Straight Path: Muhammad (sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam) left us on one end of it and the other end is in Paradise. To its right and left are paths branching off on which stand people summoning those who pass by them. Whoever takes to those paths will end up in the Fire but the one who remains on the Path will end up in Paradise.' Then he recited,

**And verily this is My Straight Path, so follow it. Follow not other ways, lest you be parted from His way. This has He ordained for you, that you may ward off (evil).**

[*al-An'am* (6): 153]

This was recorded by ibn Jarir and others [Tabari #14175]. Therefore the Path that leads to Allah is one, the Straight Path, and all other paths are the paths of Shaytan, whoever traverses them is cut off from Allah and will end up in the abode of His displeasure, anger, and punishment [22].

## 5.2 Deeds are by their Conclusion

It is possible that a man traverse the Straight Path in the beginning of his life, then deviate from it and travel one of the paths of Shaytan, hence he is cut off from Allah and destroyed. “Indeed one of you will work the deeds of the People of Paradise until there is only a cubit or fathom between him and it and then he will work the deeds of the denizens of the Fire and enter it.” [Bukhari #3332-6594 and Muslim #2643-6723]

Conversely it is possible that a person travel one of the paths of the Shaytan in the beginning of his life and then good fortune come his way, and he traverse the Straight Path and thereby reach Allah. It is essential that a person firmly traverse the Straight Path from the beginning of the journey to the end,

**That is the bounty of Allah which He gives unto whom He will.**

[*al-Jumu'ah* (62): 4]

**And Allah summons to the Abode of Peace, and leads whom He will to a straight path.**

[*Yunus* (10): 25]

Many are the people who turn back after having travelled part of the journey and give up. The hearts are between two fingers of the fingers of the All-Merciful [Muslim #2654-6750 and Tirmidhi #2140],

**Allah confirms those who believe by a firm saying.**

[*Ibrahim* (14): 27]

*My beloved! Those who falter in the path across the desert  
Are many, but those who reach the end are few.*

### 5.3 The Excellence of Drawing Close to Allah

The hadith qudsi mentions, “Whoever draws close to me by a hand-span length I draw closer to him by a cubit. Whoever draws closer to me by a cubit, I draw closer to him by a fathom. Whoever comes to Me walking, I go to Him running.” [Bukhari #7405 and Muslim #2687-6833-2743-] The narration of Ahmad adds, “And Allah is more exalted and greater; Allah is more exalted and greater.” [Ahmad #21374 ] Another hadith in Ahmad has that Allah, Mighty and Magnificent says, “Son of Adam, stand before me and I will walk to you. Walk towards Me and I will run towards you.” [Ahmad #15925]

*Whoever turns towards Us,  
We receive him willingly from afar  
Whoever desires what We want,  
We desire what he wants  
Whoever asks of Us  
We shall grant him more and more again  
Whoever works seeking Our aid,  
We will make soft for him iron.*

Man! Were you to go to the door of the governor, he would not receive you or give you any attention, perhaps he will even prevent you from getting near him. But the King of kings is saying, “Whoever comes to me walking, I will go to him running,” yet you turn away from Him and run after another! You have been cheated in the worst of manners and you have lost out in the severest of ways!

*By Allah, I have never come to visit you  
Except that I found the earth compacting for me,  
And never have I resolved to leave your door  
Except that I tripped over my own garments!*

O you who desire to meet Him, the path has been made clear so why the tarrying and the holding back?

*The Path has been made clear to you, truly  
So none who desires You need now to seek.*

Can there be doubt concerning Allah, the Creator of the heavens and the earth? He calls you that He may forgive you your sins.

[*Ibrahim* (14): 10]

O our people! Respond to Allah's summoner...

[*al-Ahqaf*(46): 31]

*O soul, woe to You!*

*Guidance has come to you,*

*Answer it! Here is the caller of Allah  
summoning you.*

*Many-a-time are you called to guidance  
yet turn away do you,*

*But answer do you the caller to misguidance  
when he calls you!*

## 5.4 The Types of Reaching Allah

Reaching Allah is of two types, one that occurs in this world and one that occurs in the Hereafter. The meaning of reaching in this world is that the heart attains cognisance of Him, and when it does

so, it loves Him, takes solace with Him, realises His closeness to it, and finds Him readily answering its supplications. One narration mentions, “Son of Adam, seek Me and you will find Me. When you find Me you will have found everything, and if you do not find Me, you will have lost everything.”

