



# WISDOM

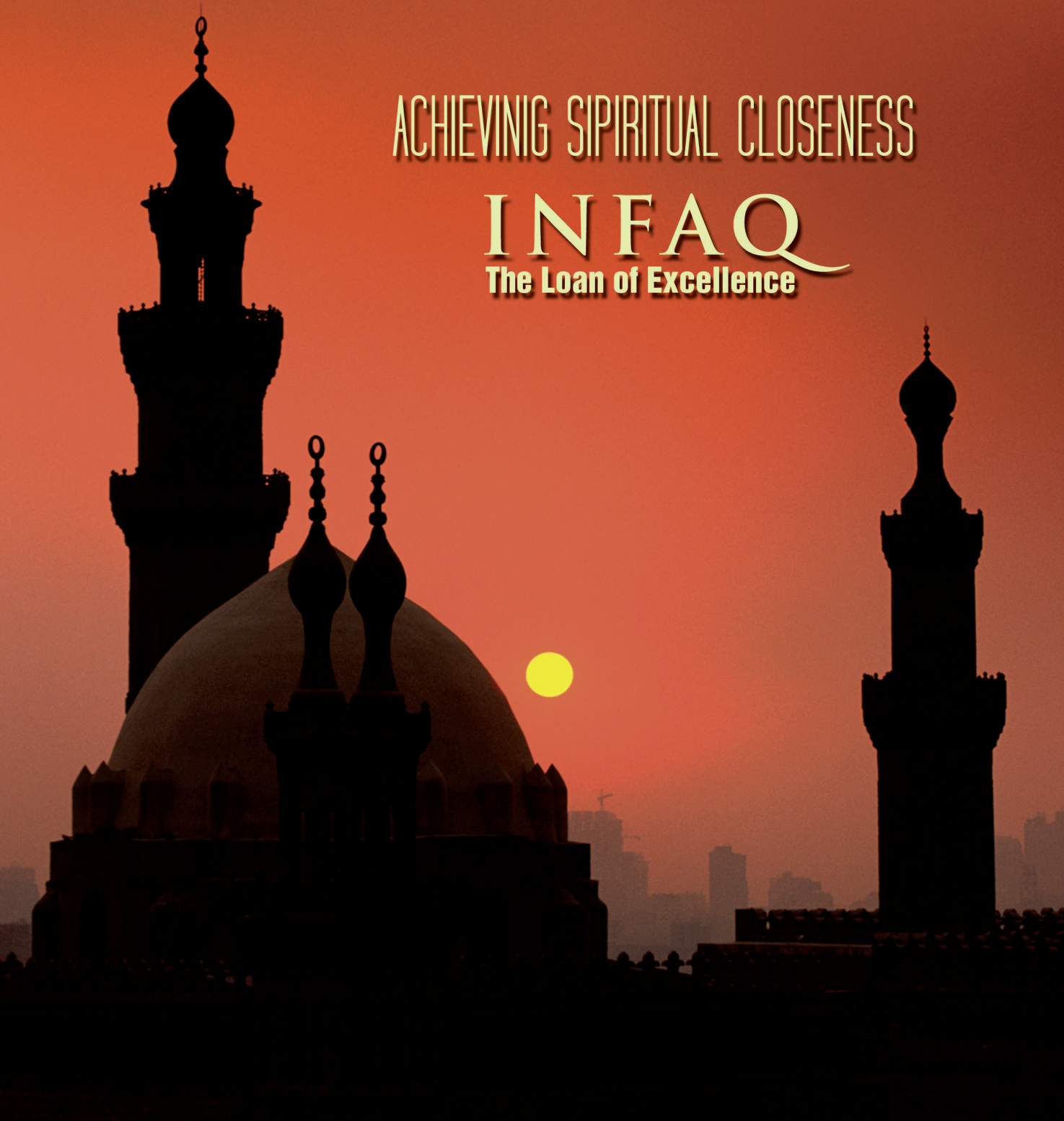
*A Source of Inspirational and Traditional Islamic Knowledge*

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## ACHIEVING SPIRITUAL CLOSENESS

# INFAQ

**The Loan of Excellence**







Dear Readers,

*Who is he that will Loan to Allah a beautiful loan? for (Allah) will increase it manifold to his credit, and he will have (besides) a liberal Reward. (Hadid:57/1)*

*Lo! Those who give alms, both men and women, and lend to Allah a goodly loan, it will be doubled for them, and theirs will be a rich reward. (Hadid:57/18)*  
In so many places in the Qur'an Allah is inviting and encouraging us to give loans to Him.

This statement, '*a loan to Allah*', has been mentioned in six different verses in the Qur'an and the word of '*infaq*' (spending in the cause of Allah) mentioned 75 times mostly in verses encouraging Muslims to spend their money in forms of zakat or sadaqah.

Why does Allah the Almighty want these loans from His servants? Does He need these loans for Himself? Of course not! Allah wants these loans for His needy creatures. Indeed, if we spend in the cause of Allah, worldly and the heavenly rewards will be given to us. But we should bear in mind that this *beautiful loan* should be for the love of Allah.

We have dedicated this issue of Sufi Wisdom to 'spending in the cause of Allah', *INFAQ*.

Our beloved teacher Osman Nuri Efendi explains to us the significance of infaq and the glad tidings about believers who spend their wealth for the sake of Allah.

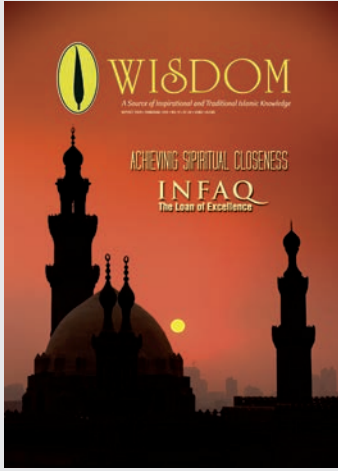
Ahmet Tasgetiren and Prof. Hasan Kamil Yilmaz also write about the virtues of giving charity (sadaqah) and the importance of generosity.

Finally, we have added an article about the existence of the ego. The article focuses on necessity of the alliance with a murshid who is an heir of the Prophet (pbuh) and linked to him through an unbroken chain of transmission.

*The parable of those who spend their possessions for the sake of Allah is that of a grain out of which grow seven ears, in every ear a hundred grains: for Allah grants manifold increase unto whom He wills; and God is infinite, all-knowing. (Baqarah:2:261)*

We hope you enjoy reading this edition and may Allah grant us the love to give to His creatures for the sake of Him and help us to be as generous as our beloved Prophet (pbuh).

Elif Kapici  
editor@sufiwisdom.net



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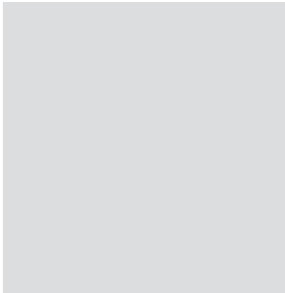
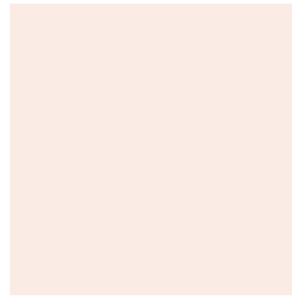






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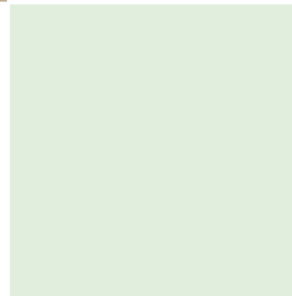
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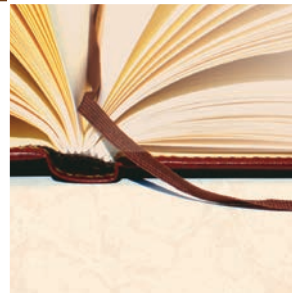
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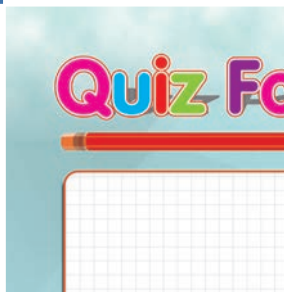
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## The Loan Of Excellence:

# Infaq

## an obligation to Allah

***The goodness bestowed upon us by Allah is a debt that we must pay back to Him with sadaqah and alms.***

**T**his universe, formed by the Almighty, is a mortal place of public habitation that has been adorned with thousands of attractions. The time we spend in this world of trial requires solemnity, a delicate soul, deep understanding and contemplation because the true blessings that remain with us are those that we will take with us to our perpetual abode. Allah Almighty wants all believers to come before Him with these never-ending deeds of merit. The values given to these deeds that are solely for the sake of Allah are stated frequently in the Qur'an.

Allah Almighty constantly encourages sadaqah and infaq, which are attributes of kindness, grace, generosity and benefaction. With this obligatory infaq comes the enthusiasm that is an inherent part of humanity and belief. An example of this is our obligation to Allah or the loan of excellence.

Allah Almighty accepts all sadaqah and infaq given for His sake alone as a loan of excellence and in return for this pledges us a multitude of rewards. As stated in this verse: "Who is he that will Loan to Allah a beautiful Loan? For (Allah) will increase it manifold to his credit, and he will have (besides) a generous reward." (Hadid:57/11)

According to this verse we should be aware that at the time of death charity will come before us and be of assistance to us; therefore, as individuals, we should show greater efforts in giving to charity.

We should also realize that difficulty and contentment in the world are related to the admiration of Allah Almighty. Those who have



become proud due to the blessings of Allah and those who are unaware and do not spend of this wealth for the sake of Allah cannot be true believers.

True believers understand and impose the two following conditions of the loan of excellence:

1- They recognize their debt to the needy.

2- They pay their debt in the form of infaq to Allah.

The loan of excellence is, in a way, a debt to Allah, as stated in the Qur'an. This is infaq given to the poor, or rather, the supporting of the duties and efforts of those on the path of Allah Almighty. Allah puts high value on this deed, expressing it as 'A loan given to Himself'. Allah Almighty asks for this infaq as payment for the debt of the believers. In the following verse it is stated: "...Establish regular Prayer and give zakat; and loan to Allah a beautiful loan. And whatever good ye send forth for yourselves, ye shall find it with Allah. Yea, better and greater, in reward, and seek ye the Grace of Allah: for Allah is oft-forgiving, most merciful. (Muzzammil:73/20)

Allah the Merciful has given human beings exceptional grace with the giving of charity or the loan of excellence on the path of His supreme pleasure. But of course, this sadaqah must be given with good intentions and without the expectation of any kind of personal gain in this world; it must not be given for appearance or prestige. This is why we should never expect to be thanked for sadaqah, and gratitude is for Allah alone.

There is a verse of the Qur'an about the sadaqah given by Sayyidina Ali and Sayyidina Fatimah:

"And they feed, for the love of Allah, the indigent, the orphan, and the captive,-

(Saying), "We feed you for the sake of Allah alone: No reward do we desire from you, nor thanks. "We only fear a day of frowning and distress from the side of our Lord. But Allah will deliver them from the evil of that day, and will shed over them brightness and a (blissful) joy." (Insan:76/8-11)

The following points about charity should be examined carefully:

1- Show preference for your Muslim brother before yourself; this is altruism (ithar).

2- Give charity not for worldly or transient causes, but only for the sake of Allah.

3- Protect oneself from the force of the Day of Judgment.

4- Know that infaq given with consciousness will please the giver when they meet their Creator.

5- Desire that other believers do good deeds.

Allah Almighty will reward this loan or charity with rewards many times over. In another verse Allah Almighty reveals the virtues of giving this kind of charity:

"... If ye (but) establish regular Prayers, pay zakat believe in my Messengers, honour and assist them, and loan to Allah a beautiful loan, verily I will wipe out from you your evils, and admit you to gardens with rivers flowing beneath..." (Maidah:5/12)

According to a report by Ibn-i Masud when the verses about giving a loan of excellence were revealed, Abu Dahdah el-Ansari asked the Prophet: "O Rasulullah, does Allah Almighty desire a loan from us?"

The Holy Prophet replied: "Certainly." On hearing this Abu Dahdah asked the Prophet for his hand and the Prophet





***Allah is giving us these blessings, but profiting or gaining from them depends on how we use them. According to this, the real debtors are human beings and Allah the Merciful is the receiver.***



stretched out his hand towards him. Abu Dahdah took his hand in his own hand as a gesture of a pledge, and said that he was giving his garden to Allah the Merciful as a loan. His wife and family lived in that garden and there were six hundred date-palms there. Abu Dahdah went to the garden, called his wife Umm Dahdah and told her that they had to leave the garden as it had been given away to their 'Lord' (Allah Almighty). And later he took all his belongings and vacated the house with his wife and children (Tabari, Hakeem, Mustedrek, II /24)

The believers who are aware of this high virtue live in peace and happiness at all times, as they are able to safeguard their lives on the earth and in the Hereafter. The following event is a dazzling manifestation of this truth. It is found in a book written by Elie Kedourie about England's politics in the Middle East. During the last period of the Ottoman Empire, towards the end of the 19th century there was a great famine. The English sent a spy to determine whether they could start a rebellion against the Ottomans at this time of famine. The report that this spy produced after investigating the situation should be an example for all. In this report he wrote: "There is scarcity but no famine! Everybody looks after one another. This is why the scarcity has not become a famine. It would be impossible to form a revolutionary movement in such a strong social structure...!"

