



WISDOM

A Source of Inspirational and Traditional Islamic Knowledge

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ISTIQAAMAH

BEING STEADFAST ON THE STRAIGHT PATH

Osman Nuri Efendi

ISTIQAAMAH

Afimet Tasgetiren

WALKING TOWARDS THE
SIRAAT

Aziz Sadiq

ETERNAL AFFECTION AND
THE ESSENCE OF LIGHT



Dear Readers,

"Therefore, stand firm (on the straight path) as you are commanded and those who turn in repentance with you. And do not transgress, for He (Allah) sees well all that you do." (Hud, 11/112)

We have dedicated this issue to Istiqamah, staying on the straight path. Istiqamah is an important concept of Islam. Its significance can be seen where every Muslim is required to recite Surah al-Fatihah forty times each day in our salah (prayer) asking continual guidance to the straight path from Allah.

It has many meanings. It means to be straight, to follow the straight path, to remain firm and not to give up doing religious duties in difficult times. Some scholars say that it also means to be sincere and do good deeds. Some others say that it means to be straight in words as well in deeds. Those who live with istiqamah Allah has promised them great reward and blessings in this world and in the hereafter.

"Undoubtedly, those who said, 'our Lord is Allah then remain firm on it, the angels descend upon them, saying, 'fear not, nor grieve and be glad with the paradise which you were promised. We are your friends in the life of this world and in the Hereafter. And for you therein is that which your soul may desire, and for you therein is that which you may ask for. A hospitable gift from One Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful!" (Fussilet, 41/30-32)

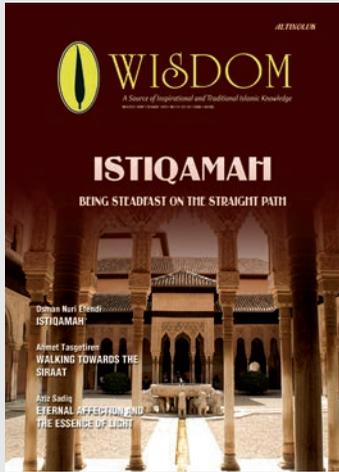
Our teacher Osman Nuri Efendi explains in his article that we should live according to the way and the example of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) in order to be steadfast.

This edition also contains an article of Ahmet Tasgetiren about seeking refuge in Allah at all times to stand firm and Prof. Hasan Kamil Yılmaz is elucidating the 'Istiqamah' of the Companions of the Prophet and how their intents and inclinations were for Allah alone.

In our Divine Path section, you will read the story of Gusztav Bogнар from Hungary and how he decided to become muslim after studying and experimenting different methods of several religions in his youth.

We hope you enjoy reading this edition, and that you will find all the articles worthwhile in learning the ways to stay on the straight path.

May Allah keep us straight and strong on the right path. Amen.



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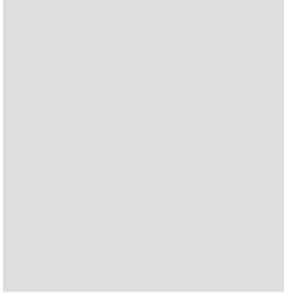
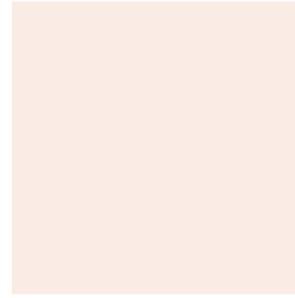
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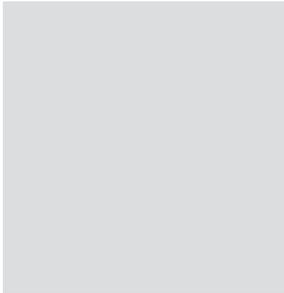
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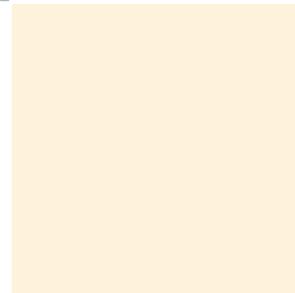
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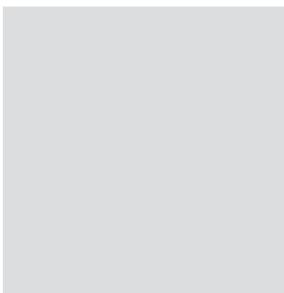
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Istiqamah

(Stand Firm On Straight Path)

Istiqamah means to proceed in a direction with no interference or hesitation. Achieving this without destroying the innocence and purity of creation and protecting it from harm is only possible with submission.



One of the great elders came across an old man who was walking with difficulty due to the load of wood he was carrying on his back. Seeing the situation the elder said: "Old man! Haven't you enough confidence left in Allah, the One Who provides for you? Why are you still suffering this hardship at your age? Isn't there anyone who can look after you?"

To eliminate the spiritual deficiency of the other man the woodcutter held his hands up to the sky and prayed: "O Allah! turn these into gold!" As soon as the old man uttered these words the wood turned into gold.

The other man, on seeing this, said in surprise: "Why would a person who's reached this degree carry wood?"

The old woodcutter answered: "My son, I'm doing this so that my ego thinks I'm its slave and so it doesn't roam beyond the limits of servitude; the only direction of adoration is Allah."

This is why the wise ones say: "The greatest miracle is direction."

Istiqamah, in general terms, means to proceed in a direction with no interference or hesitation. Achieving this without destroying the innocence and purity of creation and protecting it from harm is only possible with submission.

The result of the heart being protected throughout life is that egoism turns to the manners of Prophet Muhammad while the heart becomes closer to his spirituality and behavior. That which is of mystery begins to be evident, Allah Almighty becomes the aim of all endeavors, and the power of everything else disappears. When a believer achieves their aim of reaching Allah they will be in a state of contentment.

The best example of perfection and manners is Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), sent as a compassion of Allah to the universe; even though he was the Messenger, this was an indication of how difficult it is to fulfill these qualities and he was attributed the title of divinity.

Understanding the signs in this verse of the Qur'an one day he realized the difficulty of the circumstances and due to the huge responsibility of this divine burden Prophet Muhammad said: "Surah Hud have made me old" (Tirmidhi).

It is reported that Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) appeared in the dream of one of the believers; the dreamer asked him: "O Messenger of Allah! What was it in Surah Hud that made you old?"

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) answered by relating the following verse: *Therefore stand firm (in the straight path) as thou art commanded...!* (Hud, 11/112) (Ihya-u Ulumuddin III.145)

Abdullah bin Abbas said: "For the Prophet (pbuh) there was never a more onerous divine word than this."

White hairs became apparent in the black beard of the holy prophet after the revelation of this verse, even though until that day he had never had even one white hair.

Scholars explain this verse as:

O Messenger, indeed you must act in compliance with the discipline and judgments of the Qur'an and be a concrete example of guidance so there is no place for doubt or uncertainty! Don't take any notice of what the polytheists or hypocrites say; leave them to Allah! And comply with your duties, both those for the community and those that are personal, in the direction in which you have been ordered; do not stray from the true path! However harsh the orders are that are revealed to you, never be afraid in any way to convey or carry out that order! Allah is your guide.

This divine punishment in the verse is, in fact, concerned with the entire community, and the Prophet was worried about the punishment his community could face; this is what caused him to feel old and his hair to whiten.

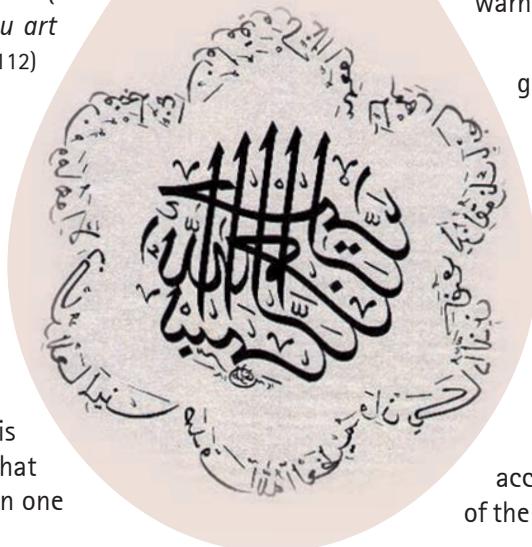
The revelation of '*On a Straight Way*' (Yasin, 36/4) confirmed this.

In that case, not only is there no other way of reaching Allah than the straight path, there is nothing harder than obeying the order to protect our istiqamah, in every sense, or fulfilling this in the best possible way.

Due to this difficulty, this command in Surah Fatiha, which is read many times a day in the form of supplication, was revealed as a warning to the community.

The requirement of guidance depicted in Surah Fatiha is read at least forty times a day during prayers; the fact that it is repeated so often is proof of the difficulty that is faced when trying to protect one's direction in a favorable manner.

The straight path according to the revelations of the Qur'an is the path of Allah;



Another meaning of istiqamah is remembering Prophet Muhammad, accepting his life and personality as our guides, modeling ourselves on his behavior, living within the spirituality of the Qur'an and the life of the Prophet

the path of prosperity, the book of Allah, faith and the qualities of faith, Islam and the laws of Islam, the path of the Prophet's Companions, the path of the life of the Prophet and the community, the path of the good ones and the martyrs, the path of happiness in this world and the Hereafter, the path of Heaven are the meanings of this declaration.

According to this, the straight path is a road that has been given to the pure humans as a blessing from Allah. These humans are firstly the Messengers, then the devoted, the martyrs, the believers and the others who are following in their footsteps in the right direction.

The straight path is a road that has no bends, no turns, and no slopes; it is just a straight smooth road.

The straight path is the road to Allah, as related in the following verse:

The Way of Allah, to Whom belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on earth. Behold(how) all affairs tend towards Allah! (Shura, 42/53)

Being on the straight path is adoration of Allah with true worthiness.