*Seek Us and you will find Us.*

*In hearts large enough to contain Us:*

*Patient and content*

*With all that comes to them from Us.*

Dhu'l-Nun would go out by night and frequently look up at the sky and say the following lines of poetry until morning,

*Seek for yourselves*

*The likes of what I have found.*

*I have found a place of rest wherein*

*He never falters in His love:*

*If I move away, He draws me close*

*And if I move closer, He draws nigh.*

[Abu Nu' aym, vol. 9, p. 357 #14112]

Reaching in the Hereafter means entering Paradise: the abode of Allah's grace. However Paradise is of many levels and the closeness of its inhabitants to Allah will depend upon the level of cognisance

realised in their hearts in this world, their closeness and their witnessing,

And you will be three kinds: (First) the Companions of the Right Hand; what of the Companions of the Right Hand? And (then) the Companions of the Left Hand; what of the Companions of the Left Hand? And the Foremost in the race, the Foremost in the race: Those are they who will be brought nigh.

[*al-Waqi'ah* (56): 7-11]

While in his house, Shibli would become agitated and recite the following couplets,

*One cannot be patient when You are afar*

*When to closeness is he familiar.*

*From You one cannot suffer being veiled*

*When in love is he immersed.*

*Even if the eye does not see You,*

*For sure the heart beholds You.*

## Chapter Six

# Islam, Iman, Ihsan



In this world, the Straight Path comprises three levels: Islam, Iman, and Ihsan. Whoever remains on the level of Islam until he dies will be saved from eternity in the Fire and he must enter Paradise, even if, before this, he is punished in the Fire. Whoever remains on the level of Iman until he dies will be prevented from entering the Fire altogether for the light of faith extinguishes the blaze of the Fire to such an extent that it says, ‘O believer, go on your way! Your light has extinguished my blaze!’ [23]

Ahmad has the hadith on the authority of Jabir that the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said, “There is no righteous person or sinner except that he will enter it. It will be a source of coolness and peace for the believer just as it was for Ibrahim to the point that the Fire itself will raise a hue and cry at its coolness!” [24] This is the legacy of the lovers inherited from Ibrahim (*‘alayhis-salam*).

*In the fire of the lover is a blaze of love:*

*The fiercest heat of Hell is its coolest portion!*

Whoever remains on the level of Ihsan until he dies will reach Allah,

**For those who do good is the best (reward) and an addition.**

[*Yunus* (10): 26]

The authentic hadith mentions, “When the People of Paradise enter Paradise a caller will announce, ‘People of Paradise, Allah has given you a promise which He wishes to fulfil.’ They will say, ‘What is that? Has He not made our faces white? Has He not made our scales heavy? Has He not granted us entry in Paradise and saved us from the Fire?’ So He will remove the veil and they will look on at Him and by Allah, He will not have granted them anything more beloved to them than this, and there will be nothing that gives more pleasure to their eyes than this! This is the addition.” Then He recited the above verse [Muslim #181-449 and ibn Majah #187].

All the inhabitants of Paradise will have a share of this vision but they will differ as to their closeness when seeing Him and in the number of times they see Him. All of the People of Paradise will see Him on the Day of Increase which is the Day of Jumu‘ah [Tabarani, *al-Awsat* #2084], and the elite amongst them will look at the Face of Allah twice a day, once in the morning and once in the evening. The generality of the People of Paradise have their provision given

them twice a day, in the morning and the evening, whereas the elite see Him in the morning and the evening. Neither palaces can make the Gnostics forget their beloved and nor can running rivers quench their thirst. One of them used to say, ‘When I am hungry, remembrance of Him is my food, and when I am thirsty, witnessing Him is my wish and gratification.’ [25]

One of the righteous was seen in a dream and he was asked about the condition of two scholars to which he replied, ‘At this time I have left them before Allah, Mighty and Magnificent, eating, drinking, enjoying bliss.’ He was asked, ‘What of you?’ He replied, ‘He knows my lack of desire for food so instead He allows me to look at Him.’

*When I desire drink, You are my satiation  
And when I desire food, You are my gratification.*

Ahmad records the hadith on the authority of ibn ‘Umar that the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said, “The people with the lowest ranking in Paradise will look at his dominion for two thousand years seeing the farthest end of it as he sees the nearest end of it, and he will look at his wives and servants. The ones with the highest ranking will look at the Face of Allah, Blessed and Exalted is He, twice a day.” [26] This hadith was also recorded by Tirmidhi with the wording, “The person with the lowest ranking

in Paradise will be one who will look at his gardens, wives, blessings, servants, and couches, for the journey of one thousand years. The best of them with Allah will look at His Face morning and evening.” [27] Then the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) recited,

**That Day will faces be resplendent, looking toward their Lord.**

[*al-Qiyamah* (75): 22-23]