Without a doubt, while scarcity and poverty were at their highest level, the verse of the Qur'an that emphasizes the values of charity during these times of hardship was a worldly blessing and an award for the needy... Allah Almighty has warned believers not to be idle or negligent in this matter:

"How is it with you that you spend not in the cause of Allah? - For to Allah belongs the heritage of the heavens and the earth. Not equal among you are those who spent (freely) and fought, before the victory, (with those who did so later). Those are higher in rank than those that who spent (freely) and fought afterwards. But to all has Allah promised a goodly (reward). And Allah is well acquainted with all that ye do." (Hadid, 57/10)



Allah the Merciful desires self-sacrifice from believers, especially during times of Islamic and Muslim hardship. This sacrifice of the believers is referred to here as *karz-i hasen* which means a 'loan of excellence'. During Gallipoli and the War of Liberation in Turkey the sacrifices shown by human beings was a loan of excellence, and Allah Almighty rewarded them with victory.

We should never forget that our bodies, lives and wealth have all been entrusted to us, but only for a limited time. There can be no question that we will suddenly have to part from them one day and everything will be left behind and returned to its true owner, Allah Almighty. Therefore, we should surrender these trusts on the path of Allah while we are still in this world; only then can we attain the everlasting reward. Even if we do not surrender, at our time of death their true owner, Allah Almighty, will take back everything He has blessed us with. But there is a great difference between the two; in the first case in which *infaq* has been given, even though all the heavens and the earth belong to Allah, He graciously accepts this as a loan and will reward us with much more. If we have not given charity we will gain nothing except the burden of the liability attained from our wealth. The Holy Prophet warns those who have refrained from charity:

"My property, my property; but O Son of Adam, what is for thee that is out of thy property? Only that which thou ate and it has vanished, that which thou wore and made it worn out and that which was spent in charity and was sent ahead." (Muslim)

Rumi remarks with the following beautiful words: "The angel of death pulls the ear (i.e., takes the soul) of the rich man who is blind to goodness. When the man wakes up to the truth and

realizes the hardships he will face because he feared losing a wealth that did not even belong to him he will laugh."

According to a report by Sayyidina Aisha the family of the Holy Prophet sacrificed an animal and after giving the meat as *infaq* to others the Messenger of Allah asked Sayyidina Aisha what was left of the meat and she replied: "Nothing except the shank." On hearing this, the Prophet (pbuh) then said: "(In fact), all of it is saved except the shank." (Tirmidhi)

In fact, the true wealth of a person is the merit they gain from giving *sadaqah* and *infaq* to others. Considering worldly goods to be a calamity and refraining from things that ruin the harmony of the souls can only be achieved with the prosperity of generosity and altruism.

Allah Almighty states that one of the deeds a human being yearns for at the time of death is charity, and tells us about the state of mind of those who have neglected these duties: "And spend something (in charity) out of the substance which we have bestowed on you, before death should come to any of you and he should say, 'O my Lord! Why didst thou not give me respite for a little while? I should then have given (largely) in charity, and I should have been one of the doers of good.'" (Munafiqun:63/10)

This is why we should be aware of the accountability and heavy burden we will face in the Hereafter from our wealth; this is why we should refrain from miserliness and worldly pleasures and give of our wealth which one day will be left behind to those near to us.

One of our main obligations in the Hereafter will be to account for how we earned and spent our wealth. The Prophet (pbuh) stated: "A servant of Allah will



remain standing on the Day of Judgment until he is questioned about his life and how he spent it, about his knowledge and how he utilized it, about his wealth and from where he acquired it and in what (activities) he spent it, and about his body and how he used it." (Tirmidhi)

Our ancestors, understanding the reality of this in the best way possible, prevailed in their actions and efforts regarding sadaqah, and bestowed us with an astounding 'charity foundation'. It was as if they racing to give infaq, and these foundations which looked after the various needs of all were established in this race. The famous charity stones were part of old Istanbul; they provided for people who did not feel free to ask for sadaqah due to their pride or honor. By doing this, provisions were given to the poor before they had to ask and they were not put to shame.

These stones provided an important service for the needy and were part of the race for sadaqah at the time. The wealthy would leave donations in the hollow on top of the stone after darkness, taking into consideration the saying; 'What the right hand gives the left should not see.' The virtuous poor would go and take the donations; they never took more than what they needed. The needy, especially those who were too ashamed to beg even though they were poor, would go late at night to the stone to take the money they needed; they would never take more than what they needed.

A French traveller in the 17th century saw this stone that had money on it and observed it for a week; he wrote that during this time no one took the donations from the stone. According to reports there were charity stones in every corner of Istanbul, in the yard of Gulfem Hatun Mosque, and at Doğancılar in Üsküdar, in

Karacaahmet and Kocamustafapasa. It is quite obvious why our ancestors developed the charity stones and foundations. There will always be people who are in need of help. The following verse of the Qur'an speaks of this:

"And in their wealth there is a due share for the beggar and the deprived." (Zariyat:51/19)

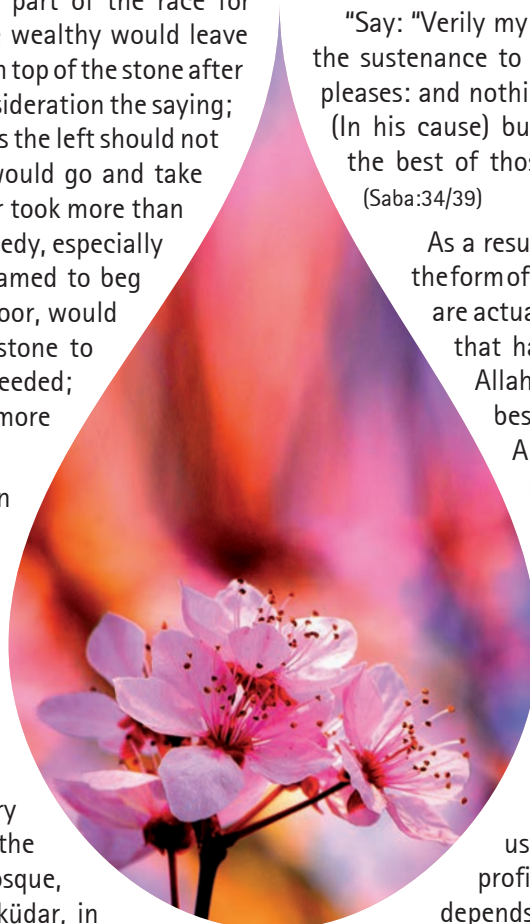
This idea should be embedded in our hearts; it is a duty that we continue the race for charity and protect the dignity and honor of the poor and needy. We must protect those who are sincerely in need, and our souls should be like the charity stone. The poor should be able to approach us for the warmth and understanding they need. And we should give thanks for those things that Allah the Merciful has blessed us with. This is a measure of our spirituality for this world and the Hereafter:

"The best of people is he who is most beneficial to others" (Suyuti)

"Say: "Verily my Lord enlarges and restricts the sustenance to such of his servants as he pleases: and nothing do ye spend in the least (In his cause) but He replaces it: for He is the best of those who grant sustenance." (Saba:34/39)

As a result, good deeds or actions in the form of infaq, or a loan of excellence, are actually given from the blessings that have been granted to us by Allah the Merciful. The goodness bestowed upon us by Allah the Almighty is a debt that we must pay back to Him with sadaqah and alms. Looking at the matter from another point of view, we will be awarded from the blessings that have been bestowed on us by the Almighty with even more benefactions.

So Allah is giving us these blessings, but profiting or gaining from them depends on how we use them.



According to this, the real debtors are human beings and Allah the Merciful is the receiver.

Rumi says: "All in the heavens and on the earth wish everything from Him because they owe Him all their wealth."

Humans are particularly indebted to Allah the Merciful, firstly for being given the honor of existence, then for obtaining their faith and Islam and being a part of Prophet Muhammad's community, for attaining his kindness and gracefulness and for many more benevolences, so many that they cannot be counted. Apart from this, for the example of his behaviour and never-ending guidance on the path of Allah, we are indebted to the Messenger (pbuh). His clear subjectivity and devotion, his conduct, the actions of excellence and grace glow in our souls; we are also debtors to the saints of Islam and our families.

Paying these debts is only possible by living in the way that has been shown to us by Allah Almighty and by following Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) in his manners and lifestyle; in doing this we will be a step closer to the beloved. We should also take into consideration that the glorification of Allah is a debt that all humans must pay.

We should also know that souls which reject this kindness and grace, those that fail to comply with the commands of Allah Almighty and fall into the traps of their spiritual or worldly desires, begin to lose their honor of humanity and dignity. Those people who live outside the divine boundaries lose themselves in the temporal beauty of the world. They are constantly submitted to degradation and misfortune. In a way, forgetting their true value in creation, surrendering and being debtors to those who are lower, poorer and needier than themselves, they decline into a state of pitiful manipulation without even realizing they have destroyed their essence. Baffled by the situation of these people Rumi said:

"What a surprising thing! Does the sun ask for a loan from a glimmer? Does the star of Venus ask wine from a tiny jug? You are an unknown soul, a life whose qualities are uncertain. You have been trapped in the world of enjoyment and people. You are an eclipse who is caught up in a knot; shame on you!"

***We should be aware of the accountability and heavy burden we will face in the Hereafter from our wealth; this is why we should refrain from miserliness and worldly pleasures and give of our wealth which one day will be left behind to those near to us.***





***We must protect those who are sincerely in need, and our souls should be like the charity stone. And we should give thanks for those things that Allah has blessed us with. This is a measure of our spirituality for this world and the Hereafter.***

In these verses Rumi compares the human to a spiritual sun. The universe is a reflection of the rays of the sun that shimmer. What he means here is that a person who, without thinking of prosperity from Allah, constantly desires mortal pleasures and the enjoyment of the world is like the sun asking a glimmer for a loan; how can the sun be in need of a glimmer?

In a Qur'anic expression it states that a human soul is: "(In due proportion) and breathed into him of my spirit." This is a divine light. But most people do not realize the value of the heart's supremacy and they live without knowing its true value. They sacrifice the holy, sacred blessings, the divine entrustment for material pleasures of mortality; they desire merely to enjoy the desires of the flesh. They have fallen into the whirlpool of material pleasure, anger, lust and fame. The nutrition of desire has become a prisoner of enjoyment; like the sun in the quote above it has become is tied up in the knots of sin, and is now unable to shed its light. When in this situation every person should realize their own measures! They should realize the uncountable blessings that have been granted to us by Allah the Merciful and be particularly aware of the secret of good temperament! They should never fall into the pitfalls of mortal or unsatisfactory pleasures! They should be purified from the lust of desire and false mortal love! They should look for everything within themselves, in their own soul!

In short, before we are forced to leave this world we should prepare ourselves for our journey to the Hereafter, with the assurance and desire of faith that has been granted to us by Allah Almighty...

O Allah give us in our hearts the prosperity of the debt owed to you by all believers, the loan of excellence, and grant us a share of your ocean of never-ending grace, allow us to pay our moral obligations whether material or spiritual, grant us emotion in our souls, grant us the ability to hear and feel the calls of the orphans and those in need!

Amen!

*The dedication of Abu Bakr, which has reached beyond fourteen centuries, when asked by the Messenger of Allah : "What did you leave for your family?" answered: "The love of Allah and His messenger".*

## THE TRADITION of INFAQ

A person enters the circle of Islam by uttering the *kalima ash-shahada* (the declaration one must make in order to enter Islam, which is *Ash hadu an la ilaha illallah wa ash hadu anna muhammadan abduhu wa rasuluhu*. I declare that there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is his servant and messenger). After this, the individual starts building their personality within Islam.

In the same way that daily prayers and fasting are indispensable qualities in a Muslim personality, so too is giving charitable donations.

In the first verses of the second chapter of the Qur'an the qualities of a *muttaqi* (God fearing, pious person), that is, those people who can be called *good Muslims*, are stated. *Infaq* (giving) is stated as the third quality after belief in the *ghayb* (the unknown, invisible world, such as the hereafter, angels, etc) and the daily prayers: "they give from those which we have bestowed upon them as their sustenance."

Here, *infaq* is connected to the sustenance which has been bestowed on us, that is: "What we give is nothing more than what has been bestowed on us."

The understanding that sustenance and giving is from the providence that is the possession of Allah is the first quality *infaq* adds to a Muslim personality.

A Muslim cannot think of *infaq* outside the boundaries of servitude to Allah; this is true in every aspect of worship. Life is a trust given to us and should be used within the boundaries that have been set by Allah and the same is true for provisions.

