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THE JOURNEY OF THE HEREAFTER BY SHAYKH ZULFIQAR AHMED

The Life to Come

Each approaching day is cutting short our life in this world and every day we are drawing nearer to our grave. Hence, we need to take strong steps to prepare for the Hereafter, and should act quickly to accumulate good deeds to earn the pleasure of Allah ﷻ. A servant whose master is displeased with him works harder and more efficiently to earn the master's pleasure.

This is the same condition of the believer in this world who rushes to accumulate good deeds so that his Creator and Master can become pleased with him. The believer tires himself in this pursuit, because if he relaxes and passes his life in ease and fun, then he has forgotten his real purpose and has become involved in his inner desires. He forgets his real purpose of preparing for the Hereafter and starts chasing the false attractions of this world. Such a person is in grave loss if he is not using all his resources to accumulate anything for the Hereafter. He is spending his life unaware that one day he has to die. This is a man to be pitied because worldly pursuits have blinded him.

We have to prepare for the Hereafter in this life and try to please our Creator. We should be involved day and night in thinking of ways to please Him. When we keep this thought foremost in our minds, we will stop wasting our time in useless talk and useless pursuits. Such an individual will stop sinning and displeasing Allah ﷻ, and start spending his life pleasing and living his life by Allah's ﷻ commands. A person who realizes this has no spare time to waste, because he is constantly pursuing new avenues to please Allah ﷻ.

We need to become people who are desirous of the Hereafter. This world and everything in it will end one day, whereas everything in the Hereafter is ever lasting. Consequently whatever man does for the Hereafter will last forever and continue to benefit him.

Staying Focused

This world and the Hereafter are incomparable; this life and everything in it has no value when compared to the life to come. We should spend our time here in this world earning the pleasures of Allah ﷻ. In this way we will not only enjoy the Hereafter, but live honorably in this life as well.

For those who believe and do righteous deeds are Gardens as hospitable homes (32:19)

We should always be mindful of the Day of Judgment, and in this way, we can avoid doing wrong. We can be successful if we weigh the shame of the Day of Judgment against what we can attain if we only practice a little patience in this life.

Why are we living in heedlessness today? We have forgotten the Hereafter and that we will be questioned one day. The Hereafter is absent from our discussions; if we talk about death, the women complain that we are depressing and have nothing else to talk about. The reality is that death *is* the only real topic, for we all have to die and face Allah ﷻ one day.

We have to live in this world like a traveler who has stopped on the way to his real destination. This world is not a place to set up a permanent residence, and death will take us to what is beyond. The purpose of this life is servitude to Allah ﷻ, and the purpose of living is remembrance of Allah ﷻ.

True Submission

Hazrat Shaykh Muhaddis Dehlvi (may the mercy of Allah ﷻ be upon him) writes that once there was intense famine around Delhi, and the scholars (*ulama*) decided to gather the townspeople and offer *Salat-e-Istisqa*¹. On a set day, the entire community – men, women, children, gathered in an open ground with their animals and all prayed for rain. The sky, however, showed no sign of rain and the *ulama* started thinking that this community must have committed some grave sin for Allah ﷻ to withhold the rains.

Just then a young man approached leading a rider on a camel, and inquired as to what was happening. The crowd told him what they were doing there so the young man said that he would also pray likewise.

The crowd saw the young man walk to the camel and fall to one knee as if supplicating, catching hold of the rider's shawl. Almost immediately clouds began to gather and it started raining. The crowd was astonished and asked the young man what he had done, for this crowd of hundreds had been praying for a long time with no results.

The young man explained that the rider on the camel was his mother, who had spent her entire life according to Allah's ﷻ laws. Neither had she ever looked upon a strange man, nor had a non-family male looked upon her. The man continued and said that he would supplicate to Allah ﷻ exactly as he had done just previously whenever he was in need, using his pious mother as an intermediary. Allah ﷻ had always accepted, and this was exactly what he had done now.