It is because of this that the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said in the authentic hadith reported on the authority of Jarir ibn ‘Abdullah al-Bajali, “You will see your Lord on the Day of Judgment like you see the moon on a night when it is full, you will have no difficulty in seeing Him.” He then said, “So if you are able not to be overwhelmed to the point of missing a prayer before the rising of the sun and before its setting, then do so.” Then he recited,

**And glorify your Lord - all the while praising Him - before the rising of the sun and before its setting.**

[*Qaf*(50): 39] [28]

## 6.1 The Periods of Morning and Evening

In Paradise, these two periods are reserved for looking at Allah with respect to the elite, and in this world he (sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam) encouraged the preservation of the prayer at these two times. Therefore whoever prays these two prayers in this world in the best of ways, with submissiveness, presence of heart, and performing all its mannerisms, it is hoped that he will be of those who will see Allah at these two periods in Paradise. This is more so if one holds fast to the remembrances and other types of worship until the sun rises or sets. If the servant adds to this a journey in the last part of the night, then he has journeyed in all three times: the end of the night, the morning, and the evening, and if he is true, for sure this will be followed by the achievement of the greatest objective,

**In an Assembly of Truth, in the presence of a Sovereign Omnipotent.**

[*al-Qamar* (54): 55]

Whoever adheres resolutely to truthfulness in his journey will be led to a Sure Footing,

**And bring unto those who believe the good tidings that they have a sure footing with their Lord.**

[*Yunus* (10): 2]

The lover is always asking after his beloved, inquiring about any news concerning him, eliciting any small piece of information, and following his tracks in order to traverse the path that leads to him.

*O seeker after her! Is there anyone who can answer (me)?  
For, after our time together, I know of no other felicity!  
Were I only to know where her family have pitched tent,  
To which of Allah's lands have they wandered to,  
We would have rushed after her as does the wind!  
Seeking this felicity even if it be beyond the stars!*

Great indeed is the aspiration whose goal is Allah and noble indeed is the soul whose beloved is He.

Allah says,

**Repel not those who call upon their Lord at morn and evening,  
seeking His face.**

[*al-An'am* (6): 52]

*What has the lover to do save the pursuit of his love?  
In every land the lover roams as one delirious.*

## 6.2 Those who Hold to the World and those who Hold on to the Hereafter

The worth of every man is judged by what he seeks. None can put a value to one who seeks Allah for this is immeasurable. The one who seeks after the world is too lowly to be valued. Shibli said, 'Whoever holds fast to this world will be burned by its blaze until he becomes ashes blown about by the wind. Whoever holds on to the Hereafter will be burned by its light such that he becomes pure gold of the highest quality and is benefited from. Whoever holds on to Allah will be burned by the light of Tawhid and will become a jewel that is beyond value.'

*He has ambitions, the greatest of which is illimitable;  
The least of which time itself finds untouchable.*

al-Shibli was asked, 'Will the lover ever gain satisfaction from something from his Beloved before witnessing Him?' He replied with the following couplets,

*By Allah! Were You to crown me  
With the crown of Chosroes, king of the orient,  
And before me the wealth of creation present -  
The wealth of those today and those of old -  
'But we shall not meet for a time,' I am told*

*To our meeting, My Master, would I gladly assent!*

Whoever's ambition is great will only ever be content with seeking Allah, Glorious and Exalted is He.

*My every journey to and fro,  
Morning and evening -  
And so too, remembrance of You  
- is my very breath of life,  
A refreshing breeze and soothing quietude.  
You are my ambition and my lot,  
My objective and my success.  
O source of my succour and refuge  
Keep me guided aright and correct me*

## Chapter Seven

# The Unexpected Confrontation



Allah, Exalted is He says,

**And there will appear unto them, from their Lord, that wherewith they never reckoned.**

[*Zumar* (39): 47]

This verse bore down heavily upon the fearful Gnostics for it states that some servants, when they meet Allah, will be confronted with things that they never expected. For example he could be unaware of what his hands have wrought, not paying it any attention, then when his covering is lifted he will see these terrible matters, and have things confront him that he never catered for. This is why ‘Umar (*radiyAllahu ‘anhu*) said, ‘If I had the dominion of the whole earth I would gladly ransom it to save me from the terror of the unveiling.’ [Abu Ya‘la #2731] A hadith mentions, “Hope not for death for the terror of the unveiling is great. It is from the felicity of a person that Allah grant him long life and nourish him with penitence.” [Ahmad #14564]

One of the sages amongst the Salaf said, 'How many occasions of sorrow will one face on the Day of Judgment that did not even cross his mind.' In this vein Allah, Exalted is He says,