...Worship Him. This is a Way that is straight. (Al-i Imran, 3/ 51)

...Whoever holds firmly to Allah will be shown a Way that is straight. (Al-i Imran, 3/101)

This is how the straight path is explained in Surah An'am:

Say: Come I will rehearse what Allah hath (really) prohibited you from: Join not anything with Him: be good to your parents; Kill not your children on a plea of want;- We provide sustenance for you and for them;- come not nigh to indecent deeds, whether open or secret; Take not life, which Allah hath made sacred, except by way of justice and law: Thus doth He command you, that ye may learn wisdom. And come not nigh to the orphan's property, except to improve it. Until he attain the age of full strength; give measure and weight with (full) justice;- No burden do We place on any soul, but that which it can bear;- Whenever ye speak, speak justly, even if a near relative is concerned; And fulfill the covenant of Allah: thus doth he

command you, that ye may remember.

Verily, this is My Way leading straight: follow it: Follow not (other) paths: They will scatter you about from His Path...! (An'am, 6/151-153)

A believer cannot reach the true path until their love and affection for Allah is greater than the affection they feel for anything or anyone else; to achieve this it is necessary to know Allah and all His qualities of divinity, because those who reach the attainments of Allah live their lives in accordance with their faith and refrain from the malice of desires and the deceit of the devil. The heart of such a believer will receive the honor of the manifestations of divine blessings. A believer who reaches this position will have opened the spiritual doors to a place that cannot be seen with the eye; this entire universe will become their book of wisdom and magnificence.

The scholar Abu Said el-Harraz saw the devil in a dream and he tried to strike the devil with his baton, but the devil said to him: "O Abu Said! I'm not afraid of that baton because that baton is visible. The thing I'm afraid of is the brightness of the rising sun which gives out flames from the hearts of the knowing ones; with their hearts they can burn anything."

The enthusiasm of a person who is not truly on the straight path is in vain and the efforts they make on that path will be of no benefit; however, the direction on the path of Allah has been proven to be a great wonder.

According to another description, the straight path is the preservation of worship, without going to extremes either way. This entails doing what has been ordered and as it has been ordered in the most perfect way, without miserliness, squandering

or waste, which are never acceptable.

The Companions are a good example; some of them went to the holy Prophet to ask his permission to retreat from everything, to spend their days and nights in a state of worship, but Prophet Muhammad ordered them to perform their worship in moderation.

The holy Prophet lived his life in a certain routine so that he would be equal to others, relying on his human strengths; in fact the duties he performed with the light of his prophethood were nothing like those performed with human ability. His days would pass in worship, spending time with his family, resting according to his needs and conveying to the people their divine duties. The Messenger of Allah performed these duties in the best way possible and in the same way he conveyed them to the community.

So, if we put to one side all of the Prophet's actions and do not do that which has been commanded of us, or do everything half-heartedly or with negligence, or in some cases, going to the extreme the other way, this is most definitely wrong. We should live according to the way and the example of Prophet Muhammad and not according to our own measures.

This remark was explained beautifully by Hazrat Abdulhaliq Gujduwani. One day someone asked him: "Should I do what my *nafs* wants or that which it does not want?"

This wise man answered: "Choosing between the two is quite difficult, as one does not know whether the desires of the *nafs* are of a Divine nature or from the devil, who usually misleads people; this is why that which Allah has ordered should be done, and not the forbidden. This is true adoration."



The enthusiasm of a person who is not truly on the straight path is in vain and the efforts they make on that path will be of no benefit; however, the direction on the path of Allah has been proven to be a great wonder.

Allah Almighty revealed: *Say thou: 'This is my Way; I do invite unto Allah - with a certain knowledge - and whoever follows me.'* (Yusuf, 12/108)

During times when the majority of human beings were subjected to wealth and power, when they were trapped in their desires, Allah Almighty sent prophets who had been created with exceptional qualities. The holy Messengers who had been sent as an example to mankind were governed with three missions:

1. Reading and conveying the message of Allah
2. Teaching the Book and its wisdom
3. Purifying and taming the *nafs* of the community and guiding them.

This holy path began with Prophet Adam and reached perfection with Prophet Mohammed (peace and blessings be upon them both).

The holy Qur'an, which left the atheists helpless and the believers in amazement, and Prophet Muhammad, with his form and manner as a manifestation of the true path, were sent as examples to all of mankind.

The straight path or *istiqamah* is a combination of good and suitable deeds. The greatness of these deeds is dependent on two conditions:

1. Obeying Divine orders
2. Love and affection for all that created by Allah Almighty.

Another meaning of *istiqamah* is remembering Prophet Muhammad, accepting his life and personality as our guides, modeling ourselves on his behavior, living within the spirituality of the Qur'an and the life of the Prophet, refraining from worldly egoistical desires and attaining the mystery of belief and accomplishment.

For a person to establish the truth and the true path they must keep their *nafs* under control at all times. However, refusing to abide by Divine pleasure equals heedlessness, and according to Allah Almighty the acceptance of all the deeds of such a heedless person will be nullified.

Therefore, in addition to absolute commitment to Divine orders we also have to consider why there are such orders and take precautions to preserve them. To act to the contrary would be heedlessness, which would mean performing deeds that have no benefit.

Even Hazrat Umar struggled to protect his purity of faith and direction. When he became the Caliph of the Muslims Omar said in a sermon: "O people! What would you do if I were to stray from the path of Allah?"

Hearing this, one of the Bedouins stood up and said: "O Caliph! Do not worry if you stray, we will straighten you with our swords!" When he heard this Hazrat Umar was very pleased and gave praise to Allah. "All praise to you O, Allah! You've blessed me with a community that will put me on the straight path!"

If Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) noticed a trace of hypocrisy in a person's heart he would immediately tell Huzaifa, for the safety of the community. Hazrat Umar knew this, and wondering about himself, went to Huzaifa one day and asked him: "O Huzaifa! For the love of Allah, tell me if I have any of the signs of a hypocrite?"

And Hazrat Huzaifa replied: "O Caliph! I can assure you that you have no trace of a hypocrite!"

Hasan Basri said to his student Tavus, a hadith scholar: "O Tavus! If you feel pride in teaching hadith then abandon your studies."

While Imam Gazali was teaching three hundred students he became very disturbed and said:

"Am I teaching all these students for the sake of Allah or am I at the edge of a cliff, defeated by fame?" After this Imam Gazali reduced the money and possessions he had, stopped giving lessons for a while, and, seeking refuge in Allah, he went into seclusion. By doing this he attained the spirituality of the holy Prophet and regained his peace. When his doubts had passed Gazali said: "All praise be to Allah, I've attained peace." He had now become a completely different person.

O Allah! Place us among those who are on the straight path and give us faith! Grant us the road of the happy reunion that is full of blessings; Grant us the road of those you have blessed, the Prophets, the wise, and the martyrs! Prevent us from straying from your path! Protect us from the road of those who have experienced Your wrath and those who are inclined to misguidance and the sorrow of destruction and from the contemptible road that is full of sadness! Amin!



*For a person to
establish the truth and
the true path they must
keep their nafs under
control at all times.*



WALKING TOWARDS THE SIRAAT

(The Bridge upon Hell over which all mankind will have to pass)

If one is like a person who is walking across the Siraat this means that they are well prepared to give an account on the Day of Judgment. It is an awareness of standing before the Creator.

"Never stand thou forth therein. There is a mosque whose foundation was laid from the first day on piety; it is more worthy of the standing forth (for prayer) therein. In it are men who love to be purified; and Allah loveth those who make themselves pure." (Tauba, 9/ 108)

This is the call to ablution and purification.

The ablutions that are made when preparing for the prayer, known as *wudu* or *abdest*, entail cleanliness of both the mind and body; this is an essential part of the rituals of worship. Prayer means standing before Allah Almighty in a conscious manner to renew one's faith.

The Messenger of Allah said: "Prayer is like purifying oneself five times a day in a stream of fresh water that flows past your house". This means that when we stand before Allah with the 'Feeling of Purity' and when we are certain of the purity in our hearts, then we are able to say "I have purified my heart to stand before you O Allah; it has been cleaned and purified. Take a glimpse at my soul..."

Every time we stand before Allah to perform the prayer in this cleansed and purified manner we pray to Allah Almighty to "Direct us to the straight path (*Siraat-ul mustakim*)..."

It is as if the 'straight path' is our vision in this world of the path of the Hereafter, as if those who can tread firmly in this world will be able to walk down the fragile path of the Hereafter.

It is as if we are incapable of achieving this 'walk' and as if every time we stray even the slightest from the boundaries of the path, disaster, grief, sorrow and desolation await us...

It is for this reason that remaining on the straight path is a difficult and complicated task.

It is for this reason that the command of 'Keep straight' was so great that it turned the hair of Prophet Muhammad white.

This is why a Prophet felt the need to turn to his Creator a hundred times a day with words of repentance...This is why he examined his soul a hundred times and felt the need to pray a hundred times more each day...

Remaining straight on the path is like leading a herd of sheep to graze in the fields of a ruler without letting a single sheep jump over the fence; it is like taking a herd that is thirsty across a river without allowing them to drink the water...

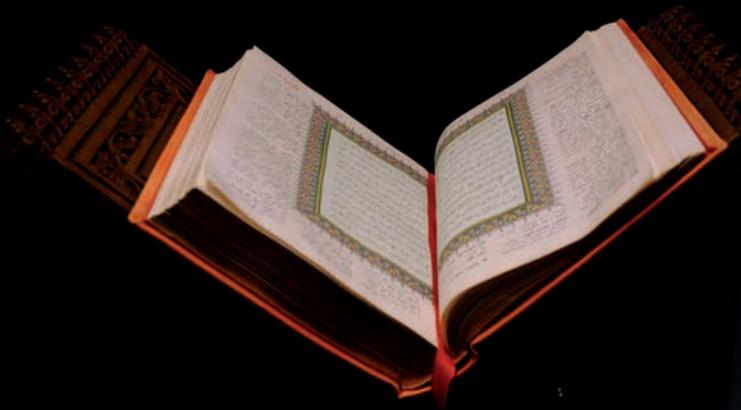
It is being aware of one's desires, but still undertaking the task of curtailing the ego...