These reminders inspire a number of things:

First, give without hesitation. If the One who gave to you tells you to give, you will give. Giving thus becomes the main characteristic of a Muslim. A human should be able to give, even though giving can be difficult.

As stated in the Qur'an, it is an *aqabah* – a mound that is difficult to pass over, an obstacle. Passing over this *aqabah* means passing the point of resistance, something which is inherent in every human being. One acquires the skill of giving only with time.

Second, the awareness of where one should give comes hand in hand with this first skill. This means that a Muslim should be like a pearl hunter, looking for the right place to give. They will feel the passion to give to every living being.

Understanding that a woman who was a sinner was awarded Paradise for giving water to a dog that was so thirsty its tongue

was hanging out and that she thus became a person favoured by Allah, a Muslim will search for approval from Allah with every being that they encounter. They will notice the orphan, the wayfarer, the slave, the one who asks and the one who does not ask. They will notice their neighbor that passes the entire night in hunger and they will be aware of the eyes that expect a smile from them.

Third, it is necessary to think that these possessions which you are using are not yours; therefore, you should feel like a trustee rather than an owner. This sensitivity will keep one from giving in front of other people. In giving, there can be no search for prestige, power or arrogance. Is there any sense for a treasurer to boast when he is making a payment?

Just as the daily prayer instils a feeling of putting a halt to daily life at certain times and standing in front of Allah, and just as fasting brings about a discipline of abstaining from eating, drinking and sexual pleasures, *infaq*, *sadaqah* and *zakat* make the feeling of ownership, one of the most basic instincts of life, relative before the absolute ownership of Allah Almighty. One realizes that these things have been bestowed, but they did not have to be given. What is not given is a test along with what is given...

*Islam established a civilization and a society and allowed human beings to display the delicacy of a dove, the elegance of silk, the harmony of a butterfly, keeping this alive for centuries.*



If the Giver says give to those who have not been given – in Qur'anic words, the deprived one – there is nothing to do but submit. This is a clear consciousness of servitude to Allah.

Then there is the thought that as we have been given the opportunity to use and manage Allah's possessions we must practice such management with the utmost care.

This is part of comprehending the Giver. Furthermore, if the giver considers the *infaq* to be *karz al-hasan* (lending only for the sake of Allah) of that which has been given to them, and can even understand "Allah is the receiver of this charity", then a much more delicate action of giving is taking place. Then you will give from what you cherish, not from that which you eat, drink or use with disdain.

Allah Almighty does not love extreme desire for possessions or those who accumulate large amounts of money or property. He does not love those who search for some kind of satisfaction by counting all their belongings or who think there is an aspect of immortality in possessions.

*Zakat*, which is a special part of *infaq*, also means "purification". While purifying the possession from the "rights of the poor" you also purify the heart from everything except Allah, from a desire of possession, distrust in the Razzaq al-'Alam (Sustainer of the Universe), fear of poverty and miserliness.

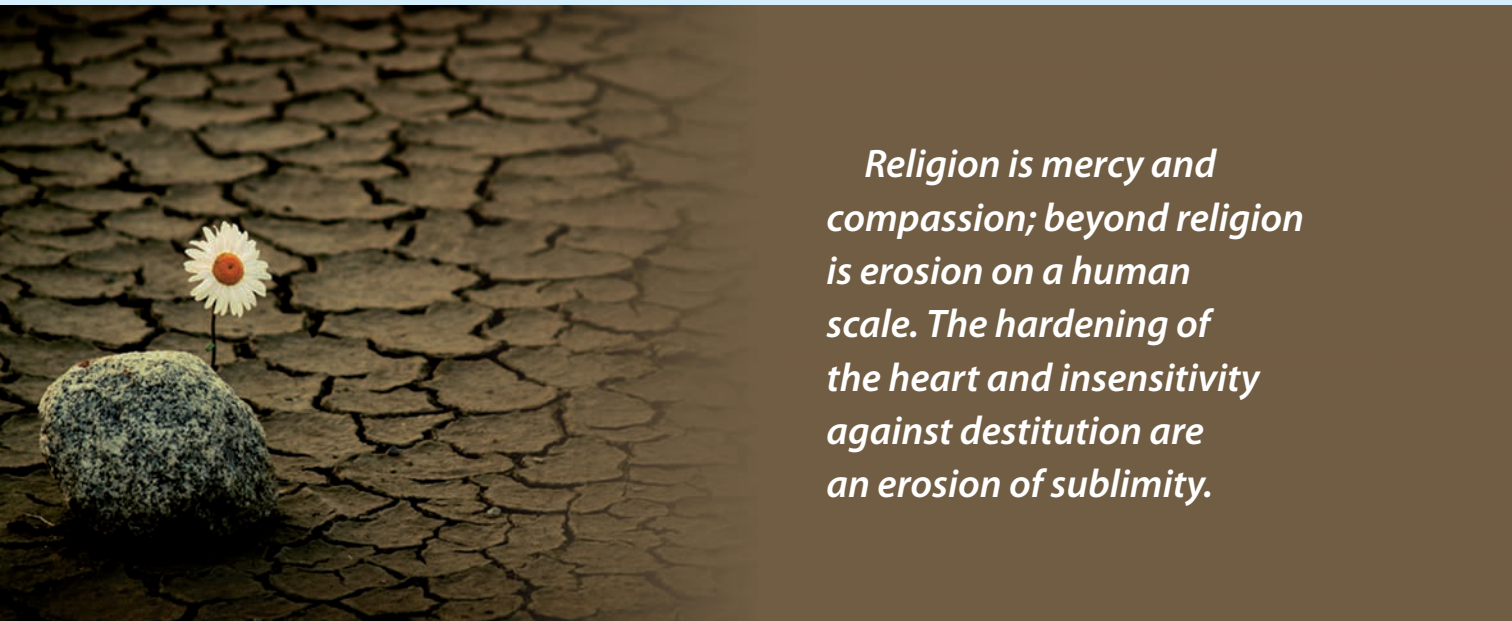
When asked about the person of *infaq*, the following attributes come to mind: Such a person is one who is aware of the "other", who cares about them, who protects them and makes a point of reaching them; they are very careful while giving and are aware of purification from all negative feelings.

When we speak of a society of *infaq* what comes to mind is a society that is surrounded in mercy and compassion, a society in which love has become an inseparable part of life.

A civilization of kindness reveals itself in building bird houses, charity stones (during the Ottoman times these were special stones where the wealthy put money so the needy could come

***The Muslim geography  
is overshadowed by the  
generosity of Uthman,  
who donated an entire  
caravan, and the sensitivity  
of the saints who found  
keeping possessions for  
another day to be against  
tawakkul (trust in Allah) ...***





*Religion is mercy and compassion; beyond religion is erosion on a human scale. The hardening of the heart and insensitivity against destitution are an erosion of sublimity.*

and take it anonymously), fountains, soup kitchens, foundations, *iftars* (dinners served for fasting people), smiles, hugs, showing care to orphans and children, the kissing of a mother's hand and greetings...

Islam established a civilization and a society and allowed human beings to display the delicacy of a dove, the elegance of silk, the harmony of a butterfly, keeping this alive for centuries.

Look at the history of Islam. One sees an exceptional Prophet who did not pass one night with gold in his possession. The dedication of Abu Bakr, which has reached beyond fourteen centuries, when asked by the Messenger of Allah: "What did you leave for you family?" answered: "The love of Allah and His Messenger".

The Muslim geography is overshadowed by the generosity of Uthman, who donated an entire caravan, and the sensitivity of the saints who found keeping possessions for another day to be against *tawakkul* (trust in Allah).

Then the erosion of man started...

An erosion that wounded even the Muslim geography.

There is an *ayah* in the Qur'an which describes the type of person who lacks the quality of *infaq*.

*"Heed not the type of despicable man, ready with oaths, a slanderer, going about*

*with calumnies, (habitually) hindering (all) good, transgressing beyond bounds, deep in sin, violent (and cruel) – with all that, base-born, because he possesses wealth and (numerous) sons."* (Qalam:68/10-14)

When reading this *ayah* one should consider the character that brings together these attributes which seem incoherent at first. Another *ayah* starts with "Seest thou one who denies the Judgment (to come)?" and this man is then further described as "Then such is the (man) who repulses the orphan (with harshness), and encourages not the feeding of the indigent." (Ma'un:107/1-2-3)

*Deen* (religion) is *rahmah* (mercy) and compassion; beyond religion is erosion on a human scale. The hardening of the heart and insensitivity against destitution are an erosion of sublimity.

After the positivist age of *Homo homini lupus* (a human is a wolf to another human) humanity was left with hardened souls; *deen* and the Divine were driven out of life and the secular age in which everything that was not related to religion ruled came about.

Today while two and a half billion people are living below poverty levels there are those who spend a fortune curing the illnesses of over-consumption. Think about those who die from a lack of water and those who spend thousands like water.

In the Qur'an Allah Almighty says, "... (wealth) may not be [a benefit] going round and round among such of you as may [already] be rich..." (Hashr:59/7) He forbids all kinds of exploitation, including interest.

At the present time, the world's wealth is pouring into certain channels. The system has been established in such a way that on the one side fortunes accumulate while on the other there is poverty... An immense gap has been formed between the north and south axis of the world.

If it were possible to look from above, one would think that the flesh of the people from the south had been stripped and patched onto those in the north; one would see that humans are sucking the blood of each other through drugs, pillage and robbery, in every possible way.

A hand that has been raised with the compassion of Muhammad (pbuh) needs to touch this age. Islam's hand needs to touch this age. *Zakat* should go around the hearts and purify the filth of possessions, ridding us of the feelings of Croesus that have accumulated there.

People should see the hunger of their neighbors; Europe and North America should hear the wailings of Africa. The philanthropy of Abu Bakr should fill the veins of the twenty-first century.

Whatever levels of pride, technology or science have reached us in the twenty-first century, an African baby with flies on its face is more embarrassing.

The twenty-first century cannot escape the search for a soul that will carry human virtues to this baby.

Bill Gates forgot about his computer empire when he saw Africa; the humanity within him came forward. This is a search for Abu Bakr. This is a call of the *infaq* civilization that resonates in the heart.

Islam is still what is expected.



***A hand that has been raised with the compassion of Muhammad (pbuh) needs to touch this age. Islam's hand needs to touch this age. Zakat should go around the hearts and purify the filth of possessions.***





# THE SENSITIVITY of INFAQ

*Sensitivity is giving only part of one's assets, while keeping the remainder. The Messenger of Allah praised those who were sensitive with these words: "A giver of charity is near to Allah, near to humans, near to Paradise and distant from Hell."*

**H**uman beings are born with a natural weakness towards worldly goods. Mankind, which has been created from earth, desires these worldly belongings in the same that the soil has a need for water. Watered land produces fruit that is beneficial, and in the same way a person should be aware of how to own and use these blessings and thus benefit from them. The duties a person has towards worldly goods are stated in many different ways in the Qur'an; primarily these are alms and Islamic acts of sadaqah acts of charity alimony, aid, charity and altruism.)

Charity is a form of tax given freely so that a person can gain the blessings of Allah Almighty. Alms are called 'Islamic charity', while charitable giving is also sometimes known as alms, due to the fealty shown when considering the circumstances of the poor.

Zakat is given for the increase, purification and abundance of goods or capital. Zakat is in fact a tax that Allah has ordered believers to give; it is the right of the poor and needy to receive this tax. Zakat is a purification of goods and prevents a person from miserliness. Zakat also has the attribute of purifying. In fact, Allah Almighty ordered: "Of their wealth take alms, that so thou mightest purify and sanctify them." (Tauba:9/103)

Aid is the disposal or expenditure of wealth or other belongings. While some forms of aid are obligatory, others are given out of choice. Alimony is also a form of aid.



Generosity, the disposal of a person's wealth or goods, irradiates one's knowledge or belongings. This applies to assets, the body, rank, worldly possessions and the afterlife.

Altruism means preferring another person over oneself. As we can see in this verse of the Qur'an:

"But give them preference over themselves, even though poverty was their (own lot)." (Hashr:59/9)

The most extensive of these concepts is sadaqah. Zakat, from the point of religious law, is an act of duty in some cases, but can also be given out of choice. The concept of sadaqah includes everything from wealth to knowledge, in fact, all the benefactions given to us by Allah.

"Who believe in the unseen, are steadfast in prayer, and spend out of what we have provided for them." (Baqarah:2/3) In this verse of the Qur'an the concept of aid is clearly explained.

As stated in the following verse of the Qur'an: "They ask thee what they should spend (In charity). Say: Whatever wealth ye spend that is good, is for parents and kindred and orphans, and those in want, and for wayfarers. And whatever ye do that is good, -Allah knoweth it well." (Baqarah:2/215)

This means that our main duty is to care for our elderly relatives, and then the remaining members of our families. The aid given to the main members is obligatory, while that given to others is optional. Again the Qur'an states: "They ask thee how much they are to spend; Say: "What is beyond your needs." Thus doth Allah make clear to you his signs: in order that ye may consider." (Baqarah:2/219)

The limits of aid are assessed according three ranks of inclination: sensitivity, generosity and altruism.