**You were in heedlessness of this. Now We have removed from your covering from you, and piercing is your sight this Day.**

[*Qaf*(50): 22]

### **7.1 The Types of Actions that will be as Scattered Dust**

*The First:* comprising something more general than previously mentioned and that is one having deeds from which he hopes good but they end up scattered dust and are altered to evil deeds. Allah, Exalted is He says,

**As for those who disbelieve, their deeds are as a mirage in a desert. The thirsty one thinks it to be water till he comes to it and finds it naught, and finds, in the place thereof, Allah Who will pay him his due; and Allah is swift at reckoning.**

[*an-Nur*(24): 39]

**And We shall turn unto the work they did and make it scattered motes.**

[*al-Furqan*(25): 23]

Fudayl said concerning this verse, *“And there will appear unto them, from their Lord, that wherewith they never reckoned,”* ‘They worked deeds thinking them to be good when in reality they were evil.’

*The Second:* Close to the above: a servant commits an evil deed to which he pays no regard, thinking it insignificant, and that sin will be the cause of his perdition as Allah says,

**...you counted it a trifle but in the sight of Allah it is very great.**

[*an-Nur* (24): 15]

One of the Companions said, ‘You are doing deeds that are, in your eyes, more insignificant than a hair, whereas at the time of the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) we would consider them to be destructive sins!’ [Bukhari #6492]

*The Third:* Worse than the previous case: one to whom the evil of his conduct seems pleasing. Allah, Exalted is He says,

**Say: Shall We inform you who will be the greatest losers by their works? Those whose efforts go astray in the life of the world, and yet they reckon that they do good work.**

[*Kahf*(18): 103-104]

ibn ‘Uyaynah said, ‘When death came to Muhammad ibn al-Munkadir he became apprehensive and so the people summoned Abu Hazim and he came. Ibn al-Munkadir said to him, “Allah says, *‘And there will appear unto them, from their Lord, that wherewith they never reckoned,’* and I fear that things will become clear to me and confront me that I never expected.” Then both of them broke down in tears.’ Recorded by ibn Abi Hatim and ibn Abi al-Dunya adds in his report, ‘So his family said, “We called you that you may console him but you have only increased his apprehension!” He then told them of what he had said.’ [ibn al-Jawzi, vol. 2, p. 167 #185]

Fudayl ibn ‘Iyad said, ‘I have been informed that it was said to Sulayman al-Taymi, “You! Who is there like you!” He said, “Quiet! Do not say this! I do not know what will appear before me from Allah, I have heard Allah saying, *“And there will appear unto them, from their Lord, that wherewith they never reckoned.”*” [Dhahabi, *Tadhkiratu’l-Huffaz*, vol. 1, p. 151.]

*The Fourth:* Sufyan al-Thawri would say upon hearing this verse, ‘Woe to the people of ostentation.’ [Qurtubi, vol. 15, p. 265] This can be seen in the hadith about the three who would be the first to be hurled into the Fire: the scholar, the one who gave charity, and the mujahid [29].

*The Fifth:* The one who has worked righteous deeds but has also wronged others and he thinks that his deeds will save him, so there confronts him that which he was not expecting. All of his deeds are apportioned amongst those who he wronged, then some wrong still remains to be requited, and so their evil deeds are piled onto his and as a result he is hurled into the Fire.

*The Sixth:* His account could be scrutinised at which it will be asked of him to show how he was grateful for the blessings granted him. The least blessing would be balanced against his deeds and outweigh them with the remaining blessings yet to be weighed! This is why the Prophet (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said, “Whoever’s account is scrutinised will be punished,” or, “will be destroyed.”

*The Seventh:* He could have evil deeds that destroy some of his deeds or the deeds of his limbs, save Tawhid, as a result of which he will enter the Fire. Ibn Majah records the hadith on the authority of Thawban that the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said, “There are people amongst my nation who will come with deeds like mountains and Allah will render them as scattered dust.” This hadith goes on to mention, “They are a people who have your skin, (they speak your language), they spend part of the night in prayer as you do, but they are people who, when they are alone, violate the prohibitions of Allah.” [Ibn Majah #4245]

Ya'qub ibn Shaybah and ibn Abi al-Dunya record on the authority of Salim, the freed-slave of Abu Hudhayfah, that the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said, "A group of people will be brought on the Day of Judgment with deeds like Mount Tihamah and Allah will render their deeds to dust and they will be thrown face first in the Fire." Salim said, 'I fear that I am one of them!' He (sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said, "They would fast, pray, and apportion some of the night for worship, but in secret, when an opportunity to do something forbidden presented itself, they would take it and as such Allah will invalidate their deeds." A person could have his deeds annulled because of showing off or arrogance and the likes yet not even be aware of it!