It is like the verse: '*And ye were on the brink of the pit fire, and he saved you from it.*' (Al-i Imran,3/103)

To achieve this salvation two things are necessary: The first consists of knowing the boundaries, limitations, and margins; it is realizing the meaning of life through the commands that were revealed by Allah. The other is to dissociate from everything we have experienced throughout our lifetime.

UNDERSTANDING VALUES AGAIN

To understand values once again we must start with an understanding of the meaning of creation and the orders that have been given in connection with our lives and faith that lie within the boundaries of preparing for the Hereafter. These need to be brought into our lives and environment... The Prophet separated faith into more than seventy categories; these categories range from the unification or consciousness that 'There is no deity other than Allah' to 'Removing something harmful from the road'. With these categories an order of thought, feeling and actions is established, which becomes almost a combination of



Therefore, knowing is a necessity... Knowing the Qur'an and reading about the life of Prophet Muhammad, step by step...Knowing how Allah Almighty wants us to behave in this world...This is the first order.

To achieve this salvation two things are necessary: The first consists of knowing the boundaries, limitations, and margins; it is realizing the meaning of life through the commands that were revealed by Allah. The other is to dissociate from everything we have experienced throughout our lifetime.

faith and existence. There is an alarming futility surrounding this subject; but futility is something that is unacceptable in life. It is faith, sense and thought along with the experience of life and the knowledge of scholars that fill this empty space in our lives.

Heedlessness of the boundaries of Islam means an inability to take a step forward in life and results in advancing only by opening doors on other dimensions of what is known as "value". These other dimensions of "value" influence the world with a trend towards global desires, filling our hearts and minds and determining the path of those who live lives of emptiness... ignorance is an inclination to be hurled from the path; the strong winds that blow are as merciless as any strong storm...If we cannot think for ourselves, they will teach us to think; if we do not know how to believe, love or fear they will teach us; they will teach enjoyment as well as eating and drinking...as if our breath of life depends on this world that is full of desires, driving us to completely different ways of understanding and different actions...

Therefore, knowing is a necessity...Knowing the Qur'an and reading about the life of Prophet Muhammad, step by step...Knowing how Allah Almighty wants us to behave in this world...This is the first order.

Reading the holy Qur'an and studying the life of Allah's messenger again for our own perception is one way to...

ANALYZE OUR UNITY

And then we need to analyze everything in life...

Analyzing everything in daily life...Worship, politics, life at work, relationships with others, the things we write, our thoughts, family relationships and government responsibilities, analyzing our faith, contemplating our faith...

The worst form of deceit is the attempt to deceive Allah...

Never deceive yourselves that "Allah will not hear or see".

The need for repentance is the result of this persistent stabbing of the heart. For example, at prayer time, when we stand before the Creator but we do not truly have that spiritual feeling in our hearts...



If we believe this, then we are trying to omit Allah from our lives...

This is where the tendency to stray outside the boundaries of Allah begins...

Straying from the true path carries many dangers; it is for this reason that analyzing our faith, thought and life is of such great importance.

It is for this reason that it is necessary to analyze our "Boundaries of faith", as if we are renewing our faith.

This will lead us to realize the transformation in ourselves.

And this is the basis of spiritual repentance... If we do not recognize a transformation in ourselves then we will never feel the necessity of repentance. We should be aware of the estrangement of our souls, as if it is an internal wound...As Yunus Emre said..."Like a gentle pain in my left side, stabbing me persistently, saying Yunus Yunus..."

The need for repentance is the result of this persistent stabbing of the heart. For example, at prayer time, when we stand before the Creator but we do not truly have that spiritual feeling in our hearts...Then our purity of emotion has been wounded.

Even though we have purified ourselves in preparation for the prayer by performing ablutions, the wound of our conscience lies

hidden somewhere deep in our soul.

Every night our obligation of debt is carried over to the following day...At night we begin to have fear in our hearts of the Hereafter; we are now burdened with records for which we cannot give account. We fear every word of the reckoning of our lives and actions.

Then we see that our outlook and reaction to our views and speech, our souls, our intake of food, our clothing and our love for worldly objects, our hopes and affections and our thoughts of poverty and wealth have changed and we go through a gradual state of transformation.

In the Qur'an one who gossips about another is said to have "*Eaten the flesh of his dead brother*" and it goes on to say '*Nay, ye would abhor it*' (Hujurat,49/12). In this way one can lose the dignity of speech; the most loathsome feature of such evil gossip is that one begins to enjoy doing it and feels pleasure in its vileness.

In the same way one begins to get a taste for the transformation; this soon becomes a pleasure...One becomes insensitive towards the deprived and feels great pleasure with wealth, not giving charity to the poor without making them suffer from shame. One gains from power with the same instincts that the Pharaoh or Nimrod had, making oppression a tradition...In whatever one writes or in any speech, even in

Straying from the true path carries many dangers; it is for this reason that analyzing our faith, thought and life is of such great importance. It is necessary to analyze our "Boundaries of faith", as if we are renewing our faith.

fighting for religion such a person boasts; as a result, pride and hypocrisy become flattery and oppression. If the boundaries of vision change one is prone to indulge in the forbidden; if one's limit of intake changes then they will become insensitive towards unlawful gains and if their way of direction changes, then indulging in filth will not disturb them in the least...

The balance between the mind and soul thus is ruined... All one's limbs and organs have lost their purpose of creation.

The idolization of the ego and the desires has taken the place of the natural balance of character.

LIKE WALKING ON THE SIRAAT...

If one is like a person who is walking across the *Siraat* (the bridge suspended over the hellfire) this means that they are well prepared to give an account on the Day of Judgment. It is an awareness of standing before the Creator. Being aware of the closeness of Allah, being aware that He is closer to us than our jugular vein... Being aware of the Hereafter as if it were our beating pulse...

This is a case of intensity, a condition of being close to Allah with every thought, emotion and action. In a way, this is the harmony between the mind and the heart; it is the unity of the heart and organs. Their concordance ensures a balance between the heart and the mind. This is an effort with every intention to pray 'For the sake of Allah'; this is sensing the tension on the long, or perhaps the short, path between Heaven and Hell. This is experiencing the thrill that lies between fear and hope, the fluctuation that exists between the scent of Paradise and the apprehension of Hellfire. And in every matter we must seek refuge in Allah... We seek refuge in Allah against the greatest troubles... The meaning of living as if we are walking across the *Siraat* is actually seeking refuge in Allah at all times...





It is very important for human beings to find the path that leads to Allah and then stay on it once it has been found. It can also be understood that by being on this path one becomes safe from fear and grief.

STAYING STEADFAST AND STRAIGHT

In the case of those who say "Our Lord is Allah" and further stand straight and steadfast the angels descend on them (from time to time): "Fear ye not!" (they suggest) "nor grieve! but receive the Glad Tidings of the Garden (of Bliss) which ye were promised!" (Ha-Mim, 41:30)

One of the hardest things for Muslims to do is to stay on the straight path. The reason for this is that the world today is full of misleading wonders and shiny trinkets that keep us busy and which lead us to stray from the path of light and safety. We become immersed in busy schedules which cause us to constantly search for the easy way out of doing hard work. However, this is not the manner of one who believes in the verse above.

We can understand from this verse that it is very important for human beings to find the path that leads to Allah and then stay on it once it has been found. It can also be understood that by being on this path one becomes safe from fear and grief. In fact, this path is so beloved by Allah that He gave mankind a lineage of Prophets to act as escorts through the darkness and fear; with them they carry holy books, like lanterns against the night. They are our lighthouses on the edge of the dark, stormy seas. The pinnacle of these books is the Holy Qur'an and the pinnacle of the Prophets is Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), the guide for all of mankind to the straight, smooth path of safety and assurance.



In the following verse Allah clearly states that the Holy Qur'an is a renewal of the light that was brought by the other Prophets, a renewal of the guidance that became lost over time, and that it is the answer to all forms of fear and trouble:

O People of the Book! there hath come to you Our Apostle revealing to you much that ye used to hide in the Book and passing over much (that is now unnecessary): There hath come to you from Allah a (new) Light and a perspicuous Book. Wherewith Allah guideth all who seek His good pleasure to ways of peace and safety and leadeth them out of darkness by His Will unto the light guideth them to a Path that is Straight.

(Maidah, 5:15-16)

There is a hadith reported by Sayyidina Ali which makes it clear that the Companions understood this fact about the Holy Qur'an. In it Sayyidina Ali declares: I heard Allah's Messenger (pbuh) say, "Dissension will certainly come." I asked him how we could avoid it, to which he replied, "Allah's Book is the way (out), for it contains information about what has happened before you, news of what will happen after you, and a decision regarding matters that will occur among you. It is the distinguisher and is not in jest. If any presumptuous person abandons it Allah will break him, and if anyone seeks guidance elsewhere Allah will lead him astray. It is Allah's strong cord, it is the wise reminder,

it is the straight path, it is that by which the desires do not swerve nor the tongues become confused, and that which the learned cannot grasp completely. It does not become worn out by repetition and its wonders do not come to an end. It is that about which the jinn did not hesitate to say when they heard it, 'We have heard a wonderful recital which guides to what is right, and we believe in it.' He who utters it speaks the truth, he who acts according to it is rewarded, he who pronounces judgment according to it is just, and he who invites people to it guides to a straight path." (Tirmidhi, 651)

It can also be understood that Allah wants all of humanity to be aware that He raised Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) to the level of perfect submission and right action by giving him the titles of *uswat'ul hasana* (perfect example) in the Qur'an and the "walking Quran". Prophet Muhammad alone was deserving of the salutations of Allah and all of His angels, it is to him that all Muslims are also commanded to send salutations. By virtue of being the example of how the Qur'an is to be applied to one's life, we can easily understand that the Blessed and Honored Prophet's teachings, known as the Sunnah, are also a necessary part of guidance. One verse which explains this truth says:

So hold thou fast to the Revelation sent down to thee: verily thou art on Straight Way.