Sensitivity is giving only part of one's assets, while keeping the remainder. The Messenger of Allah praised those who were sensitive with these words: "A giver of charity is near to Allah, near to humans, near to Paradise and distant from Hell. A miser is distant from Allah, distant from humans, distant from Paradise and close to Hell. An uneducated giver of charity is approved of more by Allah than a miserly worshipper" (Tirmizi, Birr, 40)

Generosity is the disposal of the main part of one's wealth, while the smaller amount is kept for themselves. Altruism is putting others before oneself, enduring hardship and loss, giving the largest part of one's possessions to the poor, while keeping just enough to live on.

***Benevolence is generosity within limits, while generosity is acting charitably towards everyone, without limitation. This is why generosity is attributed to Allah while benevolence is not.***





***The zakat of the organs consist of the duties of human beings and their worship to their Creator rather than indulgence in leisure and enjoyment.***



Benevolence is generosity within limits, while generosity is acting charitably towards everyone, without limitation. This is why generosity is attributed to Allah while benevolence is not.

Prophet Abraham was a person who was very close to Allah Almighty and it was his custom not to sit at the table without guests. One day a fire worshipper came to his house; when Prophet Abraham realized who the guest was he refused to show him hospitality and said to the man: "You are not worthy of my courtesy or hospitality". The man left. Prophet Abraham was almost immediately warned about this behavior via a revelation from Allah: "O, Abraham was it too much of a burden for you to feed a man whom I have fed for seventy years?" Prophet Abraham ran after the man and invited him to share the dinner. The fire worshipper asked Prophet Abraham why he had done this and upon hearing the reason, the man said: "What a good God; He scolded one of those closest to him for the sake of an enemy"; the man later became Muslim.

The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) took his cloak and laid it on the ground for the son of the scathing Tai. Not taking into consideration their differences, he put his own cloak on the ground for this unbeliever to sit on. This is a beautiful example of love, friendship, benevolence and generosity.

The real meaning of aid is giving before it is required by the needy. A man came to one of Allah's followers and asked him for four hundred dirhams. After giving the man four hundred dirhams the follower went home and cried. His wife said to him "If it was so hard for you to give the money, you should have made an excuse not to give it to him." Allah's follower then said "That is not the reason why I am crying; I should have inquired about his situation and given him the money before he had to ask for it. That is why I am crying."

Abu Sehl Suluki never gave anything in person; he would put whatever he had to give on the ground in a certain place and the needy would take what was necessary. Over time, this concept became a tradition, with alms stones being placed in the yards of mosques and on street corners. This culture of charity has been carried on throughout history.



This tradition, apart from ensuring charity – one of the great values of humanity – is also a proof of trust. In the words of Allah Almighty "Cancel not your charity by reminders of your generosity." (Baqarah:2/ 264)

In this verse, Allah the Merciful aims to preserve the honor of the needy. The poor do not take whatever they can, rather, they take only what they need. By giving aid in this way the needs of honorable people in society who, due to their modesty, are unable to ask for provisions, can be met.

"Because of their modesty, that they are free from want. Thou shalt know them by their (unfailing) mark: They beg not importunately from all and sundry." (Baqarah:2/273)

In this way, those in need were not ashamed of their situation of having to accept charity. Both the giver and receiver believe that these gifts were provided by Allah the Merciful. Allah the Almighty ruled: "Their gifts of charity, and that Allah is verily he, the oft-returning, most merciful." (Tauba:9/104) Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said: "Charity falls into Allah's hand before the poor man's."

"Allah hath purchased of the believers: Their persons and their goods; For theirs (in return) is the Garden (of paradise)." (Tauba:9/111) In this verse we are told that a person should dedicate their life and wealth on the path of Allah. The giving of life is jihad, and dying for the sake of Allah and the giving of wealth is.

There are three levels of doing this:

1- A person gives all their wealth without waiting for one's charity to become a debt .

2- One does not give all their wealth as zakat alone, but also donates their wealth as charity to organizations: "To spend of your

substance, out of love for him, for your kin." (Baqarah:2/177)." The following verse of the Qur'an is proof of this: "And spend something (in charity) out of the substance which we have bestowed on you." (Munafiqun:63/10)

3- Those who give neither a great deal nor too little. This is the lowest level of Infaq.

Zakat is a showing of gratitude for all the blessings; one of the greatest of such blessings is our health and every organ has a charity. The zakat of the organs consist of the duties of human beings and their worship to their Creator rather than indulgence in leisure and enjoyment. On the other hand, zakat is the right of the poor, and it has been ordered by Allah the Merciful that the wealthy provide it. Those who give zakat are giving the poor their rights, and they gain the approval of Allah, saving themselves from the worry of Hellfire and reckoning in the Hereafter.

The aim of zakat is to save humans from another bad habit, i.e., miserliness. As narrated in the following hadith: "There are three things that are totally destructive: a person being self-centered and conceited, having a reluctance to obey and following their own desires." (Taberani, Al-Evsat)

In the following verse of the Qur'an: "And entertain no desire in their hearts for things given to the (latter), but give them preference over themselves, even though poverty was their (own lot). And those saved from the covetousness of their own souls, – they are the ones that achieve prosperity." (Hashr:59/9)

It is possible to eliminate miserliness by regularly giving to charity. Restricting those things we like can only be achieved if we separate ourselves from them. In this case, charity means purification. This enables the

***"Smiling at  
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***Altruism (ithar) means preferring another person over oneself. As we can see in this verse of the Qur'an: "But give them preference over themselves, even though poverty was their (own lot)." (Hashr:59/9)***



miser to cleanse themselves from this bad habit. The amount of purification a person gains from zakat is relative to the amount of joy and pleasure they feel towards Allah the Merciful when making Infaq.

Financial donations are thankfulness for the wealth that Allah has given us. If a wealthy person does not give at least 1/40th of the wealth that Allah has blessed them with when they see a poor person how can they call themselves a human being.?

Someone asked the Companion Shibli: "How much should we donate?" Shibli answered: "For every two hundred dirhams you must give five dirhams, that is, one-fortieth of your wealth. But the idea of one scholar is that you should give all your wealth and be free from the concern of charity." The man asked: "Who is this scholar?" Shibli replied: "Abu Bakr Siddiq; he gave all his wealth in the way of Allah, and when asked 'What have you left for your family?' he answered 'Allah and His messenger'"

There is a poem by Imam Ali:

Charity has never been a duty on me despite my wealth;

Can charity be the duty of a generous man?

A Sufi gave one thousand dirhams to the poor dervishes every year and swore: "I have never given even one dirham for zakat"; the Sufi never waited for the condition of one year to pass before fulfilling his zakat and thus it was never an obligation on him. Allah Almighty tells us: "And there are those who hoard gold and silver and spend it not in the way of Allah: announce unto them a most grievous chastisement." (Taubah:9/34)

The limits of charity are quite widespread, as narrated in the following hadith: "When a Muslim spends for his family, seeking reward for it from Allah, this counts for him as Charity." (Muslim)

"Smiling at your brother is sadaqah and pouring from your bucket into your brother's bucket is sadaqah. (Muslim, Birr,144)

"O ye people! Spread salam, feed (the poor and needy), behave kindly with your relations and offer prayer when others are asleep, and enter

Paradise in peace." (Tirmizi)

"Feed those you love for the sake of Allah"  
(Ibn-ul Mubarak)

The Companions of the Prophet (pbuh) thought that sitting at the dinner table without guests was inexcusable. According to the report of Ibn Abbas the following verse was revealed to enlighten this concept: "There is no blame on you, whether ye eat in company or separately."  
(Nur:24/61)

Some people saw Imam Ali crying and asked him what had happened; he replied "No guests have been to my house for seven days; I'm afraid that Allah Almighty will reduce my rank"

Anas Bin Malik said "The sadaqah of a home is having a room in the house for guests."

"Has the story reached thee, of the guests of Abraham?" (Zariyat:51/24)

The Companion Ibrahim bin Junaid said: "A human, whether he is a commander or a president, should not avoid these three things: When his father enters he should stand up, he should serve his guests and his scholar and ask questions if he does not know the answer."

"By no means shall ye attain righteousness unless ye give (freely) of that which ye love."  
(Al-i-Imran:3/92)

This verse and the reports stated above regarding the importance of feeding and treating guests with hospitality have all generated the culture of Infaq. As part of this charitable awareness rooms were made in the home to accommodate guests, hostels were built to accommodate travelers, public soup kitchens were built to feed everyone and charities were formed to carry on this process. This awareness consists of the giving of one's own belongings. We still have guest rooms today but, unfortunately, due to the overcrowding of worldly objects, there is no longer much space left for visitors to stay. Even if the houses we live in today are larger, due to the lack of affection in our hearts, we do not seem to have enough space to accommodate guests anymore.

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# Journey for Wisdom

***No matter the weather, the occasion, or the surrounding events, these ladies shared experiences far beyond their dreams.***



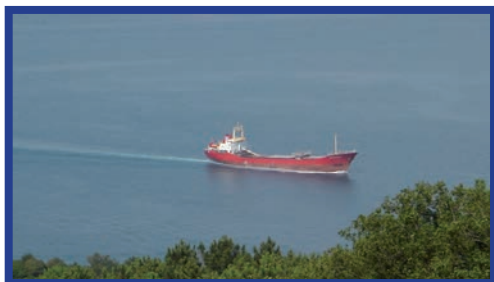
**M**ay in Istanbul is always an exciting time. The city reawakens like a bear after a long winter's hibernation; the flowers bloom, the air warms and the sun smiles a warm welcome to all the visitors that begin to cross into Turkey from every corner of the world.

This year one such group came to visit Istanbul as the first students of the Wisdom Academy; a summer program for English speaking women, which allows them to learn about their religion, their world and their heart. This year the Academy welcomed sisters from America, China, Pakistan, England, Belgium, Canada and Lebanon. No matter the weather, the occasion, or the surrounding events, these ladies shared experiences far beyond their dreams.

The Wisdom Academy is an educational experience for the senses. The ladies enjoyed introductory classes on subjects such as the life of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), the history of the Prophets Adam (pbuh) and Ibrahim (pbuh), the fiqh of the prayer and Qur'an Reading. These lessons were dotted with educational field trips to sites of importance in Islamic history and places of spiritual significance.

By June everyone had arrived and the events were unfolding day by day. The first stop was the grave of Yusha (Joshua), with its beautiful view and quaint tea garden with relaxing hammocks. The morning was spent getting to know each

other and sharing a meal. It is here that the foundation stones were laid for transforming a group of ladies into a sisterhood...an Ummah.



Bosporus View from Yusha (pbuh)

Next, there was the visit to the mosque of Eyup Sultan, the resting place of Eyub Al-Ansar, as well as the many companions of the Prophet buried near the mosque. Here the class focus was on the manners and purposes of visiting the graves, as well as being a walking tour of the early history of Islam. This guided tour opened everyone's hearts to the understanding of how the Sahaba followed the sunnah of the Prophet, that they would even travel hundreds of miles at very old ages to succeed in a mission that they deemed had been given to them.

This was a beautiful day for everyone, which ended in a surprise luncheon at a wonderful little eatery barely large enough to hold the whole group; the food was awesome and well worth the squeeze. The day may have been warm, but the company was so "cool" no one really minded.



The restaurant near Eyup Sultan

Another trip took the class to visit Miniaturk, followed by tea and sweets at Erkam Publishing. The Miniaturk visit was like a small trip around the Islamic world to many of the most important places in countries such as Turkey, Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia. Afterward everyone was taken on a small tour of the place which prints this magazine, and many of the books with which the students were familiar.



Dome of the Rock, Miniaturk

It was on the trip to Izmit that the group began their spiritual education. On a picnic in a quiet little valley the ladies began to meet with others who showed them the true meaning of sisterhood. While only sitting with their new sisters for a day, by the time the group left everyone was feeling as if they had known the other for a life time. Tears were shed as if everyone were saying good bye to their long lost family members.



Meeting new friends in Izmit

Yet another trip was made to Bursa. Here the group visited a town that had been established and continually inhabited since the Seljuk Empire.

Also, the group visited the mosques and monuments of the many awliyah (saints) and scholars that had at one time called Bursa their home; the most important of these being the Ulu Cami (Great Mosque).

The entire group was so excited to see the wonderful calligraphy and feel the strong energy of the fifth most important mosque in the Islamic world.



Wall hanging in Ulu Cami, Bursa

The final destination of the class was Konya; the city which was the home of Rumi and his famous madrasa. The group was treated to a guided tour through the many sites of historical importance to Islam. Here they learned many lessons about the life style of early Muslims, and at the same time learned the value of sisterhood today.

Visiting the mosques brought everyone to the understanding that at one time everyone celebrated Islam in many unique ways, such

as calligraphy, architecture, poetry, music, and art. These creative Muslims were also loving, kind and trusting to everyone around them, and they worked hard to maintain their closeness to Allah.



This period still affects the people in Konya to this day, and the amount of kindness and love shown to the new students changed their lives and their perspectives of how they should see themselves as Muslims and representatives of Allah and Islam. Oh, and also, they learned how to have fun!