## **7.2 Sadness in the World and Misery in the Hereafter**

Daygam, the devout worshipper, said, 'If the Hereafter of the believer does not bring happiness then two matters have gathered for him: sadness in this world and misery in the Hereafter.' It was asked of him, 'How can a person who is striving hard in the abode of this world not face happiness in the Hereafter?' He replied, 'What of acceptance? What of safety? How many are the people who think they have worked righteous deeds yet on the Day of

Judgment they are gathered together and thrown in his face.’ [Abu Nu‘aym, vol. 3, p. 360]

It is because of this that ‘Amir ibn ‘Abd Qays and others would be greatly apprehensive of the verse,

**Allah accepts only from those who ward off (evil).**

[*al-Ma‘idah* (5): 27]

Ibn ‘Awn said, ‘Do not feel secure because of a great number of deeds for you do not know if they have been accepted or not. Do not feel secure about your sins for you do not know if they have been expiated or not. This is because all of your deeds are unseen to you and you have no idea what Allah will do with them.’

Nakha‘i wept at the time of his death saying, ‘I await the messenger of my Lord and I have no idea if he will give me glad tidings of Paradise or Hell.’ [Abu Nu‘aym, vol. 4, p. 224] Another also felt anxious at the time of death and it was asked of him, ‘Why so anxious?’ He replied, ‘This is the time in which I have no idea where I will be led.’

One of the Companions was overcome with anxiety at the time of his death and he was asked after his state to which he replied, ‘Allah took His creation in two handfuls, a handful for Paradise and a

handful for Hell, and I have no idea to which handful I belong!

[30]

### 7.3 Beware, beware!

Whoever ponders this as it deserves will find himself in a state of apprehension for the son of Adam will face great terrors during his life such as death, the grave, the barzakh, the Standing; the Bridge and the Balance, and the greatest of all: standing before Allah, Mighty and Magnificent, and the Fire. He will fear losing his faith at the last minute and being condemned for eternity in the Fire. The true believer will never feel secure from all these matters,

None deems himself secure from Allah's scheme save folk that perish.

[*al-A'raf*(7): 99]

All of these matters should prevent the son of Adam from resting and relaxing. A person was seen in a dream saying,

*How can the eye sleep in peace and serenity?*

*Yet in which of the Two Abodes will it dwell?*

*- There is no guarantee.*

One of those on his death bed, a devout worshipper, was asked about his state to which he said,

*None who enters the grave knows what lies awaiting  
Save Allah, the One who to the graves is leading.*

In this respect one of them said,

*By Allah, were man to know for what he was created,  
He would not be remiss nor would he sleep.  
He was created for such a thing that be assured  
Were hearts to see it neither stray would they nor sleep:  
Death, then to the grave, then to be resurrected:  
Rebuke dire and terrors appalling, (in this bewweep!)  
For the Day of Gathering have men exerted,  
Praying and fasting in trepidation deep!  
But we, when prohibited or commanded,  
Are like the People of the Cave: awake yet asleep!*

*All praise is due to Allah, Lord of the worlds. Peace and blessings  
be upon our Master, Muhammad, his family and all his  
Companions.*

# End Notes



[1] Muslim #2816-7113 records the hadith of Abu Hurayrah that the Prophet (*sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) said, “There is not a single person whose deeds will enter him into Paradise.” It was asked, ‘Messenger of Allah, not even you?’ He replied, “Not even me, unless Allah were to envelop me in His mercy.”

He also records #2816-7121 on the authority of Jabir that he heard the Messenger of Allah (*sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam*) saying, “The deeds of any one of you will not enter him into Paradise or save him from the Fire, not even me unless it be through the mercy of Allah.” The hadith is also recorded on the authority of Abu Sa‘id by Ahmad #11486; Abu Musa, Usamah ibn Sharik, Sharik ibn Tariq, and Asad ibn Kurz by Tabarani, *al-Kabir* #493-1001-6549-7218-7221.

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[2] Ghazali quoted them in *Ihya’ ‘Ulum al-Din*, vol. 1, p. 299, and ‘Iraqi said, ‘Recorded by ibn ‘Adi and Mustaghfiri and none of them are authentic.’

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[3] Ibn Hajr, *Talkhis al-Habir*, vol. 4, p. 171, said, ‘It is reported that Jibril taught Adam these words, ‘al-Hamdulillah, with a praising that befits, and suffices, His favours and recompenses His addition,’ and then said, ‘I have taught you comprehensive words of praise.’ Ibn al-Salah said in his discussion to *al-Wasit*, ‘Da‘if isnad, munqati.’