(Zukhruf, 43:43)

By properly using these two guides, the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah, all of mankind will be able to reach the level of *Ahsan-i Taqweem*, those who are at all times God Conscious.



By properly using these two guides, the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah, all of mankind will be able to reach the level of Ahsan-i Taqweem, those who are at all times God Conscious. This is a level most loved by Allah and the level which is also most beneficial to His creation. It is the level which it was intended that humanity would reach when they were created.

It is important to understand that finding and staying on the path to which one has been guided by the Qur'an and the Sunnah is not a suggestion or recommendation. It is an admonition and a command directly from Allah. Allah warns us about this in two verses:

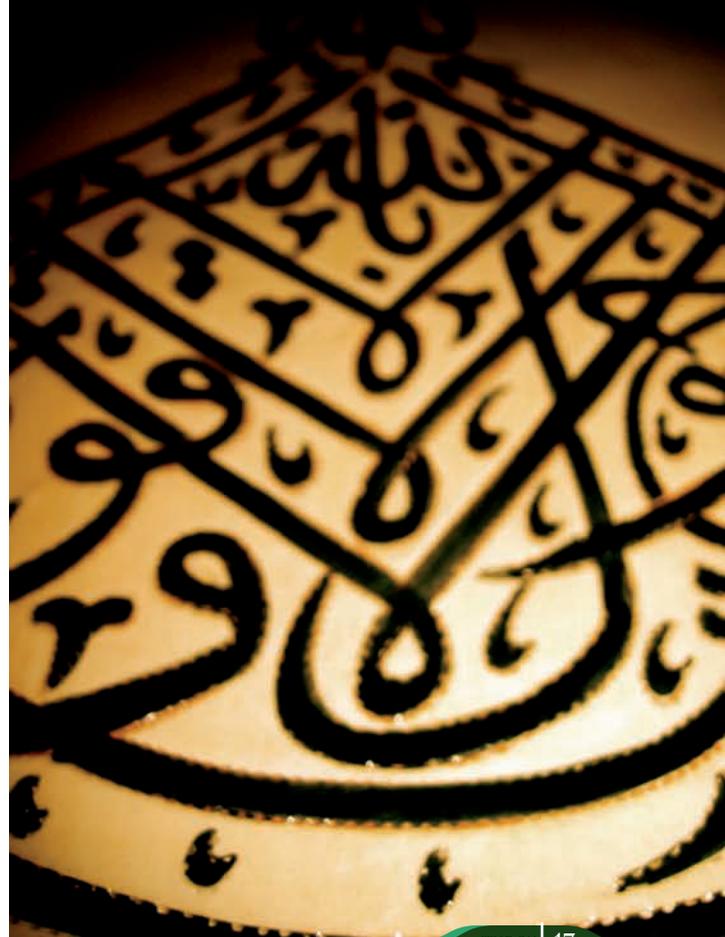
Verily this is an Admonition: Therefore whoso will let him take a (straight) path to his Lord! (Muzzammil, 73:19); and Therefore stand firm (in the straight path) as thou art commanded thou and those who with thee turn (unto Allah); and transgress not (from the Path): for He seeth well all that ye do. (Hud, 11:112)

Indeed, the second verse was one of the verses that turned the Prophet's blessed black hair white!

While the Prophet's life is the best guide for putting the Qur'an into action, he was also aware that human beings struggle constantly with themselves. Staying on the path is not as easy as one might think, but it was not meant to be easy. In the following hadith it is easy to see how Prophet Muhammad perceived the human struggle: Malik relates in the *Muwatta*: "It has reached me that the Prophet said: 'Try to keep to the straight path although you won't be able to do so completely; and know that the best of your deeds is the *salah*, and only a (true) believer preserves his wudu.'"

The Prophet further described what it was like to be on the path which leads to Allah in the following hadith reported by Abdullah ibn Mas'ud: "Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) said: 'Allah has set forth a parable of a straight path. On both sides of the path there are two enclosures in which there are open doorways, and hanging upon each doorway there are curtains. At the end of the path there is an admonisher

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Allah clearly states that the Holy Qur'an is a renewal of the light that was brought by the other Prophets, a renewal of the guidance that became lost over time, and that it is the answer to all forms of fear and trouble.

saying: Adhere to the path and do not go astray. Above that there is an announcer who announces as often as anyone intends to open the doors: Woe be to thee! Do not open it, for if you open it you shall have to enter it.' He then explained (this parable) and said: 'Verily the path is al-Islam, the open doors are the prohibitions made by Allah, the hanging curtains are the limits set by Allah, the admonisher at the end of the path is the Qur'an, and the announcer over it is Allah's Preacher (that sits) in every heart. (Tirmidhi, 67)

Allah promises to those who struggle to find and stay on the path by following the guidance of the Qur'an and the Sunnah:

Those who believed and those who suffered exile and fought (and strove and struggled) in the path of Allah they have the hope of the Mercy of Allah; and Allah is Oft-Forgiving Most Merciful. (Baqarah 2:218)

Indeed, this is a blessed promise from the One to whom the straight path leads. There is indeed nothing crooked that leads to Allah. Furthermore, in order to be among those who deserve this promise it becomes the responsibility of every Muslim, every human being, to learn from the tools and guides that He has provided. They must learn to find shelter in the Holy Qur'an. They must learn to find shelter in the example laid out by the Prophet (pbuh). They must heed the admonition and learn the signs which point clearly to the path of Allah's pleasure and mercy.

Finally, it is important to listen to the wise ones who inherited the leadership and the spirit of the law, the Shariat, of the Prophet (pbuh) so that they are not misled by the wonders of the world. One such wise person was Bayazid Bistami who, when asked about a man who could walk on water and float in the air, said: "Fish and frogs also float on water, and insects and birds fly in the air. If you see a man float on his rug on the water, or sit cross-legged in the air, do not show any interest in him. Rather, consider whether he is straightforward in his state and conduct, and whether his actions are in accordance with the Sunnah."



Those on the true path of guidance exert themselves for the sake of Allah. They never neglect their religious duties which can cause idleness and their intents are for Allah alone.

BEING ON THE STRAIGHT PATH

Being straight is something that is hard to achieve; being straight means that one is a person of direction. If we look at the definition of direction it means 'facing a certain way'; however, in religious terms direction (*Istiqamah*) means Allah Almighty desires that we are steadfast and adhere to the testimony given in the Qur'an 'Yes, we bear witness' (Araf, 7:172), keeping within the boundaries He has appointed.

Istiqamah is a difficult task to undertake because maintaining direction means abandoning habits and ways and standing before Allah with true feelings of sincerity. This is why Prophet Muhammad said: "Try to go straight, although you will not be able to do so." He then went on to say: "The best of your actions is the prayer. And only a believer is constant in his ablutions" (Muwatta, Ibn Majah).

From this hadith we clearly understand that those who pray regularly and those cautious of purification are able to never stray from the path.

Istiqamah is living within the limits of piety and far from extremes; it is conforming to the boundaries of the Sunnah. With direction a person can find guidance for the practice of their religious duties and deeds. Those on the true path of guidance exert themselves for the sake of Allah; they refrain from the extremes that can lead to the oppression of the soul. They never neglect their religious duties which can cause idleness; they follow the middle way and their intents and inclinations are for Allah alone. Their actions are always within the limits of the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad.



Being overzealous or neglectful in the Sunnah or actions of hypocrisy or idleness in practice will destroy the actions of a person, diverting a believer from the path of guidance; true deliverance is only to be found on the middle way.

The true order of *Istiqamah* is found with the completion and perfection of faith; on this path one can gain many different blessings and benefactions. The efforts, speech, essence and daily tasks of those who do not choose this path will be in vain, as revealed by Allah Almighty:

And be not like a woman who breaks into untwisted strands the yarn which she has spun, after it has become strong. (Nahl, 16/92)

In the following two verses of the Qur'an, Allah the Merciful compliments those who on the true path of *Istiqamah*, those who with their worship and obedience to His commands have made faith their way of life:

In the case of those who say, "Our Lord is Allah", and, further, stand straight and steadfast, the angels descend on them (from time to time): "Fear ye not!" (they suggest), "Nor grieve! but receive the Glad Tidings of the Garden (of Bliss), the which ye were promised!" (Fussilet, 41/30)

Verily those who say, "Our Lord is Allah," and remain firm (on that Path),- on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. Such shall be

Companions of the Gardens, dwelling therein (for aye): a recompense for their (good) deeds. (Ahkaf, 46/13-14)

In these two verses assurance against fear and grief has been given to those who on the true path of *Istiqamah*. According to the following verse, assurance is an attribute that is connected only with the Companions of Allah.

Behold! Verily on the friends of Allah there is no fear, nor shall they grieve. (Yunus, 10/62)

Abu Bakr's *Istiqamah* was the unification of Allah while the *Istiqamah* of Umar was acting correctly according to the orders and prohibitions; Uthman performed his duties for the sake of Allah, without straying from the true path and he never was involved in any kind of hypocrisy. Ali was orderly and accurate, describing religious duty as that in which no mistakes are made in word or essence. The tasks of these great men were ones that required great energy.