*Allah is the owner and provider of all wealth, and that He has placed this wealth with human beings as a trust. Humans, in turn, have the responsibility to disperse that wealth in a way that is true and just.*



# INFAQ

## Charity Without Fear



*And whatever ye spend in charity or devotion be sure Allah knows it all. But the wrong-doers have no helpers. (Baqarah:2/270)*



In the Quran Allah mentions three different types of charity. These are sadaqah, zakat, and nafaqah or infaq. These words are often translated into one English word: charity. However, this does not do justice to the actual meaning of these words. It is actually better in most cases to consider them as three separate levels of charitable giving due to the fact that they each have a separate benefactor, and most certainly each has a different reward.

The first and broadest form of charity is sadaqah (alms). This is defined as any kind of non-obligatory charity given for the sake of Allah. Sadaqah can be as simple as a smile or an understanding embrace, or it can be the giving of property based on the receiver's needs and the giver's ability to provide. The true benefactor in sadaqah is most certainly the needy, while the giver is the recipient of the spiritual blessing of having done a good deed.

The second type of charity mentioned in the Quran actually falls inside the circle of sadaqah, and that is zakat (required charity). Zakat is obligatory charity that is based on a person's income, property and savings. Its requirement is not based on the need of the receiver; rather it is based on the wealth of the giver. Everyone, from merchant to farmer, must pay zakat if they have reached a certain level of income and/or savings. The benefactor of zakat is the giver whose money and property then become purified and clean, and the receiver who attains the spiritual blessing of knowing that they have been cared for by their society.


The third type of charity is infaq, which comes from the Arabic nafaqa. Today nafaqah is most often referred to as the money given to a wife during her iddat (waiting) time of divorce. However, this is only a minor meaning of this word. Nafaqah actually means payment, maintenance, or expenditure. The word has a long term connotation, distinguishing it from sadaqah or zakat, both of which are events that occur once. The benefactor of infaq is also broader than that of sadaqah and zakat. With infaq the entire community is the true benefactor, while the giver is rewarded according to the total number of people who have benefitted.

Infaq is the highest level of charity, and as with all things of high value in Islam, it is

the hardest to practice in everyday life. Infaq requires one to completely understand that Allah is the owner and provider of all wealth, and that He has placed this wealth with human beings as a trust. Humans, in turn, have the responsibility to disperse that wealth in a way that is true and just.

This should be easy to do, but the reality is that most Muslims find this task very difficult. While infaq requires a great deal of trust, it also requires a complete lack of fear of anything other than Allah. In order to complete this mission in life one should have neither fear of poverty, fear of loss nor of people. The reason that infaq is so difficult to practice is because it requires that one completely puts all of their trust in Allah.

A hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah exemplifies this understanding in the best way. He reports that he heard Allah's Apostle saying, "Allah willed that three men be tested; a leper, a blind man and a bald-headed man. He sent them an angel, who first came to the leper and said, 'What thing do you like most?' He replied, 'Good color and good skin, for the people have a strong aversion to me.' The angel touched him and his illness was cured, and he was given a good color and a beautiful skin. The angel asked him, 'What kind of property do you like best?' He replied, 'Camels.' So the leper was given a pregnant she-camel, and the



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as if you do not need them.  
This requires a great deal  
of training for the nafs and  
purification of the heart.***



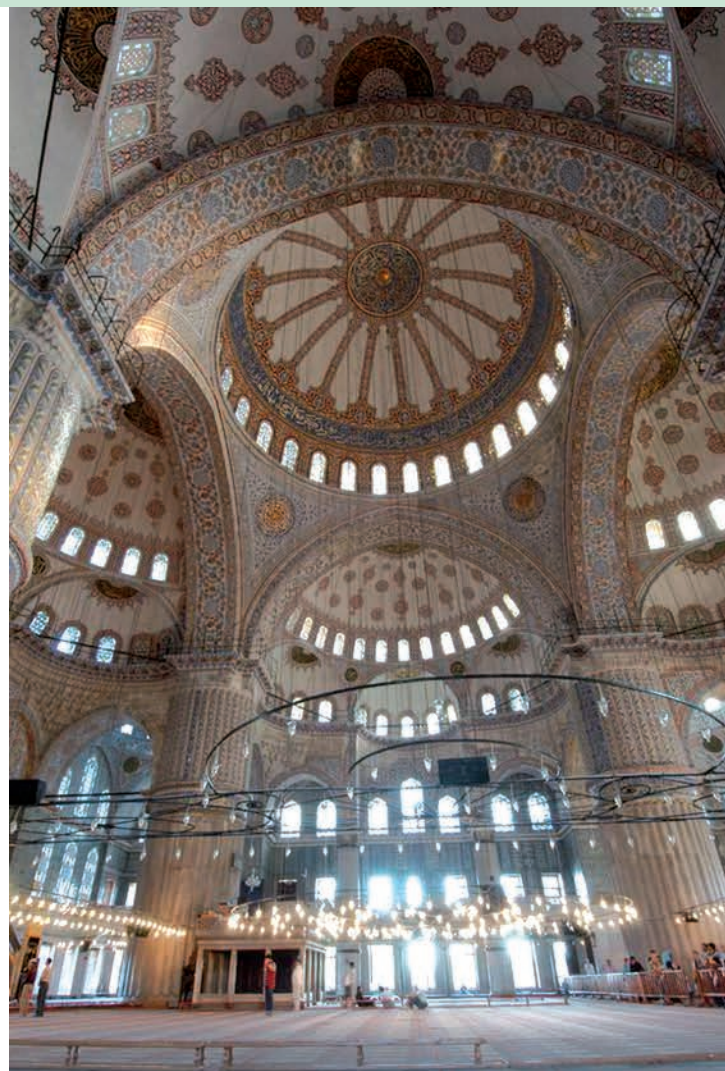
angel said, 'May Allah bless you with it.'

The angel then went to the bald-headed man and said, 'What thing do you like most?' He said, 'I like good hair and wish to be cured of this disease, for people feel repulsion towards me.' The angel touched him and his illness was cured, and he was given good hair. The angel asked him, 'What kind of property do you like best?' He replied, 'Cows.' The angel gave him a pregnant cow and said, 'May Allah bless you with it.'

The angel went to the blind man and asked, 'What thing do you like best?' He said, 'I would like Allah to restore my eye-sight so that I may see the people.' The angel touched his eyes and Allah gave him back his eye-sight. The angel asked him, 'What kind of property do you like best?' He replied, 'Sheep.' The angel gave him a pregnant sheep.

Afterwards, all three pregnant animals gave birth to young ones, and multiplied and brought forth so much that one of the (three) men had a herd of camels, one had a herd of cows and one had a flock of sheep, each filling a valley. The angel, disguised in the shape and appearance of a leper, went to the leper and said, 'I am a poor man, who has lost all means of livelihood while on a journey, so no one can satisfy my need except Allah, and then you. In the Name of He Who has given you such a nice color and beautiful skin, and so much property, I ask you to give me a camel so that I may reach my destination.' The man replied, 'I have many obligations (so I cannot give you anything).' The angel said, 'I think I know you; were you not a leper to whom the people had a strong aversion? Weren't you a poor man, and then Allah gave you (all this property)?' He replied, '(This is all wrong), I got this property through inheritance from my fore-fathers.' The angel said, 'If you are telling a lie, then may Allah make you as you were before.'

Then the angel, disguised in the shape and appearance of a bald man, went to the bald man and said to him the same as he had the first man, and the bald man gave the same reply. The angel said, 'If you are telling a lie, then may Allah make



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you as you were before.'

The angel, disguised in the shape of a blind man, went to the blind man and said, 'I am a poor man and a traveler, whose means of livelihood have been exhausted while on a journey. I have nobody to help me except Allah, and after Him, you yourself. I ask you in the Name of He Who has given you back your eye-sight to give me a sheep, so that with its help, I may complete my journey.' The man said, 'No doubt, I was blind and Allah gave me back my eye-sight; I was poor and Allah made me rich; so take anything you wish from my property. By Allah, I will not prevent you from taking anything (you need) from my property; you may take it for Allah's sake.' The angel replied, 'Keep your property with you. You (the 3 men) have been tested; Allah is pleased with you and is angry with your two companions.'

Surely, there are many examples of infaq from the time of the Prophet (pbuh), as they were the first generation to act on the words of the honorable Prophet, and they never failed to do exactly as they heard or saw him do. They understood completely that he was the "most blessed example".

One such example is that of Sayyidina Khadijah, the Prophet's first wife, at the time when the Muslims were banished to a valley outside of Mecca. Without concern for herself, or her lifestyle, she gave everything she had to buy food and supplies for the first group of Muslims who had been banished for three years. She supported them until she died.

Her daughter Sayyidina Fatimah was the same. Sayyidina Aisha once said about Fatima: "I have not seen any one of God's creation resemble the Messenger of God more in speech, conversation or manner of sitting than Fatimah, may God be pleased with her." She was also

like her father, the Prophet (pbuh) in matters of infaq. She was particularly kind to poor and indigent folk and would often give all the food she had to those in need, even if she herself remained hungry. She sufficed with Allah and her father, the Prophet (pbuh), as her source of satisfaction.

This is real infaq...giving the things that you need as if you do not need them. It is a belief that Allah will provide for your needs just as you have provided for the needs of others. It is faith in the knowledge that Allah is the owner of everything in the heavens and earth, and that Muslims are merely the vessels he has chosen to provide for those in need in this world. The most important way to accomplish this mission is to first foster a feeling that meeting the needs of every other person in the world is more important than meeting your own needs. This requires a great deal of training for the nafs and purification of the heart.

Infaq, as one can see, is the greatest of charities because its benefit is so great in the society. Infaq is not a charity of those with illnesses of the heart, or weaknesses in Iman. It is the charity of those who have reached a level of understanding about the nafs and the dunya, and how they conspire to make humanity fail to reach their potential of being the greatest of creation. It is the charity of those who remember Allah ceaselessly with fear and awe. It is the charity of those who reflect on the last day as if it were tomorrow and realize that on that day nothing will benefit them but those items they gave away in the spirit of spending for the sake of Allah. It is the charity of a Mu'min (believer).

May Allah make us rise from the level of Muslims and cause us all to become Mu'min with a feeling of love and charity in our hearts, and a sense of peace in the face of giving.



# THE FORBIDDEN TREE

*Allah has willed that the poor and weak be fed, that they shall be fed by you and the bounty that He bestowed upon you, and if you do not do so then you shall indeed see your wealth deplete before you eyes.*



*"The month of Ramadan in which was revealed the Qur'an, a guidance for mankind, and clear proofs of the guidance, and the Criterion (of right and wrong)" (Baqarah:2/185)*



In Ramadan the Muslim exerts himself in the recital of the words of his Lord, reacquainting himself with the lessons, commands and advice of Lord of all the Worlds. In it one finds parables and similitudes struck for the people of deep insight.

Allah Most High says, "Verily Allah does not hesitate to strike a parable as insignificant as a mosquito. As for those who believe then they recognise it as the truth from their Lord. But as for those who deny the truth then they say 'what does Allah mean by such a parable?' He does misguide by it many and He does guide by it many and it is none but the losers who are misguided."

And so while verses from the Noble Qur'an and honourable sayings of the Prophet (pbuh) about charity abound, let us turn our attention to the story of Adam (pbuh) as narrated to us in Surat al Baqarah, the second garden of the Qur'an that the believer roams freely within.

***How does corruption arise? When the believer has busied himself with taking from that which Allah has made permissible for him but has ignored the duties upon him from his Lord.***

Allah Most High did say to Adam (pbuh), "O Adam, you and your wife may live in paradise and eat from it whatever you wish but do not approach this tree lest you become of the transgressors." They were given free reign to reside in paradise and to take from its fruits and to benefit from its pleasures and to be at absolute liberty therein, but for the forbidden tree. That tree was the only thing from the pleasures of paradise that they were to abstain from. No reason was given, except that it was the command of Allah, and that was reason enough. But, as Allah informs us, Satan did distract them from all that Allah Most High had put before them and turned their attentions to the forbidden tree.

Despite all the pleasures they had before them in abundance, Satan had drawn their desires towards that which was not theirs, and despite the fantastic treasures that were within their reach, they were now in want of that tree. However when the forbidden fruits of that the forbidden tree fell within their hands, naught but dread filled their hearts and they were thrown out of paradise. That which seemed so enticing earned nothing but despondence, disgrace and fall from grace. Such is the world for the believer.

Allah Most High has said to us, "Eat and drink from the sustenance of Allah and do not go about the earth spreading corruption." So take o believer from the permissible provisions that Allah Most Glorious has provided you with, eat and drink from it, enjoy and proclaim the bounties that your Lord has graced you with, but, "do not go about the earth spreading corruption". And how does corruption arise? When the believer has busied himself with taking from that which Allah has made permissible for him but has ignored the duties upon him from his Lord.