Nawawi, *al-Rawdah*, said, ‘I found it in ibn al-Salah, *al-Amali...* and it is mu‘dal.’

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[4] This meaning is also recorded by Hakim #7641, 7642 on the authority of ibn ‘Abbas that the Prophet (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said, “....then if a good deed remains, Allah will expand generously [a place] for him in Paradise.” Hakim said it was sahih with Dhahabi agreeing.

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[5] Muslim #2581/6579 records on the authority of Abu Hurayrah that the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) asked, “Do you know the bankrupt person is?” They said, ‘A bankrupt man amongst us is one who has neither dirham with him nor wealth.’ He said, “The bankrupt person of my nation would be he who comes on the Day of Resurrection with prayers and fasts and Zakat but he

hurled abuses upon this person, brought calumny against that person, unlawfully consumed the wealth of that person, shed the blood of that person, and beat that person. So his good deeds would be credited to the deeds of those people [by way of retaliation] and if his good deeds fall short to clear the account, their sins would be added to his and he would be thrown in the Fire.”

Muslim #2582/6580 records on the authority of Abu Hurayrah that the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said, “All rights will be restored to their owners on the Day of Judgment. Even a hornless goat that is butted by a ram will have justice.”

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[6] Hakim #8728 and Dhahabi said the isnad contained a weak narrator. Ibn Abi Shaybah, vol. 13, p. 360, has the wording, “...will not be forgiven,” and ibn al-Mubarak, *al-Zuhd* #1324 also records this wording as a statement of ‘A’ishah.

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[7] Tabarani, *al-Awsat* #4844. Its isnad contains a weak narrator as per Haythami, vol. 1, p. 307. The author, *Jami‘ al-‘Ulum*, vol. 1, p. 177, said the isnad was da‘if.

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[8] Tirmidhi #3358 records on the authority of Abu Hurayrah that the Prophet (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said, “The first thing that the servant will be asked about on the Day of Judgment of the pleasures will be: Did We not give you a healthy body? Did We not give you cool water to drink?” It was declared sahih by ibn Hibban #7364 and Hakim #7203 with Dhahabi agreeing.

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[9] Ahmad #17650 records on the authority of Muhammad ibn Abi ‘Amirah that the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said, “Were a servant to remain in the state of prostration from the day he was born to the day he dies an old man, in devout obedience to Allah, Mighty and Magnificent, he would consider that insignificant on the Day of Judgment and would wish to return to this world so that he may increase in reward.” It was declared sahih by Albani, *Sahih al-Targhib* #3597.

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[10] Talq ibn Habib said upon being asked about *taqwa*, ‘That you perform the obedience of Allah upon a light from Allah, hoping for the reward of Allah. You leave disobedience to Allah upon a light from Allah, fearing the punishment of Allah.’ Recorded by ibn al-Mubarak, *al-Zuhd* #473 with a sahih isnad.

Ibn al-Qayyim, *al-Risalah al-Tabukiyyah*, p. 27, said, ‘This is the best that has been said concerning the definition of *taqwa* for indeed every action must have a beginning cause to it and an objective. An action can never be considered to be obedience and a cause to draw one closer to Allah until its point of commencement and cause be unadulterated faith, not habit, not base desires, not the wish for praise and position, nor other such things. Its objective must be the reward that lies with Allah and His good-pleasure, this being the definition of *ih̥tisab*. This is why we often find the combined mention of these two foundations such as in his (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) saying, “Whoever fasts the month of Ramadan out of faith and *ih̥tisab*...”’.

His saying, ‘upon a light from Allah’ points to the first foundation which is faith. His saying, ‘hoping for the reward of Allah’ points to the second foundation which is *ih̥tisab*.’

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[11] Ahmad #2107 and Bukhari, vol. 1, p. 93, as a ta‘liq report. Ar: *al-Hanifiyyah al-Samhah*. Shaykh Sindi said, ‘al-Hanafiyyah is an attribution to the religion of Ibrahim and what is meant here is the religion of Islam with which our Prophet (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) was sent for it resembles the religion of Ibrahim in its foundations and in many of the subsidiary issues. The Hanif in the language of the Arabs is one who follows the religion of the

Ibrahim. al-Samhah means that which is easy upon the self and not burdensome like monasticism.’

Ahmad #24855 also records on the authority of ‘A’ishah that the Prophet (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said, “I have been sent with the easy religion.”