The lives of these women weren't like our lives today. Those women used to live in absolute obedience to Allah ﷻ, who in turn used to answer their every prayer. People who obey Allah ﷻ and abstain from what He has forbidden have only to raise their hands and Allah ﷻ will satisfy them beyond their expectations. Today when the husbands leave for work women switch on the television sets or radios. They lose themselves in dramas and musical shows, and gossip is constant within the housework so what kind of acceptance can we expect from Allah ﷻ if we are so absorbed in this kind of vain work? Television, radio, and music are a waste of time that earns us nothing but the displeasure of Allah ﷻ.

Taking time to clean our Hearts

Our women think that they have attained their purpose if they complete their housework on time for the day. Housework and cooking is not what woman was created for, but she was

¹ *Salat-e-Istisqa* is a prayer for rain.

created to live her life according to the *sunnah*² of the Messenger ﷺ of Allah and to please Allah ﷻ. Allah ﷻ wants that we should spend our lives according to the laws of Islam so that He rewards us on the Day of Judgment. If we cannot find the time at night, we should try and spend as much of the daytime in worship as we can and protect ourselves from useless talk such as backbiting and slander. The Holy Quran curses people who seek out and publicize faults within others; for finding fault is one sin, but publicizing it is another. We are so absorbed in fault finding and backbiting that it seems that we cannot rest unless we find something negative in a person.

Today if we correct a person from backbiting, he turns around and says that he is speaking the truth. The definition of backbiting is that the specific talk would hurt the person being spoken of if said to his face, be it true *or* false. However, if the talk is false, it is called slander. The Holy Quran states very clearly that backbiting is a worse sin than adultery. Allah ﷻ can always pardon adultery, but forgiveness for backbiting must be sought from the person who has been slandered.

Housewives today spend their whole lives cleaning their houses and making everything neat because guests visit their houses. These women take pains to make sure everything is clean so that the house does not seem unkempt. However, these same women forget that Allah ﷻ is looking into their hearts every day, and this heart deserves more attention because it is filled with more filth than their houses. Today we cannot find the time to fulfill our daily *tasbeeh* but we find the time to clean the house in which people have to live in for this lifetime. The house in which Allah ﷻ looks is neglected; it is constantly filling with new sins and becoming hard because we have become heedless of Him. We have forgotten our priorities and do not pay attention to how dark and filthy our hearts are becoming.

Allah ﷻ says that neither the earth nor the skies can contain Him, but He can be contained within the believer's heart. We become absorbed in house cleaning at the coming of an ordinary guest almost to the point of obsession. We must ask ourselves why we do not pay the same, if not *more* attention to our hearts, where Allah ﷻ says *He* can be contained.

Rights of Worship

If our women meet someone in the street or at home, or receive a phone call from a friend, their useless gossip takes hours and they have no clue where the time goes. However, this same woman will become restless when listening to a speech about Quran and Hadith, and will find it hard to find time for prayer. These same women do not find time to open the Holy Quran but find time for useless gossip with their friends and they must seriously examine their lives if they seek to change for the better.

A *hadith* says that the Holy Quran will be presented in the form of a young man on the Day of Judgment. This young man will say to Allah ﷻ, "O Allah, You sent me as a guest to these people but they did not see any value in me. They used to wrap me in beautiful covers and kept me away in shelves. People used to pass by me everyday and spend time in useless talk, but I was

² The *sunnah* includes both the external (e.g. lengthy beard) and internal (e.g. mannerisms) acts of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

left all alone. No one would ask after me, take me in their hands, or read me, but I was left to gather dust. I am Your Word and today I demand my right over these people.”

Allah ﷻ describes the Holy Quran as “stubborn”, and continues to say that it will fight with Allah ﷻ for its rights until those who neglected it are thrown into Hell and those who valued it are sent to Paradise.

The *ulama* have written that the Holy Quran’s right over us is two completions in one year. This is the least that every Muslim should do, and whoever can do more is more fortunate. Today our women find it hard to sit for prayer, and even then their prostration is alike a rooster pecking the ground. We should get in the habit of praying and reading the Holy Quran regularly with fear and respect of Allah ﷻ.