Allah Most Wise has said, "Do you believe in parts of the Book and disbelief in parts while you recite the Book? So what is the recompense of such a one from among you except punishment in the life of this world and on the Day of Judgement he will be thrown into an awful torment". So eat and drink but set aside that portion for the poor and weak among you. Take from the blessings Allah descends upon you, but do not approach



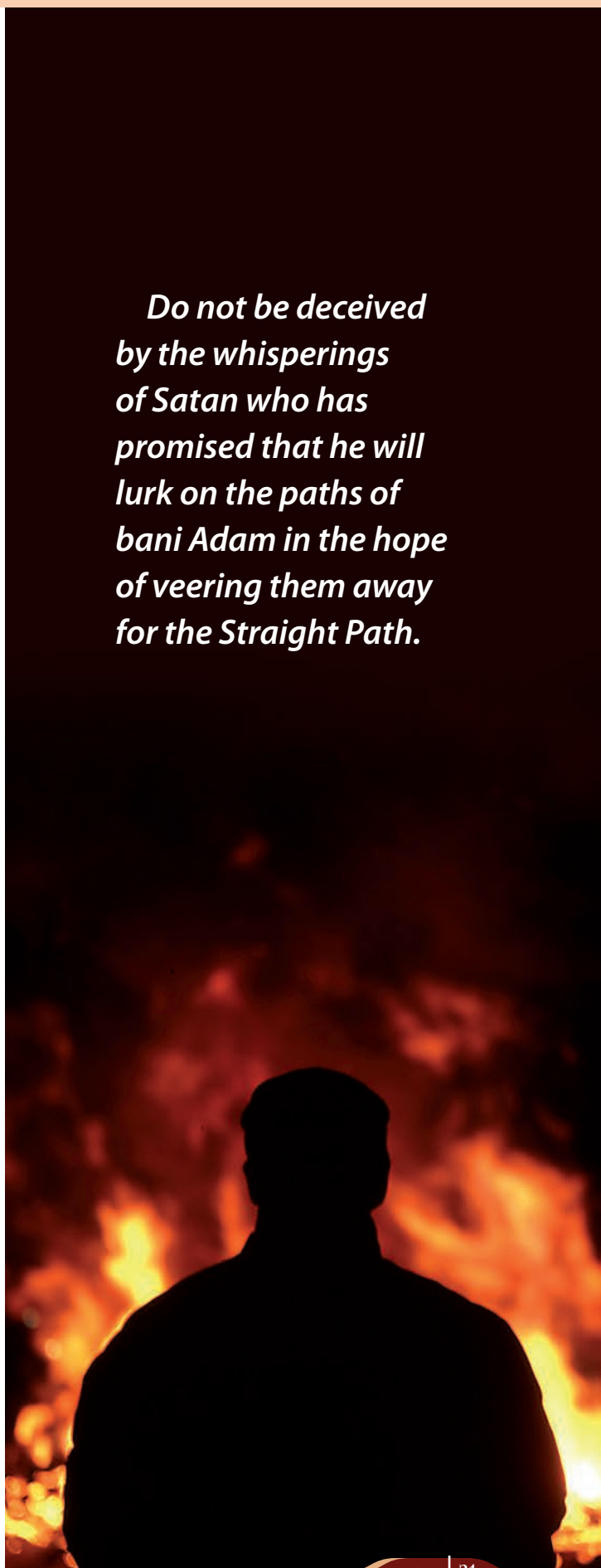
the "forbidden tree", do not come near the wealth of the orphan, nor withhold your zakah, nor rebuke the petitioner when he asks you. Your wealth is a blessing but it is also a trust from Allah. Do not be like those who denied the truth who came before you, whom when charged with charity to be given to the poor, turned up their noses and arrogantly proclaimed, "Shall we feed one whom if Allah had willed He would have fed him Himself?" Allah has willed that the poor and weak be fed, that they shall be fed by you and the bounty that He bestowed upon you, and if you do not do so then you shall indeed see your wealth deplete before you eyes.

Just as the one in Surat al Kahf who was blessed with gardens of rivers and grapes but he denied Allah and his duties to Allah, and when his friend did warn him of his arrogance and false sense of security, he increased in arrogance and pride. So he sealed for himself his pathetic fate and Allah Most Just did destroy his gardens and rivers and he was left in a state of regret. Do not o brother, do not o sister allow yourself into the position of regret, for this is the most retched of states to bring yourself to by your own hands.

Give knowing that Allah Most Kind will then give to you many times over. Know that the best deal one can strike is the one between oneself and His Creator so as Allah does say, "give to your Lord a goodly loan", for verily He does not allow the rewards of His slaves to be lost. And He Most High and Exalted has said, "The parable of those who spend their possessions for the sake of Allah is that of a grain out of which grow seven ears, in every ear a hundred grains: for Allah grants manifold increase unto whom He wills; and Allah is infinite, all-knowing.

Do not be deceived by the whisperings of Satan who has promised that he will lurk on the paths of bani Adam in the hope of veering them away for the Straight Path. Know that "Satan threatens you with the prospect of poverty and bids you to be niggardly, whereas Allah promises you His forgiveness and bounty; and Allah is infinite, all-knowing". But the world is not as it seems and the one upon whom Allah has bestowed knowledge and understanding he is

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the one who sees the world for its reality and knows that to spend will cause your wealth to increase and to be miserly will only cause one to fall into poverty.

And give to those without as Allah Most Generous has given to you, without miserliness and without burden on the recipient. Allah Most Wise has warned us, "They who spend their possessions for the sake of Allah and do not thereafter mar their spending by stressing their own benevolence and hurting [the feelings of the needy] shall have their reward with 'their Sustainer, and no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve. A kind word and the veiling of another's want is better than a charitable deed followed by hurt; and Allah is self-sufficient, forbearing."

Allah Most Kind has taught us not only to give our money but the etiquette with which one gives. Allah Most Worth of Praise teaches us, "O you who have attained to faith! Do not deprive your charitable deeds of all worth by stressing your own benevolence and hurting [the feelings of the needy], as does he who spends his wealth only to be seen and praised by men, and believes not in Allah and the Last Day."

So give with such politeness and kindness that an onlooker may mistake you as the

recipient of the money rather than the one giving, because it is indeed a favour from Allah Most High upon you that He provided you with wealth, the guidance to spend it in His Path and the opportunity to actually do so too .

Thus you have come to the realisation that you must give and that you must give to all in need and that must do so kindly and gently without burdening your recipient, but what to give from your wealth is also explained by our Rabb:

*"O you who have attained to faith! Spend on others out of the good things which you may have acquired, and out of that which We bring forth for you from the earth; and choose not for your spending the bad things which you yourselves would not accept without averting your eyes in disdain. And know that Allah is self-sufficient, ever to be praised."*

Give of the good that you have and not that which you do not like for yourself. Allah Most High speaks of those preferring other over themselves even when they themselves may be in need saying, "Those who show altruism (i.e. give others preference) even though poverty is their own lot, they are the successful."

Thus Allah Most Kind has shown you the way to success, be not then one who was shown the way but chose to get lost.

***You have come to the realisation that you must give and that you must give to all in need and that must do so kindly and gently without burdening your recipient.***



# I DID NOT FIND ISLAM, ISLAM FOUND ME!

Maryam ter Valkenheul

Turkey, Ramadan 2001. We have eaten our Iftar meal and finished our Maghrib prayers and it is time for a cup of tea. I switch on the television and stop at a Turkish channel. Today some Muslim converts are telling their conversion stories. An Englishman is interviewed. The journalist asks him: "How did you find Islam?" He says: *"I did not find Islam, Islam found me...!"*

His words really strike me and I feel a great emotion swelling up inside me, because I immediately understand what he means. I too did not find Islam, but Islam found me!

If somebody had told me 25 years ago, that I would become a Muslim, I would have laughed at him. But it is true, Allah's guidance (*hidayah*) took me by the hand and lead me – step by step – to Islam.

I switch off the TV and many memories return. I remember:

1982 was my first visit to Turkey; I was invited by my eldest sister who had heard about the Islamic culture and history in Turkey. So she wanted to go there and I just went along with her. But as a result I was greatly moved by the hospitality and kindness of the people; this was something I had never experienced before. The sound of the adhan was such a different sound, but it actually frightened me...



*A few hours after I converted to Islam, I became very ill. I felt very weak, but my heart was on fire; this was something I had never felt before! Later I learned that this illness was a way for me to be purified. Alhamdulillah!*

Back in Holland, I decided to learn some Turkish, so that if I ever went to Turkey again, I could speak a little with these kind people. My Turkish teacher was a Muslim. He taught me Turkish, but he also told me a lot about Islam, especially about Sufism and he told many stories filled with Sufi wisdom, of the Sufi masters. I loved those stories with their intelligent messages for mankind.

He advised me to go to meetings where I could meet Dutch converts. I hesitated, because I had no intention, whatsoever, to convert to Islam.... But my curiosity pushed me and so I went. I was amazed by these different people and the new world that I had met. I bought books and started to read and slowly I understood why my Turkish teacher was so enthusiastic about his religion and about Sufism.

My Turkish teacher and I got married, but I did not convert to Islam. We both had the intention to live a religious life, he as a Muslim and I as a Christian. But we were very naive, and did not know how to carry this out in practice. I started to fast during the month of Ramadan and I liked it very much. I had a tape with the sound of the adhan and before I went to sleep, I used to listen to this wonderful sound, that at first scared me, but now I had started to love....

1987, we went for a holiday to Turkey; we went to Konya and we visited the grave of Rumi. The sound of the adhan started to move me more and more, many times while traveling through Turkey and hearing the adhan, I couldn't move but only cry. I loved to sit in the mosque and look at the praying people.

On this same holiday, we went to a place where we were told a Naqshbandi Sufi master lived. We met this master and he said in Turkish to my husband:

— "Wouldn't it be better for you and your wife if she became a Muslim?"

My husband translated his question and invitation to Islam. I was surprised and had not prepared myself for this question, but at that moment, sitting next to this imposing figure, I had no courage to protest..... and without further

thinking I said: "Yes" . I repeated the words of the Shahada which the Sufi master recited and I became a Muslim..... *'Islam found me. I didn't find Islam!'*

A few hours after I converted to Islam, I became very ill. For 3 days I had a high fever and was vomiting all the time. After that I felt very weak, but my heart was on fire; this was something I had never felt before! Later I learned that this illness was a way for me to be purified. Alhamdulillah!

Back in Holland, a complete new life started – a process of internal and external *transformation*. My husband became very serious in practicing the daily rules of Islam and I started to learn how to pray and also tried to give it a place in my working life.

But as a matter of fact, this was quite a difficult time. I had to learn so many things, I had to change so much. My husband was moving very fast in his development, but I had the feeling that I was a child who knew little and moved quite slowly.

So this difference in development and speed, plus the reaction of my family, friends and colleagues, was quite intense. But, with the help of Allah and with the *dua* of our Sufi master, we made it! Alhamdulillah!

1988, we went on Hajj and this gave my faith a great spiritual push!! After the hajj, I started to wear the scarf and I was strong enough to withstand the reaction of the people around me. In 1989 I had a son and in 1991 a daughter.

My tea has become cold, but the memories of being *'found by Islam'* and the first years as a Muslim give me a warm feeling, Alhamdulillah!

In 1997 we immigrated to Turkey, particularly for the children, to let them grow up in a Muslim surrounding. Over the past 11 years I have seen Allah's *hidayah* so often; I have learned, seen and experienced anew so many things, that I could easily write a book about it.

***We went to a place where we were told a Naqshbandi Sufi master lived. We met this master and he said in Turkish to my husband: "Wouldn't it be better for you and your wife if she became a Muslim?"***



# Pearls of Wisdom

*"He who does not thank people, does not thank Allah."*

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)

*"Sincerity means that one does not seek recompense for what one has done."*

Abu Bakr

*"Teachers open the door, but you must enter by yourself."*

Anonymous

*"Forgiveness is choosing to love. It is the first skill of self-giving love."*

Mahatma Gandhi

*"He who has never learned to obey cannot be a good commander."*

Aristotle



*"Earning is not  
your in control, but  
spending is."*

Muhammad Farouq

*"The window  
determines how much  
Light enters the house,  
even if the Moon's  
radiance fills the East  
and the West."*

Rumi

*"Friendship takes  
many years to  
establish; so do not fall  
out with a friend over  
a single disagreement."*

Sadi Shirazi

*"The tears of the sinner  
are more beloved to God  
than the arrogance of the  
righteous man."*

Ibn Ata'llah

*"When your brother is  
out of your sight, mention  
him as you would like him  
to mention you when you  
are out of his sight."*

Sufyan Thawri



# GOOD DEEDS MAKE THE WORLD GO ROUND

*If we have little spare money to give away, we can spend our spare time for others. Then the slogan: 'Money makes the world go round', might change to 'Good deeds make the world go round'.*

**B**efore becoming Muslim I knew and practiced the principle of voluntary giving, *Sadaqah*. For the most part I transferred money to the account of a charitable institution, but this was somehow impersonal, as I did not know or meet the needy persons to whom it was given.