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[12] Bukhari #2663-6060 records on the authority of Abu Musa that the Prophet (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) heard a person excessively praising another person to which he said, “You have broken his back!” Ahmad #5684 records on the authority of ibn ‘Umar that the Prophet (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said, “If you see those given to praising, throw dust in their faces.” It was declared sahih by ibn Hibban #5770 and Haythami, vol. 8, p. 117.

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[13] Ahmad #20347. It was declared authentic by Haythami, vol. 3, pp. 308-310, vol. 4, p. 15. “A nation from whom ease is desired,” meaning that you have no need of going to such extremities in worship, and neither should a person be praised for doing so, rather a balanced path is more deserving.

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[14] Bukhari #3418 and Muslim #1159-2729-2730-2739. The fast of Dawud is to fast one day and not fast the next. The night prayer of Dawud consisted of him sleeping half the night, praying the next third, and sleeping the next sixth.

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[15] Muslim #656/1491 on the authority of ‘Uthman. Ibn al-Qayyim, *al-Manar al-Munif*, p. 40, said, ‘Therefore the one who prays these prayers in congregation has the reward of one who prayed the whole night. If this person prays these two prayers in congregation and prays by night he receives both the rewards of actually praying the night and the equivalent reward again. If this person prays those two prayers by himself but prays the night prayer will get the reward of one who had prayed in congregation and slept by night.’

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[16] mentioned in His saying, *“Guard strictly your prayers, and the Middle Prayer.”* [*al-Baqarah* (2): 238]. Bukhari #6396 and Muslim #627-1420-1426 record a hadith stating that the Middle Prayer is the ‘Asr prayer. The author, may Allah have mercy upon him, also proceeds to mention other reasons that strengthen this verdict.

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[17] Bukhari #1145 and Muslim #756-1772-1778 record on the authority of Abu Hurayrah that the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said, “Every night, when the last third of the night remains, our Lord, Blessed and Exalted is He, descends to the lowest heaven and says, ‘Is there anyone who invokes Me that I may respond? Is there anyone asking of Me that I may give it to him? Is there anyone who asking My forgiveness that I may forgive him?’”

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[18] The hadith is not recorded by Muslim, rather Abu Dawud #2571 on the authority of Anas. Hakim #1630 said it was sahih and Dhahabi agreed. It was also declared sahih by Albani #3122.

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[19] Bazzar #2946 on the authority of Hudhayfah. It was ruled da‘if jiddan by Albani, *Da‘if al-Jami‘* #4948.

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[20] This amount is recorded by Bazzar and Suyuti #2509 declared it da‘if as did Haythami, vol. 1, p. 62.

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[21] Tirmidhi #76 records on the authority of Nawwas ibn Sam‘an that the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said, “Allah has set forth the following as a parable: there is a road that

leads straight to the destination. On either side of the road there is a wall in which there are open doors with curtains hanging on them. From the remote end of the road, a voice calls, 'Proceed straight and do not turn aside.' Whenever someone intends to lift a curtain from the door another voice calls from above, 'Beware! Do not lift the curtain; otherwise you will be lured inside.' The Prophet (sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam) explained the parable by saying that the straight path is Islam, the walls are the limits imposed by Allah, the open doors are the things that he has prohibited, the voice which calls from the end of the road is the Qur'an and the voice which calls from above is Allah's monitor in the heart of every believer."

It was declared hasan gharib by Tirmidhi and sahih by Hakim #245 with Dhahabi agreeing and Albani, *Sahih al-Jami'* #3887.

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[22] Ibn al-Qayyim said, 'We will expound upon the Straight Path in a succinct manner for the people have explained it in various ways all of them revolving around one essential fact. The Straight Path is the path of Allah which He has put in place to lead mankind to Him; there is no path to Him other than this one which He appointed upon the tongues of His Messengers. It is to single Him out alone for worship and to single out His Messengers alone for obedience. Therefore none should commit *shirk* in His worship just as none should commit *shirk* in the following of His Messenger

(sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam); one should purify his *tawhid* and purify his following of the Messenger (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam), this is the full import of the testification that, ‘None has the right to be worshipped save Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.’

All of the various explanations given to the Straight Path fall under these two principles. You must love Him with all your heart, you must try to please Him to the utmost of your ability; there should not be any area of your heart except that it is overflowing with love of Him and you should have no desire except to please Him. The first point is realised through actualising, ‘None has the right to be worshipped save Allah’ and the second point is realised through actualising, ‘Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.’ This is guidance and the religion of truth, this is knowing the truth and acting upon it, this in turn is knowing what He sent His Messenger with and living by it. All definitions revolve around this essential concept. Sahl bin ‘Abdullah said, ‘Stick to the narrations and Sunnah for I fear that a time will come when the Prophet (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) and the importance of following him in everything is mentioned, the people would censure the person who says this, cause others to flee from him, disassociate themselves from him, humiliate him and disgrace him.’ - ‘Abdu’l-Rahman Ali al-Shaykh, *Fath al-Majid Sharh Kitab at-Tawhid*, p. 24.