When a human conforms to the order of regulations throughout life they are faced with many forms of oppression, both internally and externally; the greatest internal restraint is the inner desire. The *nafs* always acts upon the consideration of the "self" and prompts the 'me' in a person's soul to be considered before all else. When it comes to relationships of self-interest,



One should not abandon something worthwhile, even if they cannot perform it perfectly," Istiqamah should continue to be our aim. To reach this we need blessings and guidance from Allah.

there is an even greater sense of repression in a person's soul. The greatest weaknesses of the ego are lust, love of leadership and fame; when a person acquires wealth or position these suppressed egoistical desires appear with great intensity.

In the Qur'an it is stated:

Perchance thou mayest (feel the inclination) to give up a part of what is revealed unto thee, and thy heart feeleth straitened lest they say, "Why is not a treasure sent down unto him, or why does not an angel come down with him?" But thou art there only to warn! It is Allah that arrangeth all affairs! (Hud, 11/12)

The Messenger (pbuh) said how the difficulties of this verse made him 'feel old' (Tirmidhi). The reason why Prophet Muhammad 'felt old' was not due to his own *Istiqamah*; rather, he had been given an attribute of virtue and he had been blessed with the honor of Allah's path. What he found to be so difficult was the responsibility of the *Istiqamah* that had been placed on his community.

It is clear that this verse of the Qur'an was revealed for those who had lost their *Istiqamah* and who had gone too far in oppression. Again, this verse of the Qur'an indicates that humans have the illusion of self-sufficiency, and thus when they enjoy wealth and power they become heedless to the orders and regulations of Allah.

Nay, but man doth transgress all bounds. In that he looketh upon himself as self-sufficient. (Alaq,96/6-7)

Many of those who are cautious about what is *halal* and *haram* become less so when they gain wealth or power; they forget their cause and purpose in life. The motivation behind ambition is achievement, and this drive for power allows actions and incidents which would normally embarrass or shame human beings to become a normal part of daily life.

The most shameful of all egos is the one who defends their evil actions; those who are involved in forbidden actions over time begin to gain pleasure from their ill-gotten gains.

How have we lost our belief in the Hereafter? We must seriously consider the qualities a person requires for faith in the Hereafter with our hearts. Have we begun to take pleasure in the excuse "What can we do? Everyone's doing the same?"



Humans are attracted by the opposite sex just as much as they are by money and power; the consequences of this decline in *Istiqamah* in relations with the opposite sex that exceed the limits can be seen; extremes are reached that are out of all proportion, and as a result a shadow is cast over the prosperity of this world and the Hereafter.

We should deeply contemplate Surah An-Nasr in the Qur'an; the following verse orders us to turn towards Allah in repentance and remembrance at times of abundance. Allah the Glorified revealed:

When comes the Help of Allah, and Victory, and you see men entering the religion of Allah in companies. Celebrate the praises of thy Lord, and pray for His Forgiveness: For He is Oft-Returning (in Grace and Mercy). (Nasr, 110/1-3)

Those who are constantly surrounded by people and who are aware of their own power are more prone to making mistakes; they constantly face the possibility of straying from the true path. This is a general problem for humans today; deceived by the blessings of the world, unaware of the temporality of wealth and position, they lose themselves in the pleasures of mortality, quickly forgetting that we are on a journey towards eternal life.

How have we lost our belief in the Hereafter? We must seriously consider the qualities a person requires for faith in the Hereafter with our hearts; does the fact that something is extensive mean that it is legitimate? Have we begun to take pleasure in the excuse "What can we do? Everyone's doing the same?"

This resembles the excuse of those who neglect prayer. "What can I do, it is not possible to pray in the life I'm living." According to

the principle that "One should not abandon something worthwhile, even if they cannot perform it perfectly," *Istiqamah* should continue to be our aim.

To reach this we need blessings and guidance from Allah. The intentions and effort of a person can only be balanced with blessings and divine sanctions. Like someone who is trying to hit a target; if they cannot reach the target they are aiming for, they should at least try to get as near as possible. If a believer cannot reach their aim, the true path, then they should never cease trying or abandon their efforts. If one does not continue to make such efforts then there will be a metamorphosis and the intentions of the heart and actions will take a change for the worse.

Istiqamah is standing before Allah with all sincerity and abiding by our promise with true loyalty.

Istiqamah is the soul of the one who has been revived; in other words, whatever the soul signifies for the body, direction is the same for the meaning of actions. Like the impossibility of a body living without a soul, a life with no direction is bound to be corrupted. The condition of life depends on guidance; without direction or guidance there can be no reliability in behavior and no advancement in the carrying out of human duties.

The true direction we must take is the *Istiqamah* and the promise to refrain from gossip, the *Istiqamah* of abandoning innovation and idleness.

Abu Bakr, who made his *Istiqamah* his way of life and who became one with his belief in the Hereafter, made the following stunning declaration: "Living with true *Istiqamah* is when a person imagines that they are in the presence of Allah on the Day of Judgment."



All goodness finds perfection with direction; when there is no direction goodness becomes unpleasant.

In the following verse of the Qur'an we are told that remaining on the path of *Istiqamah* brings with it constant Divine compassion and in this way we reach benevolence and perfection:

If they (the Pagans) had (only) remained on the (right) Way, We should certainly have bestowed on them Rain in abundance that We might try them by that (means). But if any turns away from the remembrance of his Lord, He will cause him to undergo a severe Penalty." (Jinn, 72/16-17).

Though the meaning of the 'Straight Path' implies a geographically straight line, in reality this is referring to the 'Path of Truth'. '*Siraat-ul Mustaqim*', included in the Al- Fatiha, is referred to frequently in Islam; it is only by the *Siraat-ul Mustaqim* that a person with a heart in the true direction can progress to salvation.

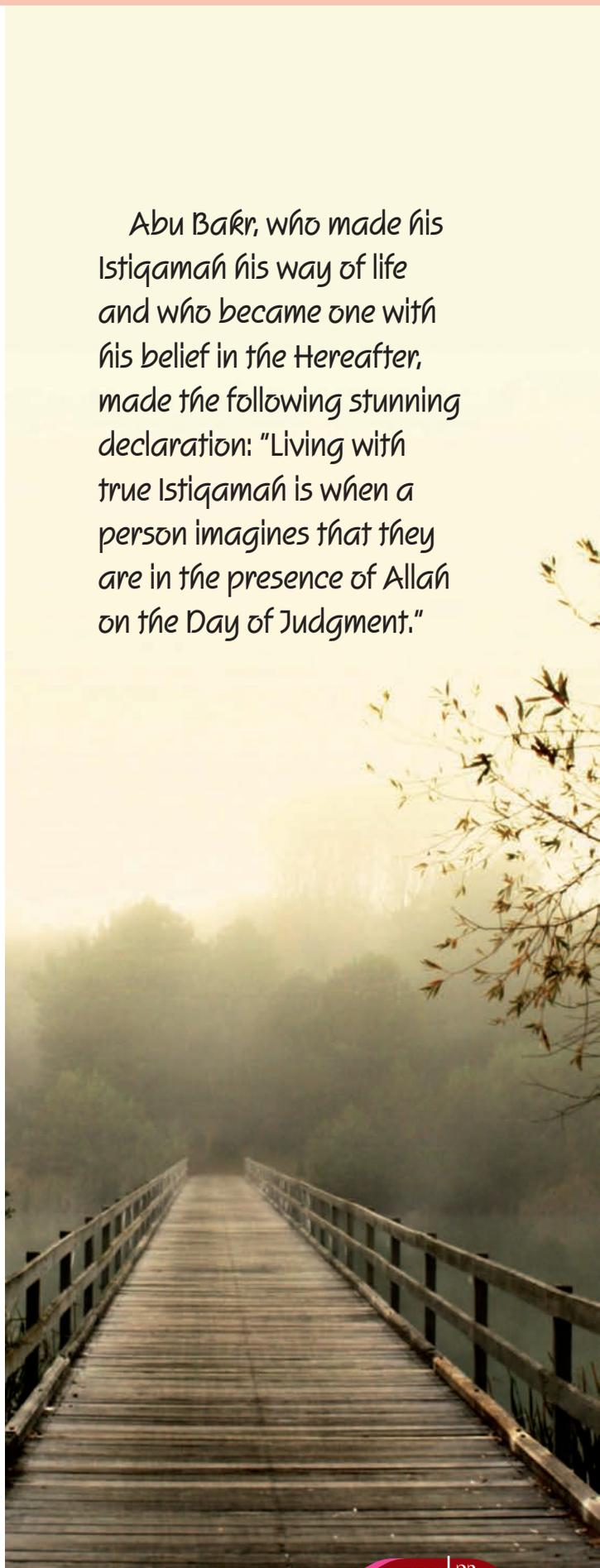
One day when the Messenger (pbuh) was sitting with the Companions he drew a straight line; he then drew another two lines, one on each side of the first one, putting his finger on the middle line he said: "*Verily, this is my way, leading straight.*" (An'am, 6:153) (Ibn Majah)

Ibn Arabi came to the conclusion that, according to this verse and hadith, our *Istiqamah* should be the path of Muhammad. Ibn Arabi used the verse that says *My lord is on the straight path* saying this is a divine and germane direction, as the following verse about divine direction is: *I put my trust in Allah, My Lord and your Lord! There is not a moving creature, but He hath grasp of its fore-lock. Verily, it is my Lord that is on a straight Path.*" (Hud, 11:56)

So, according to Islamic law in the universe there is the Prophet's way, which is the straight direction of the Messenger and mankind, and there is a straight road with divinity and the laws of Allah.

A person of maturity is the one who can turn both of these two directions into principles for their life.