Why don’t we have time to spend for Allah ﷻ if we have time for our worldly pursuits? Most of us who *do* pray delay the time of prayer until it is almost over, constantly thinking that we have time, which is a very clever delaying tactic of Shaitan. We hurry when the time is almost gone, whereas we should try and pray at the earliest. We should make a habit of completing Allah’s ﷻ orders *before* tending to our own worldly affairs. The Messenger ﷺ of Allah said that a woman who obeys Allah ﷻ and pleases her husband would be able to enter Paradise from any gate she wishes on the Day of Judgment.

Parents as Examples

The child learns first in his mother’s arms, and the child will follow in example if the mother establishes a habit of prompt worship. The majority of children neither listens nor obeys because they do not see an example. Here the fault lies within the parents who need to evaluate themselves and try to rectify their lives so they set a better example. If results do not materialize despite our strongest efforts, then we should turn to Allah ﷻ in prayer instead of sitting aside and admitting defeat. The supplication of a mother is the cool breeze of Paradise, and even a disobedient mother’s supplication is accepted faster than those of the *aulyaa*. Allah ﷻ can change the inner conditions of the hearts in the blink of an eye, but the fault is within us because we do not have complete trust in Allah ﷻ.

A traveler reflects upon his destination until he reaches that point, and likewise we should ponder the Hereafter and make preparations just like the traveler. We have to be raised in front of Allah ﷻ one day, so we have to take care of our heart and our actions like we take care of our houses. The pleasure of Allah ﷻ and obedience to Him is our sole purpose, whereas a home, food, and finances are *necessities* that we need in order to achieve that purpose. The Hereafter is going to be a place of grave worry for us if we sacrifice this purpose merely to accumulate these worldly belongings which we cannot take with us anyway.

The Shaded

There will be extreme heat and no shelter on the Day of Judgment except that of the Throne of Allah ﷻ. Everybody will be raised in the face of his or her deeds, and Allah ﷻ will shade seven kinds of people under His Throne.

1. A just ruler.
2. A youth who grew up worshipping Allah ﷻ.

3. A man whom a woman tries to seduce but he says that he is scared of Allah ﷻ.
4. A man whose heart is attached to the mosque.
5. Two men (or women) who love each other solely for the love of Allah ﷻ.
6. A man (or woman) who gives in charity and hides it, such that the left hand does not know what the right hand has done.
7. A man (or woman) who remembered Allah ﷻ in private so that the eyes shed tears.

Our Allah is so merciful that He will shade us and forgive our sins just for shedding a few tears, this can only happen if we keep the Hereafter in perspective. Only then we will stop chasing the illusions of this world and keep thinking of ways in which to please Allah ﷻ.

The Day of Judgment has been called the Day of Decision in the Holy Quran; the Day of winning and losing. Allah ﷻ will preside over the decision and man will either win or lose that day. Hence we should prepare for our Hereafter now so that we are not standing empty-handed before Allah ﷻ on that Day.

The Poor Man on the Day of Judgment

The Messenger ﷺ of Allah asked his Companions (*Sahabah*), “Do you know who is a poor man?” The *Sahabah* asked him who and the Prophet ﷺ continued, “The poor man is he who comes to Allah ﷻ with a mountain of good deeds, but has been careless at the same time. He lies at some point, hurts someone, or calls someone names. These people will come and demand their rights on the Day of Judgment, so Allah ﷻ will start distributing his good deeds among them. His good deeds will finish but their rights will not. Allah ﷻ will then take these people’s sins and start collecting them on this man’s head. These sins will pile up like a mountain. Such a one is called a poor person, one who has accumulated a mountain of good deeds but has been careless with his tongue and his hands at the same time.”

Restlessness on the Day

On the Day of Judgment, we will be sweating for worry of our sins. This sweat will not be the sweat of this world, but will be boiling hot. Each one will be in as much sweat as his sins. We will be boiling like vegetables in oil, and the atmosphere will be of intense worry.