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[23] Tabarani, *al-Kabir* #668. Haythami, vol. 10, p. 360, mentions that its isnad contains a weak narrator and it was declared da'if by Suyuti #3354 and Albani, *Da'if al-Jami'* #2474.

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[24] Ahmad #14520. Bayhaqi #370 said that its isnad was hasan. Hakim #8744 said it was sahih and Dhahabi agreed. Haythami, vol. 7, p. 55, said that the narrators of Ahmad were trustworthy and precise. However both Albani, *Da'if al-Targhib* #2110 and Arna'ut, *Tahqiq Musnad* show that the isnad is da'if due to the presence of an unknown narrator.

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[25] Ibn Abi'l-'Izz, *Sharh 'Aqidah al-Tahawiyyah*, p. 213, said, 'The nation is agreed that Allah will not be seen by anyone in this world. They did not differ over this except with regards our Prophet (sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam) specifically.' Nawawi, *Sharh Muslim*, vol. 2, p. 105, said, 'As for seeing Allah, Exalted is He, in this world then we have previously mentioned that this is a possibility, however the majority of the Salaf and later generations, both amongst the Mutakallimin and others, are of the opinion that it will not occur in this world.' Kilabadhi, *al-Ta'arruf li Madhab al-Tasawwuf*, p. 43, said, 'They have all agreed that He will not be seen in this world, not with the eyes nor the hearts, except from the perspective of

certainty. This is because this seeing is from the greatest of blessings and as such is befitting that it occur in the best of places. Now if they were granted this vision, the greatest blessing, in this world, there would be no distinction between it and Paradise.’ Perhaps these words serve to clarify the meaning of the words of the author, may Allah have mercy upon him.

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[26] Ahmad [#5317] Haythami, vol. 10, p. 401, said it contains a narrator who is agreed to be da‘if and Albani, *Da‘if al-Jami‘* #1381 ruled it da‘if.

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[27] Tirmidhi #2553-3330 and he said it was gharib. It was declared da‘if by Albani, *Da‘if al-Jami‘* #1382.

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[28] “You will not be harmed in seeing Him,” the hadith has two readings, one of them meaning that ‘you will not be crowded so close together so you have difficulty in seeing Him’ and the other meaning ‘you will not be wronged in any way when you see Him such that some can see and others cannot.’ - ibn al-Athir, *al-Nihayah*, vol. 3, pp. 92-93.

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[29] Muslim #1905/4923 on the authority of Abu Hurayrah with the words, “The first man (whose case) will be decided on the Day of Judgment, will be a man who died as a martyr. He shall be brought forth and Allah will recount His blessings (which He had bestowed upon him) and he will acknowledge them. Then Allah will ask, “What did you do with them?” He will reply, “I fought for Your sake until I died as a martyr.” Allah will say, “You lie. You fought so that you might be called a ‘brave warrior’ and you were called so.” Then a command will be given and he will be dragged on his face and cast into Hell.

And a man who acquired knowledge and taught it and recited the Qur’an. He will be brought forth and Allah will recount His blessings (which He had bestowed upon him) and he will acknowledge them. Then Allah will ask, “What did you do with them?” He will say, “I acquired knowledge and disseminated it and recited the Qur’an for your sake.” Allah will say, “You lie. You acquired knowledge so that you might be called ‘a scholar,’ and you recited the Qur’an so that it might be said, ‘He is a Qari’,’ and it was said. Then a command will be given and he will be dragged on his face and cast into Hell.

And a man whom Allah had made abundantly rich and had granted every kind of wealth. He will be brought forth and Allah will recount His blessings (which He had bestowed upon him) and he

will acknowledge them. Then Allah will ask, “What did you do with them?” He will say, “I spent money in every cause in which You wished that it should be spent for Your sake.” Allah will say, “You lie. You did so that it might be said, “He is generous,” and it was said. Then a command will be given and he will be dragged on his face and cast into Hell.’

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[30] Ahmad #17594 on the authority of one of the Companions, and Haythami, vol. 7, pg. 187 said, ‘Its narrators are those of the Sahih.’ Tabarani, *al-Kabir*, vol. 20, pg. 365, records it on the authority of Mu’adh ibn Jabal and Haythami points out two weaknesses in the isnad.

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