In 1987, newly converted to Islam with quite a large amount of money in my bank account, I was told that I had to pay *zakat*, that is 2.5.% of this "spare" money. Hearing this was quite a shock for me and for my *nafs*, because I had all sorts of plans to spend this money on my family. I was brought up with the idea that everybody has to earn his money by themselves so that nobody is dependent on anyone else, and the principle that 'your money is yours' had been instilled in me. My conception was: 'I earned this money with my own hands and it is mine and I can decide what to do with it.'

The principle, *'everyone in the society, the poor and the rich, need each other spiritually or materially, as a part of the Wisdom and the Plan of Allah Almighty. And in fact everything, including our personal possessions belong to Allah and man only possesses things metaphorically, not in reality'*, was something I could not very easily accept. Of course I paid my *zakaat*, but at that time it did not really come from my heart. *Astaghfirullah!*

Immigrating to Turkey and meeting people who had very little made me start to understand and experience the great wisdom of the principle of *INFAQ*. I became able to give with a much more willing heart!

1. Islam, Spirit and Form: Osman Nuri Topbas



*So if we stock up our possessions and do not use them for the needy, they will be of no use to us in our grave.*

But then our financial situation had changed and now things were almost the opposite; now we were the ones who were sometimes in need. So Allah showed me and taught me that we are dependent on his Wisdom and Plans.

**"Oh ye men! It is you that have need of Allah..."** (Fatir:35/15)

Now I can truly understand and feel what a great relief it is when people understand your situation and hold out their hands to you. True feelings of thankfulness for the giver and for the ultimate Giver are new sensations to me.

In the past, when my husband and I both had well-paid jobs, there was always enough money to spend on others; it was not really difficult. But when you have a little yourself, REAL spending on others knocks at your door. Could I ever reach the level of Sayyidina Ali and his wife Fatima who gave away their money to a beggar while they were in need of it themselves? But Allah was very pleased with their behavior and sent them rewards that went beyond their giving. Allah tells us about it in Surah Al An'am, verse 160:

**"He that doeth good, shall have 10 times as much as his credit...."**

Sayyidina Ali and Sayyidina Fahtima really trusted Allah, they really had *tawakkul*; they knew that Allah keeps His promise. They knew that if they were to give, Allah would give them much more. And this is absolutely true! I have experienced this promise of Allah many times over the last years. Even if you have a little to give, Allah gives you a great deal more than that!!

When we have a tight budget, spending on others can have another purpose and there is a clear advice from our Prophet (pbuh) on this matter:

*"Every good deed is sadaqah"* In the Western countries, everything is thought of in terms of money and slogans like: *'Time is money'* and *'Money makes the world go round'*, are used frequently. But if we have little spare money to give away, we can spend our spare time for others. So we can help a neighbor, we can visit the sick, we can teach somebody about Islam, we can pick up something from the street with might harm somebody, we can smile at somebody we meet, etc, etc.... Then the slogan: *'Money makes the world go round'*, might change to *'Good deeds make the world go round'*.

Everybody is very much in need of good deeds, because it is good deeds that will help us in our grave. Here in Turkey, the death of somebody is announced by the sound of *'Assalaatu, wa salam...'* calling from the mosque. Hearing this calling I always think of the following hadith:

*"Three (things) will accompany a dead body (to his grave); his family, his possessions and his deeds. Two of them will leave and one will stay. His family and his possessions will leave him and his deeds stay with him."*

So if we stock up our possessions and do not use them for the needy, they will be of no use to us in our grave.

May we fully understand those wonderful principles of *Infaq* and may we practice them so that our good deeds increase, Amen!



# THE WISDOM BEHIND THE EXISTENCE OF THE EGO

*Overcoming the obstacle of the ego is made possible by a bay'ah. One must then submit themselves to the training of this teacher. The Qur'an states: "His (Allah's) hand is above their hands" (Fath:48/10)*

The honor that fills our heart in triumph is borne of the sense of accomplishment we feel for having endured the trials and tribulations that one tastes in the struggle to succeed.

Prophet Adam (pbuh) unwittingly committed an error that resulted in his exile from paradise to earth. The ultimate reason for this event was to offer the descendants of Adam the opportunity to regain their lost honor of having had the "best stature" (Tin, 95/4) during the course of their life on earth.

This supreme distinction is bestowed only upon those human beings who have passed the tests put before them by their Creator during this earthly life and who, in so doing, earn the right to return to their primordial paradisiacal home. Allah, with the intention of increasing this honor, has furthermore equipped all human beings with an ego or nafs that functions as an obstacle on the straight path of return. The process of prevailing over the nafs serves to increase the value of the achieved aim, as in all other cases when one triumphs over impediments on the path to victory. Beyond this, Allah has also bestowed upon human beings the necessary means for attaining this aim. In this regard, of principle importance are the Prophets He has sent and the chains of saints and scholars following them who will continue to offer guidance to mankind until the end of the world.

Rumi (quddisa sirruh) symbolically explained the wisdom behind the existence of the ego in the following story.

An amir was riding along when he saw a snake going into the mouth of a sleeping man. The amir, observing this, rushed to frighten the snake away, but he was too late. Since his Creator had endowed him with an abundant supply of intelligence, he struck the sleeping man several powerful blows with a mace. These blows drove the man to flee the amir; he then came to rest beneath a tree.

There were a number of rotten apples under the tree and the amir said, "Eat these, O you in the grip of pain!" He forced the man to eat so many apples that they were falling out of his mouth.

He was crying, "O amir, I beseech you, why have you set upon me? What have I done to deserve this treatment? If you have an argument with me, strike me with your sword and shed my blood at once. I wish you had never seen me! Oh, happy is the one who was never blessed with being espied by you! O Allah, I beg of you, grant this emir the retribution which he truly deserves!" With every instant the man continued to utter curses, but the amir kept beating him and telling him to run. The blows of the mace came quicker than the man could run. The poor man continued to run, although he frequently stumbled and fell. He was over-filled with the rotten apples and his feet and face were covered with a hundred thousand wounds. The amir drove the man back and forth, until he was overcome by vomiting.

All the things, both good and bad, came up from within him: the snake shot forth with all that he had eaten. When the man saw the snake, he fell on his knees before the kind emir and all his anger and sorrow left him.

"Truly," said he, "you are the Gabriel of divine mercy; you are the lord of bounty. Oh, blessed is the hour that you first saw me: I was dead and you have given me new life. You were seeking me as a mother searches for her children; I was fleeing from you like an ass. The ass flees from his master out of stupidity, while his owner runs after him as a consequence of good nature. He seeks him, not on account of profit or loss, but so that a wolf or another wild beast might not tear him apart. Oh, happy is he that espies your face or suddenly lights upon your abode. O you whom pure spirit has praised, how many foolish and idle words have I uttered to you! O lord and emperor and amir, I spoke not, my folly spoke: do not punish me for this offense. If I had only known your title, O master, how could I have spoken such foolish words? I should have praised you, O man of virtuous qualities, had you only given me a single hint as to the actual circumstance. But you, maintaining silence, silently continued to beat me on the head. My head became dizzy; the wits flew out of my head— especially as this head has but little brain. Pardon me, O man of beneficent countenance and benevolence: please forgive that which I have exclaimed in a state of frenzy."

The amir answered, "If I had uttered a hint of what had happened, your gall would instantly have turned to water. Had I described to you the qualities of the snake, in terror you would have given up the ghost. If I had told you about the snake, neither would you have been able to eat, nor would you have been capable of vomiting or cared to do so. I heard your abuse and went on with my work; I kept praying beneath my breath, 'O Lord, make it easy!' Neither was I able to speak of the cause, nor could I abandon you. Borne of the grief in my heart I was continually praying, 'Oh Lord,



guide my people; verily they know not."

The Prophet said: "... If I should correctly describe the enemy which is in your souls, the gall bladders of even courageous men would burst: he (will be such ) that he will neither go on his way nor care for any work. There would remain in his heart neither endurance in supplication, nor sufficient strength in his body for fasting or ritual prayer. He would become good for nothing, like a mouse before a cat; he would be distraught as a lamb before a wolf.

No power to plan or power to move would remain in him: it is for this reason that I tend you without speaking."

This was the method the Prophet adopted. For the purpose of protecting the interests of those around them, the saints choose silence as well. Furthermore, they never reveal what is in the heart of those who are around them. Instead, they veil their shortcomings. They educate by virtue of exemplary actions and behavior instead of on the basis of words. Those under divine guidance have the ability to influence people, even those with hearts like iron, as long as such hardened people retain the ability to be influenced in the same way that Prophet David was able to soften iron.

Abu Darda, may Allah be pleased with him, served as the judge of Damascus. One day, he saw some people cursing a person who had committed a sin. He asked them: "What would you do if you saw a man who had fallen into a well?" They replied: "We would use a rope to save him from the well."

Abu Darda then went on: "Then why do you not show mercy to this person who has fallen into a well of sins? Why do you not prepare a rope of glad tidings for him and save him from his misfortune?"

One asked: "Do you not feel animosity towards this sinful person while Allah is threatening to punish him with the Hellfire?" The distinguished Companion, who was raised under the eye of the Prophet, answered this question as follows: "Yes, I feel animosity for the awful acts he has committed, but I do not feel animosity towards him."

Rumi expressed his love and mercy for all creatures for the sake of their Creator in the following lines: "My Lord! If the pious alone can hope for your mercy, who else can the sinful turn to for refuge? O my Glorious Allah! If you accept only the prayers of your special servants, to whom can the criminal turn to in prayer? ... (Verily, You are the most Merciful of the merciful!)"

The sleeping man in the story by Rumi symbolizes the heedless person. The black snake that entered his mouth is his ego or nafs. The amir is the Perfect Guide. What the blows of the mace awoke him from are seclusion and the battle against the nafs. Finally, the departure of the snake symbolizes liberation from the dominion of the nafs.

When Allah spoke to Prophet Musa in the sacred valley of Tuwa, He asked him about the staff he was holding. Musa answered:

"It is my rod: on it I lean; with it I beat down fodder for my flocks; and in it I find other uses." (Taha, 18)

Allah ordered him: "Throw it, O Musa!" (Taha, 19)

Some scholars who have written commentaries on the Qur'an have interpreted these passages symbolically. They have explained that this guidance applied to the inner world of Musa. When Musa referred to temporal attachments in relation to his rod, Allah ordered him to abandon them. The





ego and all the attachments associated with it appeared in the form of a snake. In this way, the Creator revealed to Musa the truth of the nafs. Musa became frightened and ran away. Allah then ordered him: "O Musa! This snake represents attachment to things other than Allah. If the true nature of this condition was revealed to whoever suffers from it, all would flee."

Another symbolic meaning extrapolated from this story is related to the Lord's command, "Throw away your staff! You have now been blessed with the attributes of Tawhid, faith in the unity of Allah. How can it remain appropriate for you to rely on a staff and hope to benefit from it? How can you claim that you perform actions with this staff and claim that you continue to derive benefit from it? The first genuine step in the path of Tawhid is to leave all agents behind. So abandon all wishes and claims..."

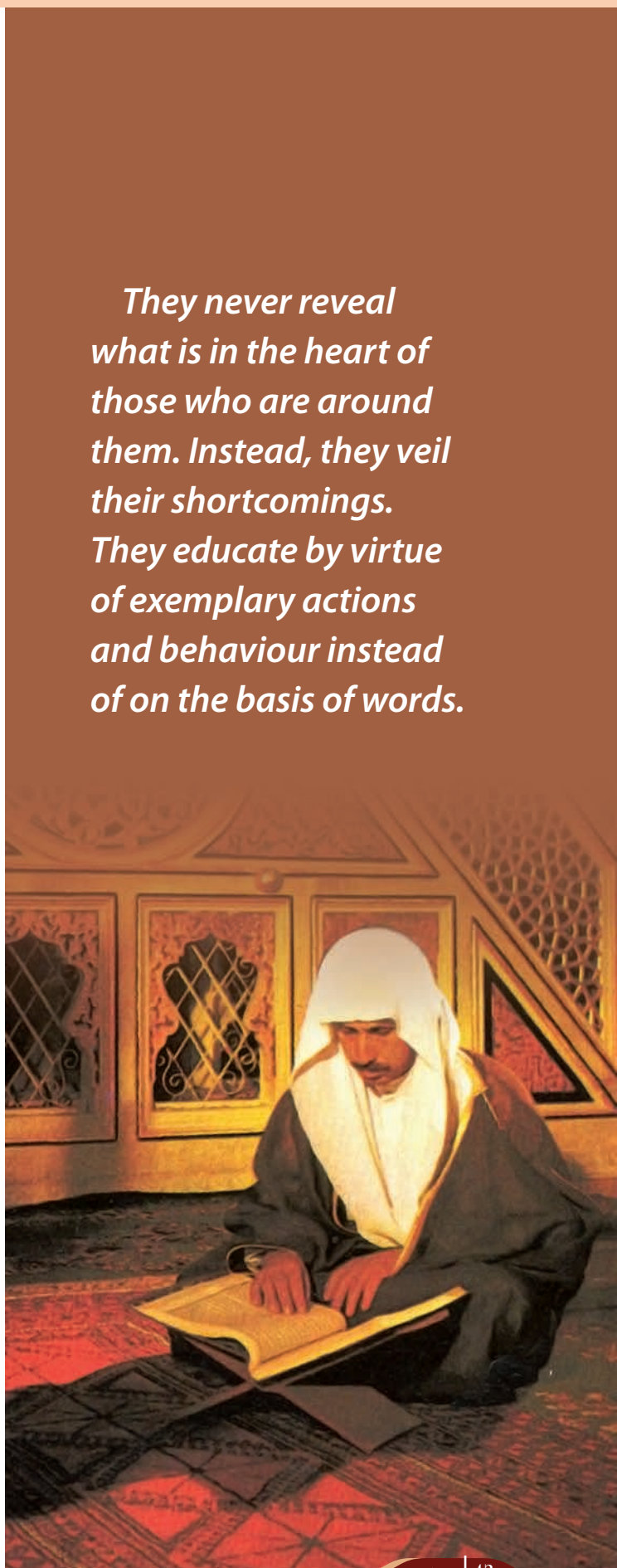
The following is said in the Tawilat-i Najmiyya: He who hears the divine voice and sees the divine light detaches himself from everything else and never relies on anything but the generosity and blessing of Allah. He completely cleanses his heart of all base desires.