People will not be able to bear this intense worry and heat. They will approach the Prophets one by one to intercede with Allah ﷻ to start the Accounting. The Prophets will all decline one by one. Hadrat Adam ؑ will refuse saying that he had disobeyed Allah ﷻ by eating the fruit; Hadrat Nuh ؑ will refuse, saying that his own son refused guidance; Hadrat Isa ؑ will also refuse, saying that his own nation made him the son of God and so he will be terrified to face Allah ﷻ.

People will finally approach the Messenger ﷺ of Allah, who will be standing on the Mount of Mahmud³. Allah ﷻ will be aroused in anger and the Prophet ﷺ will fall in prostration. He will praise Allah ﷻ so highly that no one would have praised Allah ﷻ like that in the past or future. The Messenger ﷺ of Allah will keep praising thus and Allah’s ﷻ anger will be appeased and turn into mercy and kindness. Allah ﷻ will say, “My beloved, raise your head. Today I will

³ A special station and status in Paradise that will be occupied by the Messenger ﷺ of Allah.

grant your every wish.” The Messenger ﷺ of Allah said to the *Sahabah*, “I will ask that the Accounting be started, and I will not enter Paradise until the last of my nation enters Paradise.”

The Messenger ﷺ of Allah was indeed very merciful upon his nation. He used to cry and pray for his nation so much that his beard and the ground would become wet. His ﷺ noble feet used to swell for standing in prayer and his eyes would become red.

Reaping What We Sow

Our state today is that even our mandatory worship is in danger, and our lives are passing away in total heedlessness. Today we neglect payment of our *zakat*⁴; all of us like to save and our women like to make jewelry, but the fear of *zakat* is only in a minority.

The Messenger ﷺ of Allah said that the people who were neglectful of their *zakat* will be stripped of their jewelry on the Day of Judgment and Allah ﷻ will have the angels melt it until it is molten. The angels will then make stakes out of this and apply these heated stakes to the face, front, and back of these people. “Taste what you used to collect in the world,” they will say.

Today women have a strong desire to make jewelry. We should have as much, if not more desire to pay the *zakat* that is due on these items because *zakat* purifies one’s income. If a woman does not honor her *zakat* on the items due it, her ring will become a scorpion, her bangles will become snakes, and her necklaces will become cobras. They will sting and bite in the grave until the Day of Judgment and their victim will scream and kick. A voice will say, “Taste the pleasures of that jewelry which you took pains to safeguard.”

What is the benefit of shaming people in front of others? We should stop talking and backbiting against others and start searching out the good in others so we can save ourselves from the sins of lying, backbiting, and slander. If we cannot do well for others, the least we should do is not hurt anybody, and try to establish good habits and manners in ourselves.

Allah ﷻ dislikes breaking contact with relatives and kin and treating them like enemies. The Messenger ﷺ of Allah said that Allah ﷻ will not forgive one who holds hatred in his heart for another. Hatred is common among members of the same family and between neighbors. Allah ﷻ will not forgive such a person even on *Lailat-ul-Qadr*⁵, a precious night in which Allah ﷻ forgives everybody.

A Clean Heart

The Messenger ﷺ of Allah was seated in a gathering with the *Sahabah* when he looked towards the entrance and said, “A man of Paradise is coming.” At that instance someone who seemed to be very ordinary entered the mosque where they were seated. A *Sahabi* was curious as to why the Prophet ﷺ said this, so he followed the man to his house. This *Sahabi* told the man that he was a traveler and stayed as a guest. For three days the *Sahabi* saw nothing unusual, so he finally told the man what the Prophet ﷺ had said and asked him what was so special. The man thought for a long time and said, “There might be one thing – before going to sleep every night I forgive everyone and sleep with a clean heart.”

⁴ *Zakat* can be defined as an Islamic religious tax, one of the five basic requirements (*arkan* or "pillars") of Islam. All adult Muslims of sound mind and body with a set level of income and assets are expected to pay *zakat*.