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This Is How Much THEY LOVED HIM

The Companions always believed that anything that Prophet Muhammad did would be a blessing for them; they would drink from the glass he had drunk from and gather his hairs from his beard all with the excitement of having attained the blessing and help of the Messenger of Allah.

THE LIMIT OF LOVE

The door to faith is the testimony of unification (kalimah shadah) and the door to the testimony of unification is the Messenger of Allah. By putting this condition of faith in these words, Allah Almighty displayed the essence of mankind and what the limits of affection for Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) should be.

Above all else Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was a faithful servant of Allah, but he was also a servant who had been exalted to the highest position of faith among all humans, he was the reason and wisdom of the creation of mankind. He was a human who had been chosen in the two universes that were honored and glorified with his presence; with his great morality and behavior he is the past and eternal companion and the beloved of Allah. With his great honor he is our messenger and our interceder in the two worlds, he is the Sultan of the Prophets, the source of true faith, happiness and salvation; he is the key to the love of Paradise.

This is the reason why Allah ordered affection for and belief in Prophet Muhammad, His messenger. He was sent as a guide of faith, as a means and a cause, a blessing and a gift to mankind by Allah Almighty.

Therefore, wasting our affection and love for him with ignorant actions and inclinations of desire would be to distance ourselves from belief; he is the second condition of faith. A person's faith

is not complete with belief in Allah alone; faith is only completed by belief in Allah and the Prophet as Allah's Messenger. The basis of this belief begins with love for Prophet Muhammad; if there is no affection or love then there can be no true faith. The desperate atheists of Mecca knew that Prophet Muhammad was the Messenger of Allah, but because they had no affection for him they could not turn this reality into faith; only those who recognized the cascade of affection and drank from the fountain of faith became true Companions. It is in this way that the lives of the Companions are manifest demonstrations of their affection for the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

Thus we could say that:

The true measure of affection and love for Prophet Muhammad is his Companions, because their affection for the Messenger of Allah and what they did because of their love for him were praised and approved of by both Allah Almighty and his Prophet. Therefore, the examples and principles of how our affection and love for the Prophet should be are found in the stories about these Companions. In particular, the Companions of Prophet Muhammad sought blessings in whatever belonged or came from him; this was a sign of their affection for the Messenger of Allah and this love of Muhammad (pbuh) is a good example of the correct manners believers should have.

JOY FOR THE BLESSINGS OF THE BELOVED

The Companions were so aware that the Prophet had been sent as a mercy to the universe that they would rejoice in and show respect to whatever he owned or that which came from him and Prophet Muhammad gave them the permission to do this.

Anas reported: "The Prophet would go to

the home of (my mother and his milk mother), Umm Salama for a mid-morning nap. One day he went there and slept and when Umm Salim heard that the Messenger was sleeping in her house she went home and found he had been sweating, so she wiped the sweat of the Prophet and wrung it into a bottle. When the Prophet awoke he asked: 'O Umm Salama what are you doing?' she told him: 'O Messenger of Allah! I am hoping that this will be a blessing for my children!' Prophet Muhammad replied: 'Whatever you hope is right.'" (Muslim)

Anas said: "(My mother) Umm Salama would collect the sweat of the Prophet in a bottle and add it to things to make them smell nice"

The person who reported this hadith added the following information: "When Anas was on his death bed he asked that some of this sweat be put on his shroud." (Bukhari, Muslim)



THE BLESSING OF THE HOLY HANDS

Again Anas reported that: "While Prophet Muhammad was performing the morning prayer the servants of Medina would come to him with bowls of water and without rejecting any of them he Messenger of Allah would put his fingers in the water; some mornings were cold, but the messenger still placed his fingers in the water" (Muslim)

The Companions of Prophet Muhammad hoped for blessings from this water; they would later use it to make ablutions and bathe in.

Abu Juhaifa reported that Prophet Muhammad went to Batha in the midday heat. He made his ablutions and prayed two *rakats* each for the midday and late afternoon prayers. He placed a spear in front of him.

"Then the people began to stand up; they were holding the Messenger's hand and placing it on their faces. I took his holy hand and placed

it on my face. His hand was cold and more fragrant than musk." (Bukhari)

"Abu Makdura would not trim or separate the hair on his forehead because Prophet Muhammad had rubbed his head." (Abu Dawud)

Abu'n Nadr reported: "We went with Wasilah bin Eska to visit a sick person; we greeted then and sat down beside them. The sick person held the right hand of Vasilah, a Companion of the Messenger and rubbed his own face with it, hoping for blessings from a hand that had touched Prophet Muhammad." (Ahmad)

At the battle of Uhud, Qatada bin Numan stood as a shield in front of the Messenger of Allah, shooting arrows until he was hit in the eye and one of his eyeballs was struck. God's Messenger used his hand to replace the eyeball in its socket. The eye healed at once, as if nothing had happened, and became even better than the other one. (Hakeem, Haysama)

HELP US, O MESSENGER OF ALLAH!

The Companions always believed that anything that Prophet Muhammad did would be a blessing for them; they would drink from the glass he had drunk from, give great honor to anything he had touched, and gather his hairs from his beard and sweat, all with the excitement of having attained the blessing and

help of the Messenger of Allah.

Of course, these and other reports are all concerned with the hope that they would gain the intercession of Prophet Muhammad in the Hereafter; in no way can this be compared to a form of idolism. On the contrary, such acts strengthen unification, because unification can only be completed with belief that Prophet Muhammad was the Messenger of Allah.

On the other hand, everything in which we have the hope of mercy is like a reflection, all that the Companions classed as blessings were in reality nothing but a memory of the Prophet, a refreshing of their pledges of alliance to him and an effort to keep their affection for and belief in Prophet Muhammad alive.

These memorials are the reflection of the Prophet's morality, of his way of life and his exemplary character.

Some who misinterpreted the emotions and affection the Zahra, the daughter of Prophet Muhammad, felt for him tried to prevent her from going to his grave. She answered them in the following way: "Instead of preventing those who want to go to the holy grave, it would be much better to guide them; instead of accusing them of being disbelievers or idol worshippers it would be much more beneficial to explain to them and teach them. Without a doubt, Allah



Prophet Muhammad is the only pre-requisite for loving Allah Almighty and therefore, those who do not love Prophet Muhammad do not love Allah and whoever has love and affection for him loves Allah Almighty.

will protect the Unity until the Day of Judgment. The Prophet gave the glad tidings that Satan has abandoned the hope of being obeyed in this city, and therefore, there is nothing to worry about concerning the Unity of Allah."

We should not doubt the Unity of Allah; while we have the spirit of and affection for Prophet Muhammad in our hearts we should be at ease. The true fear is for those who do not have affection or love for Allah and his Prophet in their souls. This is why the Companions of Prophet Muhammad lived their lives with such true love and devotion to him that they used to surround him while he was having his hair trimmed to prevent any of the hair falling on the ground.

DISTRIBUTE THESE!

Anas bin Malik told how the Companions of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) would compete with each other to collect the hair of the messenger after he had performed hajj to attain blessings from it:

It was narrated from Anas that Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) summoned a barber to cut the hair on the right side of his head. He then called Abu Talha and gave all the hair to him. He then commanded the left-hand side of his hair to be removed and gave it to Abu Talha, saying, 'Distribute it amongst the people.' (Bukhari; Muslim)

Anas reported in another hadith: "I saw the barber shaving the blessed head of the Messenger of Allah. The Companions of Prophet Muhammad were moving in circles around him so that if any hair should fall, it would fall into one of their hands" (Muslim)

THE MYSTERY OF VICTORY: A FEW STRANDS OF HAIR

When Prophet Muhammad's hair was being cut Khalid bin Waleed begged him: "O Messenger of Allah! Let me have the hair from your head! You are dearer to me than my mother or father!" Abu Bakr seeing him in this state looked at him with astonishment, remembering what Khalid bin

Affection which turns a person's soul and features into the gleaming light of the sun and the ability of being able to see further can only be achieved through his character and the ultimate step in the path to reaching Allah is love and affection for Prophet Muhammad.



The measure of faith is to love the worthy and dislike that which deserves to be disliked. As a result all the benefit we attain from our affection for Prophet Muhammad is based on to what degree we are devoted to him.

Walid had done at the battles of Uhud, Hendek and Hudaibiya. (Ibn-i Sa'd)

When the Prophet gave his hair to Khalid, the latter rubbed them on his face and eyes and placed them in the front part of what he was wearing on his head; it is thought that due to this he could not be defeated in any battle. Khalid said: "Whichever way I turned my head, that place was conquered!"

According to another report Khalid lost what he was wearing on his head during the battle of Yarmuk and he ordered his soldiers to find it; they looked everywhere, but could not find it. He ordered them once again to search, in the end they found it. They looked at it and noticed that it was quite old and worn. The Companions were surprised and wondered why Khalid had insisted so much on finding it. Khalid told them: "The Prophet performed umrah and then shaved his head. I rushed to get some of his hair. I got some of the hair from the front part of his head which I put in this hat. Every time I have gone into battle with this garment, Allah has given me victory." (Haysama)

Ibn- Sirin stated: "I told Ubaida that I had the blessed hair of the Messenger of Allah which I had received from Anas, or another close to him. Then Ubaida said, 'If I had the blessed hair of the Prophet, I would love it more than the entire world and all the contents of this world.'" (Bukhari)

THE CUP THE PROPHET DRANK FROM:

While Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was in Bani Saida with the Companions he said to Suhail bin Saad: "O Suhail, come and give us some water!"

Suhail brought Prophet Muhammad some water. We know that Suhail must have kept the cup for a long time because Abu Hazeem reported that Suhail gave the Prophet some water in a goblet. When the Prophet had finished drinking, Suhail kept the goblet as a blessing. When Caliph Umar bin Abdul Aziz asked Suhail to give him the goblet Suhail gave it to Umar bin Abdul Aziz and he kept it. (Muslim)

BRING ME THE BLESSED DISH!