When Yusuf was confronted with the wiles of Zulayha, an involuntary inclination rose up in him. At that moment, Allah revealed to him His indisputable proof. The roof of the room opened up and he saw his father Yaqub biting his finger. Another person appeared next to him who said: "Yusuf, look to your right!" When Yusuf looked to his right he saw a huge snake.

This is how the true nature of things was revealed to Yusuf. The deeds of the ego appeared to him in a concrete and ugly form. The transient appearances melted away and the deeper reality behind them emerged unveiled. At that moment, the divine manifestations and the secrets of things became clearly visible to him. When the help of Allah arrived with a clear proof, Yusuf was saved from harm being caused by both his nafs and the woman.

The Prophet said: "Paradise is surrounded by what the nafs despises while the Hellfire is surrounded by what the nafs enjoys

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and behaviour instead  
of on the basis of words.*



Overcoming the obstacle of the ego is made possible by a *bay'ah* (alliance with a friend of Allah who is an heir of the Prophet and linked to him through an unbroken chain of transmission. One must then submit themselves to the training of this teacher. The Qur'an states: "His (Allah's) hand is above their hands" (Fath:48/10), and this is applicable to the *bay'ah*. What is referred to by "their hands" is the hands of the Companions of the Prophet who gave allegiance to him. In the same way, every man of Allah (*ahlullah*), even a poor dervish, has a *bay'ah* that reaches the Prophet. This is made possible through the chain of transmission that extends back in time through the hand of his teacher, his teacher's teacher, and the hands of all previous masters reaching back to the hand of the Prophet. The power of Allah remains above all these hands through the course of time. The presence of the power of Allah with the hand of the Prophet is what distinguishes the hands of the perfect servants of Allah and it is through this presence that they are able to function in extraordinary spiritual capacities. The Absolute Actor (*al-fa'il al-mutlaq*) is Allah and He allows His friends to perform acts that have been spiritually engendered solely by Him.

There are two forms of love: real and metaphorical. Real love exists solely in the love of Allah, while all metaphorical love is in fact an attachment to a created, transitory condition.

The true lover is freed from all attachments

because he is exclusively and completely attached to Allah alone. He neither recognizes nor considers the love of anything other than Allah.

For instance, Majnun finally attained a spiritual state in which he could not even recognize Layla. Rumi indicates this issue in the following passage: "Due to a love for the body, Allah made Majnun unable to distinguish between friend and foe." The poet Fuzuli, who was a lover of the Prophet, compared the Prophet with a rose in his famous Water Ode (*Su Kasidesi*): "Let the gardener abandon the rose garden to the flood water, for a single rose (like him) could not blossom even if he were to water a thousand rose gardens."

Rumi articulated this love as follows: "Allah Almighty gave such special power to divine love that if one is blessed with but a single drop of it, they will be emancipated from the concerns of both worlds." This means that one who is lost in divine love no longer cares about the deficiencies, the jealousy, and the mistakes of others. In this way their perfection grows and they eventually attain the destination they have sought. This is pure love. This is the love of Allah.

A guide attracts disciples to himself through a spiritually sanctified act and reconfigures their bondage to the mundane by slowly transforming it into a genuine love of the divine. The real connections that gradually emerge

*The Prophet defined this worldly life as follows: "Why should I be concerned with this world? My condition is similar to a traveller who stops briefly over under a tree to get some rest in its shadow and then continues his journey."*



between disciple and master slowly replace the false attachments and in fact become the first steps on the path to being extinguished in divine love.

Sheikh Sadi illustrates the divine acts of guides in the following story: "One day, a friend gave me a piece of soap while in the public baths; the soap was made of a special compound. I asked the soap: "Are you musk or amber? I am genuinely impressed by your wondrous fragrance." The soap answered: "I was the soil of a rose. The rose's petals used to be covered with drops of water in the morning. These rose petal drops used to fall on me as tears. With them, I became molded like dough. In truth, I am ordinary soil whose exquisite fragrance comes from the rose."

Allah has created the universe for human beings. He has put everything that in the sea, in the sky and on the land under the command of man. However, in exchange He has burdened human beings with a responsibility that is more onerous than that which the mountains bear.

If a human being looks at this world through materialistic, acquisitive eyes, they will inevitably think about living in it in a fashion that is devoid of eternal insight. There is only one event in life functions to restore balance to our vision. This is the event of "death". This moment of transition contains the full meaning of life and is thus filled with many important lessons. It is the extraction of these lessons and their integration that are of deep spiritual concern for any person who takes life seriously, and it is this moment that is the measure of one's ultimate success in life. Having acknowledged this truth, we also need to remember that death is a sorrowful end for those who care only for their bodies and who have abandoned their souls.

The Prophet (pbuh) defined this worldly life as follows: "Why should I be concerned with this world? My condition is similar to a traveler who stops briefly over under a tree to get some rest in its shadow and then continues his journey."

O Lord! May You bestow upon us the endless joy of your love and blessings. Amen!

***The real connections  
that gradually emerge  
between disciple and  
master slowly replace  
the false attachments  
and in fact become the  
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being extinguished in  
divine love.***







# STORIES

## IMAM ALI and THE CANDLE

**A** candle burnt by Ali's side as he sat down meticulously recording all the revenue and the expenses of the treasury. Just then Talha and Zubair appeared.

They wanted to have positions of authority under Imam Ali's rule and had come to strike a deal. If Imam Ali gave them a place of distinction, they would in turn pledge their full support. Imam Ali was aware of this. Just as they sat down, Imam Ali put out the candle and lit another one.

Talha and Zubair exchanged a glance of surprise and then one of them said: "O Ali, we have come on some important business. But why did you extinguish the candle?"

Imam Ali replied: "That was a candle bought from the treasury funds. As long as I was working for the treasury, I could use it. Now you have come on personal business, so I will use the candle bought from my personal funds." Talha and Zubair left him without saying another word.







# THE STORY for THE MOTHS

One night the moths met together, tormented by a desire to become united with the candle.

They said: "We must send someone who will bring us information about the object of our desire." So one of them set off and came to a castle; inside he saw the light of a candle. He returned, and reported what he had seen, or rather, what he had thought he had seen.

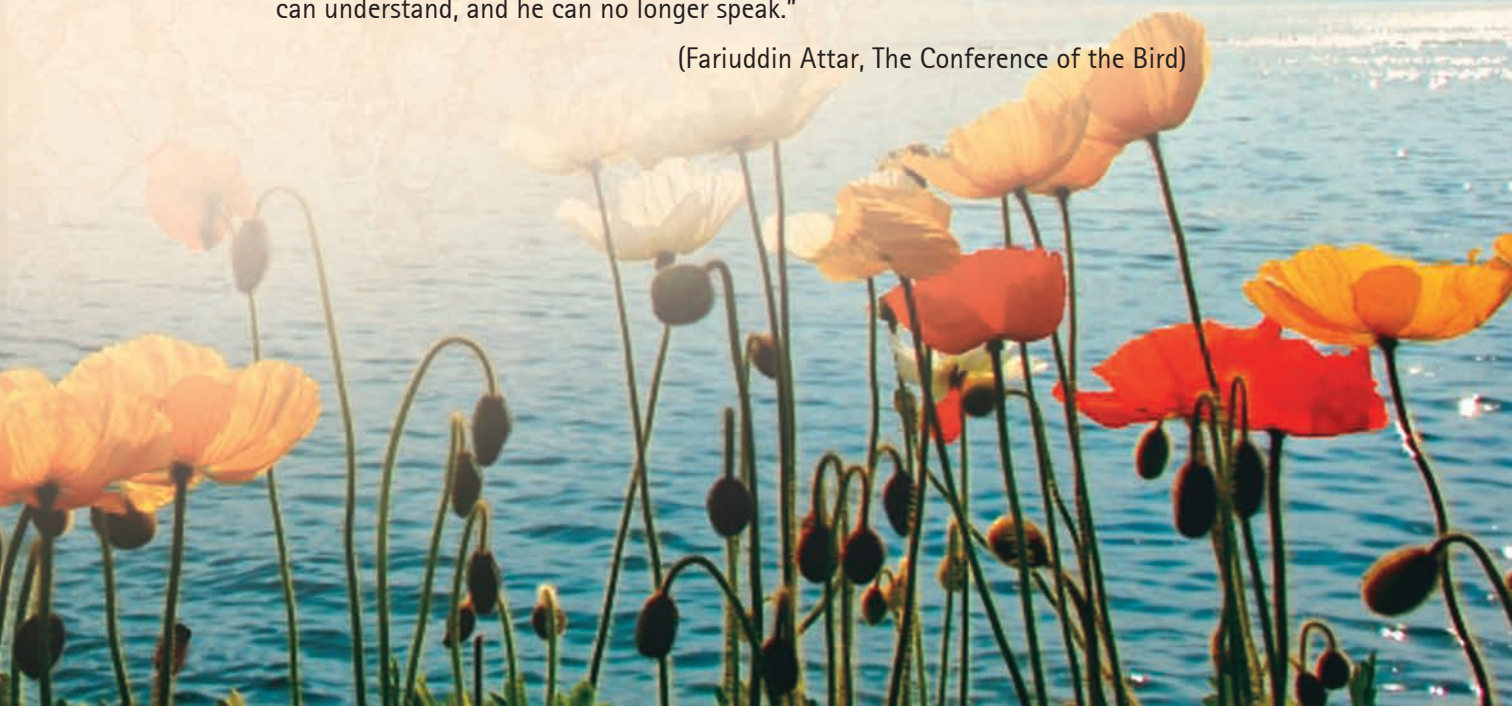
But the wise moth presiding over the gathering stated that in the other moth had actually understood nothing at all about the candle, as he had remained so far from it.

So another moth went there. He touched the flame with the tip of his wings, but the heat drove him off. His report was no more satisfying than that of the first, so a third went.

This one, intoxicated with love, threw himself on the flame; with his forelegs he took hold of the flame and united with it. He embraced it completely and his body became as red as the fire. The flame and the moth appeared to be one.

The presiding moth said: "He has learnt what he wished to know; but only he can understand, and he can no longer speak."

(Fariuddin Attar, The Conference of the Bird)



# Quiz For Children



1. What is the first Surah in the Quran?  
A) Al-Fil                      B) An-Nas  
C) Al-Fatiha                D) Al-Baqarah
2. What was the first name of the Prophet Muhammed (pbuh)?  
A) Mahmud                B) Ahmad  
C) Ibrahim                D) Adam
3. Who was the first female Muslim?  
A) Khadijah                B) Aisha  
C) Mary                    D) Asia
4. Who was the first Muslim man?  
A) Musa                    B) Uthman  
C) Abu Bakr                D) Jafaar
5. Who was the first child Muslim?  
A) Ali                      B) Umar  
C) Bilal                    D) Abu Talib
6. Who was the first slave to accept Islam?  
A) Abu Lahab              B) Abu Sufyan  
C) Bilal                    D) Abdullah
7. Where were the first ayats of Qur'an revealed?  
A) Thawr Cave  
B) Hira Cave  
C) Mount Nimrud  
d. Mount Sinai
8. In which month were the first ayats of Qur'an revealed ?  
A) Ramadan  
B) Shaban  
C) Dhul-Hijjah  
D) Rajab
9. Who was the first Prophet?  
A) Musa (pbuh)  
B) Ibrahim (pbuh)  
C) Muhammad (pbuh)  
D) Adam (pbuh)
10. Who was the first martyr of Islam?  
A) Habil  
B) Kabil  
C) Sumayya  
D) Isa (pbuh)

.....  
Hey Kids! Maybe you can win a prize!

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

Name: ..... Age: .....

Address: .....

Parent's Name (for consent purposes only): .....

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