⁵ *Lailat-ul-Qadr*, or the Night of Power, in which the first revelation was revealed to the Messenger ﷺ of Allah.

We should all take an example from this hadith and hold ill feeling toward no one. We should have a big heart and forgive for the sake of Allah ﷻ. Allah ﷻ says that He will forgive people quickly if they forgive each other quickly in this life. Consequently, Allah ﷻ will be harsh on whoever is harsh with people in this life. We need to forgive each other quickly and refrain from harshness. Moreover we should not get angry over small things and make them a major issue.

Controlling Anger

Allah ﷻ loves those who control their anger. The person who controls his anger despite having the upper hand and the ability to exact revenge will be so special to Allah ﷻ that he will be able to look upon Allah ﷻ in Paradise. Allah ﷻ will show Himself to such a person because He loves those who exercise mercy when angered.

Let us think on what a good trade this is. We will be among those who will see Allah ﷻ if only we practice patience and control our anger. We should forgive others but not ourselves. We make the biggest mistakes and ignore them, but refuse to forgive others for the smallest mistakes. Our animal desires are pushing us into Hell, but we remain busy in nurturing those same desires. A person should practice self-control and good manners under all circumstances and advise others of the same.

Our time is growing shorter everyday. Let it not be that we are not ready when the Angel of Death comes. The Angel of Death will not ask if the person has any matters left undone, just like a young man is not asked upon his death when he was due to be married. Those who will come to take us will not ask these useless questions, but will take us at the appointed time. Going anywhere without preparation proves very hazardous, and this is why we need to make preparations for the Hereafter *now*.

A Bitter Taste

Hadrat Isa ﷺ used to live atop a hill with his mother Hadrat Maryam ﷺ. They used to spend their days in fasting, and Hadrat Isa ﷺ used to pick fruits from the mangroves below whenever they ate. One day a stranger appeared at the door when Hadrat Isa ﷺ was gone. Hadrat Maryam ﷺ grew frightened and asked who he was. The man said, "I am the one who comes to every door without notice." Hadrat Maryam ﷺ realized that he was the Angel of Death and requested enough time until her fast was over. The Angel said that the appointed time cannot be shortened or lengthened for anyone, and Hadrat Maryam ﷺ was thus taken.

When Hadrat Isa ﷺ returned he did not disturb his mother because he thought she was asleep. However, he approached to wake her as night fell and only then realized that she had left this life. He cried and requested permission from Allah ﷻ to be able to say farewell. Allah ﷻ granted his request and Hadrat Maryam ﷺ opened her eyes. She said to her son, "My son, I have drunk from a cup whose drink is so bitter that I cannot rid my mouth of the aftertaste." Saying this she again closed her eyes.

Now let us evaluate ourselves and see if we are ready for death. Where do we stand in comparison to this chaste lady who is describing death in such grim words? The fortunate are only those who prepare for their death so they will be at peace in the grave and in the Afterlife. However, we will be in the greatest turmoil if we lose the Decision on the Day and are pushed

into Hell. We are so spoiled and have been raised in such comfort that we cannot bear the heat of noonday or the heat of our ovens. The heat and fire of Hell is seventy times the magnitude of anything in this life.

The time to save ourselves from the intensity of this fire is *now*. The time to prepare for the Hereafter is *now*. May Allah give us the wisdom and guidance to treat each other with respect, and prepare for our death. We live in luxury and enjoy of Allah's ﷻ bounties without thanks and we still think that we will enter Paradise. Why should Allah ﷻ grant us everlasting happiness and joy if we are so ungrateful and undeserving?

We all have to die, and *will* die, and there is no escaping that or the Judgment to come. The Angel of Death will come and grab us by the throat and dig his claws into our chest. Can we say that we are ready? We need to start evaluating our lives now and become serious about worshipping and pleasing Allah ﷻ if we claim to be serious about our religion.

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