There was a Companion called Firas who wanted something that belonged to the Prophet. One day he went to see the Prophet of Allah and he saw that he was eating from a dish. Firas asked the Messenger if he could have the dish and the Prophet, who never refused any request, gave him the dish. Sometimes when Umar came to his home he would say to Firas: "Bring me that blessed dish."

He would drink *zamzam* from the dish and sprinkle the remaining water on his face. (Ibn-i Hajar)

WATER FLOWS FROM HIS FINGERS

The water crisis in Tabuk was now at its worst. However, water started to flow from between the fingers of Prophet Muhammad, increasing so much that it was like a tap; the people were able to fill many containers and gave this water to those who were fighting in the battle as a blessing. The water that flowed from the fingers of Prophet Muhammad was undoubtedly even better and healthier than the Zamzam water because this water flowed directly from the enlightened hands of the Messenger of Allah.

MY SHARE OF GOODNESS!

When Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) drank milk he would offer what remained in the bowl to the Companions for their prosperity. The amount of milk would also increase due to his blessings.

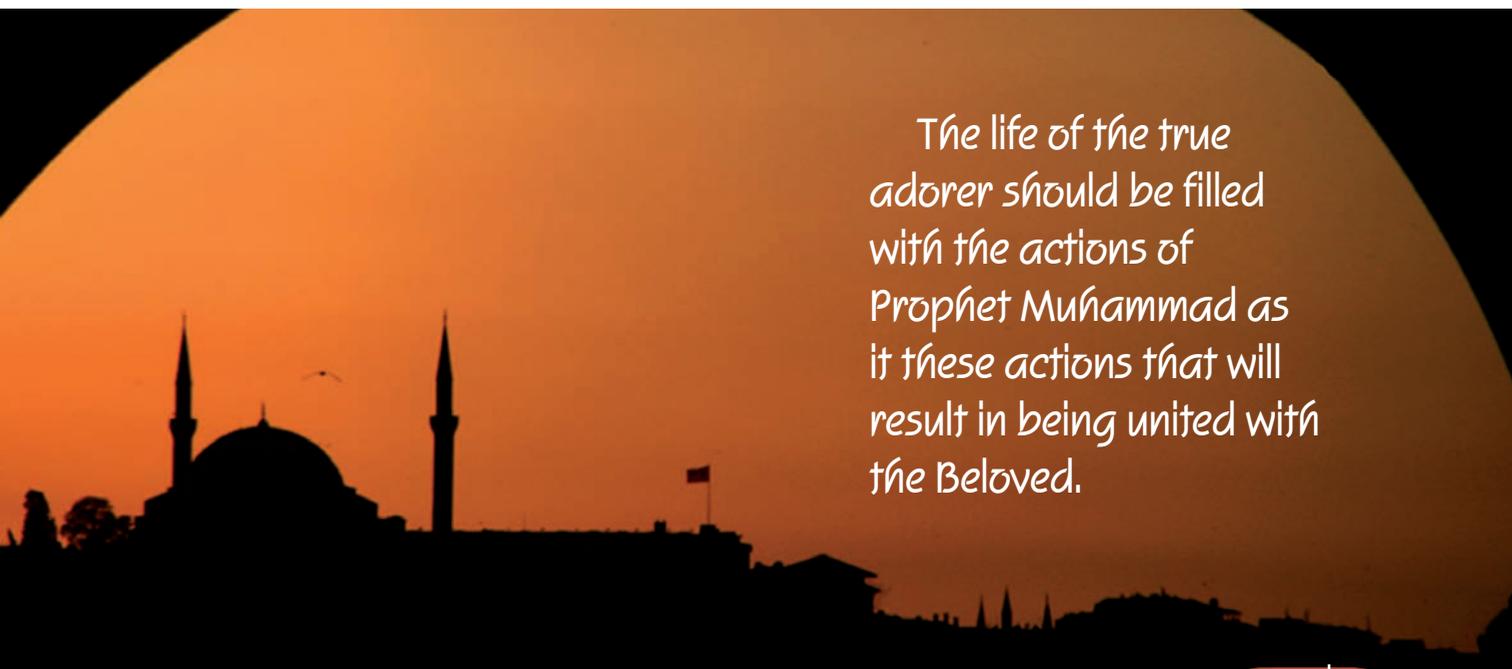
Suhail bin Sa'd reported: "Once there was a young boy sitting on the right side of the Prophet of Allah, while on the left hand there was one of the wise elders of the Companions; someone brought the Prophet something to drink and he drank a little of it. He then turned to the boy on his right and asked with great politeness: 'With your permission, can I give this to the older person first?'"

The intelligent boy gave such an answer that he surprised all those present: 'O Messenger of Allah! I do not wish to give away anything that you have offered to me!'

So Prophet Muhammad gave the drink to the young boy." (Bukhari)

THESE EYES ARE FOR SEEING HIM

After Prophet Muhammad passed away the Companions were in great distress; these people who loved the Prophet so much could not bear



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it these actions that will
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the Beloved.*

being away from him for even a day but now they were never going to see him again in this world. This was so upsetting for them that they no longer cared about this world.

According to a report by Qasim bin Muhammad one of the friends of his father had lost his sight. His friends went to visit him, but he was not upset about becoming blind and he told the visitors: "I wanted these eyes to see Prophet Muhammad, but after the death of the Prophet I would not be happy even if I were to give the most beautiful eyes in the town of Tubala (Yemen)!" (Bukhari)

Abdullah bin Zaid was another of those who suffered greatly due to the death of the Prophet, his sorrow and grief were so great that he opened his hands to the skies and he sought refuge in Allah: "O Allah take my sight! I do not want to see anything in this world after having seen the Prophet!" He immediately lost his sight.

The followers of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) who were enlightened with these memories longed to see the Prophet, even if it were only in their dreams; Prophet Muhammad explained this desire as follows: "Those in my community who have the strongest love for me are the people who will come after me. Some of them would give their family or wealth to see me." (Muslim and Bukhari)

THE ESSENCE OF LOVE: ALLEGIANCE

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said: "Subtle forms of polytheism are harder to detect in this *ummah* than the track of a black ant over a black stone on a dark night." (Imam Ahmad)

The lesser form of polytheism is loving oppression and hating anything that is just.

Allah Almighty revealed: "Say: If ye do love Allah, follow me: Allah will love you and forgive you your sins: for Allah is oft-forgiving, most merciful." (Al-i Imran, 3/31)

According to this the measure of faith is to love the worthy and dislike that which deserves to be disliked. As a result all the benefit we attain from our affection for Prophet Muhammad is based on to what degree we are devoted to him; mere declarations of love and affection which are truly not reflected in our ways of life are of no benefit. In connection with this, the following report of Bayazid Bistami is a very good example:

One of Bayazid Bistami's students asked: "Master, can you give me a piece of material from your coat so I can carry it with me for its blessings?" Bayazid replied: "My son, if you are not on the right path, let alone my coat, I myself, even if you were to skin me and wrap



Those who love Allah gain from the reflections, the blessings and prosperity of the spirituality of Muhammad (pbuh), they are then blessed with a different manifestation and with every breath they open their wings to the universe of these blessings.

The Companions of Prophet Muhammad lived their lives with such true love and devotion to him that they used to surround him while he was having his hair trimmed to prevent any of the hair falling on the ground.



yourself in my skin, would still be of no use to you...!"

We must never forget that whoever is sincere in their love for somebody loves everything about that person; this means that they show affection with allegiance and submission in all ways. Like a drop in the ocean we must lose ourselves in those we love, particularly if the loved one is the Prophet Muhammad, as he is the essence of all love. This is why the Prophet is the only pre-requisite for loving Allah Almighty and therefore, those who do not love Prophet Muhammad do not love Allah and whoever has love and affection for him loves Allah Almighty. Therefore, if we do not have true love for Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) while following the path of the Qur'an and the life of the Messenger, any claims of adoration or love will be invalid.

COME, MY SOUL!

We can only attain a life that is filled with the elation, prosperity and an abundance of worship by reflecting the unique character of Prophet Muhammad. Dignity and gentility in actions, magnanimous behavior, affection which turns a person's soul and features into the gleaming light of the sun, true sensitivity, the ability of being able to see further and many other means of enrichment can only be achieved through his character and the ultimate step in the path to reaching Allah is love and affection for Prophet Muhammad.

Therefore, the life of the true adorer should be filled with the actions of Prophet Muhammad as it these actions that will result in being united with the Beloved.

Rumi said: "Come, my soul! True rejoicing is uniting with the great Muhammad (pbuh) because he is the light of the universe; his holy existence can be found in the beauty of his light." "Know that on the path that unites with him that when life ends Allah will give another life. If the mortal life has ended then there is the never-ending life; life without death! Love is the water of life. Dive into this water; with every drop of this ocean of love we find another existence, another life!"

Those who love Allah gain from the reflections, the blessings and prosperity of the spirituality of Muhammad (pbuh), they are then blessed with a different manifestation and with every breath they open their wings to the universe of these blessings...!

O Allah! In the same way that you have blessed us with the honor of being among the followers of Prophet Muhammad grant us a soul that is imbued with the love and enthusiasm of his Companions! Grant us success in living our short lives in this world with affection for him and with the mystery of reunion!

Amen...!

IS THERE A POINT OF ABSOLUTE VALIDITY THAT MAKES SENSE OF HUMAN LIFE?

Gusztav Bogнар



Why and how did I convert? It happened almost 10 years ago. The place was the masjid Dar as-Salam in Budapest, where three of us had walked in: my son, a friend of mine and me.

It was the very first time that we had been in a masjid and talked to Muslims. That masjid was the biggest one in the capital of Hungary: it held about two hundred Muslims on Fridays. Not so many, you say? Well, perhaps, but Dar as-Salam is still the biggest masjid in Budapest.

It was springtime, a Saturday morning. Some 10-15 men were inside, all immigrants from different countries. None of them could speak more than a few words in Hungarian, so we started to talk in English. Despite using the same language, this conversation quickly became very chaotic.

Everybody was trying to convince us in his own way and by his own reasons about the supremacy of Islam to other religions, so it took quite a bit of time before we could explain to them that we had come here to learn how to pray. We only had a short time before the noon prayer to make the kalimat-at-tawhid and to make ablutions.

Why Islam? It was a long process for me.

Before the age of 40 I was a restless intellectual with some artistic endeavours. My family background is one of a superficial Christian mixture: a Roman Catholic father and a Calvinist Protestant mother, neither of them a practicing believer. I was baptised as a Protestant, and was confirmed in my "faith" with a short course in early adolescence. (It was forced on me by my parents with the thought that it "be useful to know about the old beliefs of our ancestors".)

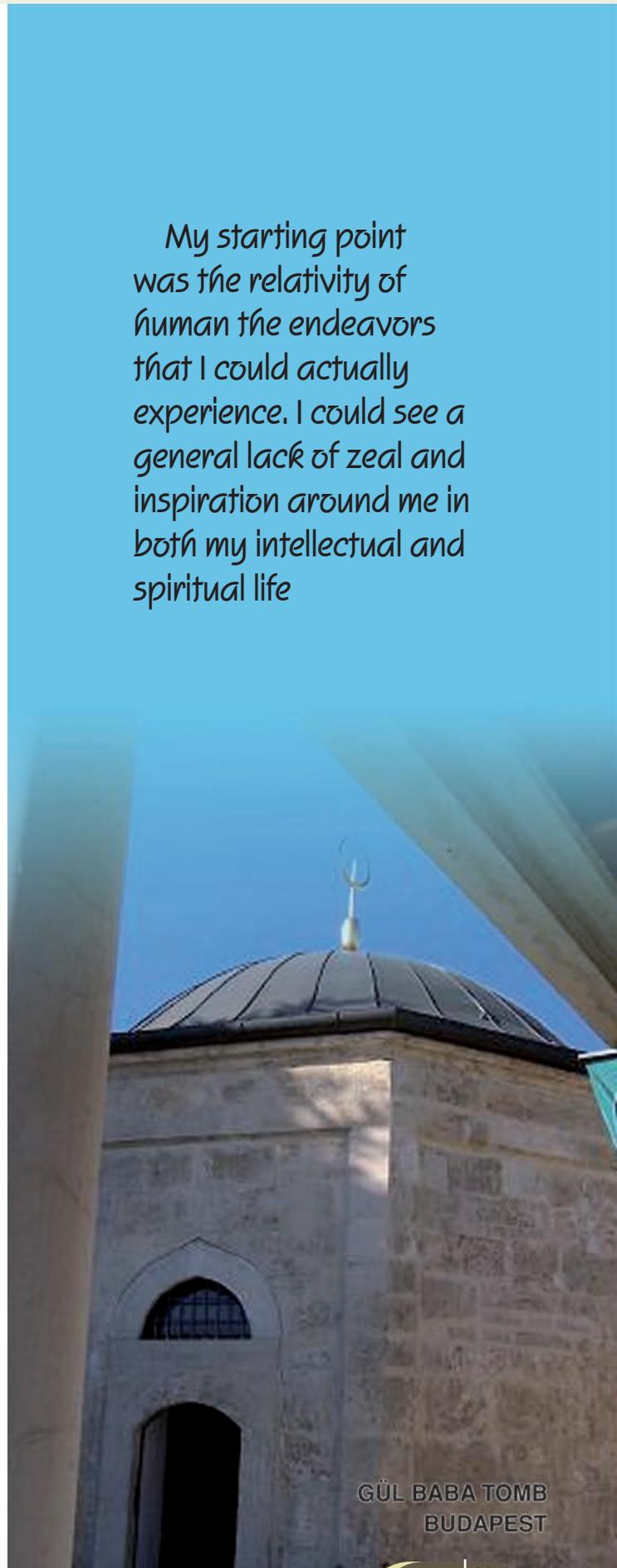
Like so many of my peers at that time (late '60s in Hungary) I maintained a very critical attitude to my parents' lifestyle. At the age of 17 I decided firmly to go my own way. I felt that my parents had been trapped by some forces I did not understand. I decided to locate and avoid these "traps of life".

In order to learn different strategies of life I started to study philosophy. I graduated as a lawyer and continued by studying psychotherapy, meanwhile working as a sociologist for a while. I changed my profession practically every three years. I married – and got divorced after 12 years and two children (and wrote a book on the psychology of divorce).

As I approached the age of 40 I was living in a suburban house now in my second marriage (without children). I now regarded myself as a businessman and planned to spend two more years as such. Despite former plans, when I turned 40 I made a decisive change and started to deal directly with the basic questions of life.

I decided to be very cautious and systematic. My starting point was the relativity of human the endeavors that I could actually experience. I could see a general lack of zeal and inspiration around me in both my intellectual and spiritual life: I was very sad to see that in the Euro-American culture it was only the obviously narrow-minded people who could be zealous about their perspectives.

My starting point was the relativity of human the endeavors that I could actually experience. I could see a general lack of zeal and inspiration around me in both my intellectual and spiritual life



GÜL BABA TOMB
BUDAPEST

Step by step, I learned that the most important task in life was to get closer to Allah by submitting myself

Is there a point of absolute validity that makes sense of human life? Philosophies proved too weak for a definitive answer. I decided to test the intellectual and spiritual power of different religions. There were three sources of relevant information:

- a) "special literature" (scriptures that refer to themselves as inspired);
- b) my direct experiences;
- c) conclusions I reached through my own reasoning.

The concordance of these three I accepted as a sound base. I left my home and all my assets so that I would be free of material obligations, and started systematically researching the problem.

Three years passed in studying and experimenting different methods of several religions until I was certain of the existence of an absolute "controlling level" of the perceived world, and until I had some experience in something I could call "guidance".

At this point I decided to deal exclusively with this "ultimate controlling level" that could be perceived as the one and only source of guidance.

It took three years more to actualize and ascertain that this source was not something. "It" was Somebody.

At the same time, step by step, I learned that the most important task in life was to get closer to Allah by submitting myself;

I realized that the ultimate source of guidance for mankind in this world was something called Qur'an and the practice of the guided people had been established upon the legacy of a man who had been clear and flexible enough to convey His ultimate message. At that point the three of us walked into Dar as-Salam in Budapest.



A Single Word Can Brighten A Face

*A single word can brighten the face
of one who knows the value of words.
Ripened in silence, a single word
acquires a great energy for work.*

*War is cut short by a word,
and a word heals the wounds.
There is a word that changes
poison into butter and honey.*

*Let a word mature inside yourself;
withhold the unripened thought.
Come and understand the kind of word
that reduces money and riches to dust.*

*Know when to speak a word
and when not to speak at all.
A single word turns the universe of hell
into eight paradises.*

*Follow the Way. Don't be fooled
by what you already know. Be watchful.
Reflect before you speak.
A foolish mouth can brand your soul.*

*Yunus, say one last thing
about the power of words.
Only the word "I"
divides me from Allah.*



Yunus Emre

Pearls of Wisdom

Everyone in the heavens and everyone in the earth ask forgiveness for a man of knowledge, even the fish in the water.

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)

Knowledge without action is insanity and action without knowledge is vanity

Imam Ghazali

Two types of people will never be satiated, the seeker of knowledge and the seeker of this world.

Imam Ali

Whoever's sin was because of [carnal] desires, hope for him (as he may repent and be forgiven); but whoever's sin was out of pride, fear for him. For indeed, Adam sinned out of simple desire, and was forgiven; whereas Satan sinned out of pride, and was cursed.

Imâm Sufyan bin 'Uyaynah

The people under the care of their scholars are like children in the laps of their fathers.

Rabi'ah bin Abd Al-Rahman

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

Muhammad Farouq

*Do not think about
how small the sin is, but
think about who you
have just disobeyed.*

Bilal bin Sa'd

*The life of the heart is
knowledge, so preserve
it, the death of the
heart is ignorance, so
avoid it.*

Imam Ghazali

*The life of this world is made
up of three days: yesterday has
gone with all that was done;
tomorrow, you may never reach;
but today is for you so do what
you should do today.*

Hasan Al-Basri

*A believer might fall into any
[bad] character, except deception
and lying.*

*Sa'd bin Abu Waqqas Learn
Arabic, for it strengthens the
intelligence and increases one's
noble conduct.*

Al-Bayhaqi

*Remember Allah in
good times and He
will mention you in
hard times. When you
remember those who have
passed away, consider
yourself like one of them.*

Abu Darda



It is unfortunate that nowadays most of the sins that are committed by mankind are created by their religions which go against their nature.

IS THERE A NEED TO COMMIT SIN?

Islam is the most suitable religion for the needs of mankind. It answers all of our needs that emanate from our very humanity. In other words, the things that are permissible in Islam can satisfy all the needs of a human being without them having to commit sins. This might not always be the case in other religions. For example, because of the prohibition of marriage for the clergy, many priests might either commit fornication or other similar sins. Islam encourages marriage for all, without exception, and thus no one is deprived of being able to satisfy their sexual drives in a legitimate way. It is unfortunate that nowadays most of the sins that are committed by mankind are created by their religions which go against their nature. Imam Rabbani explains how easy it is to practice Islam

"The most valuable of God's grace over mankind is His showing easiness in religious commands. Islam prefers easiness in all its commands. For example, the prayers that Islam demands be prayed to God take up less than an hour in a day of 24 hours. Allah the Almighty also accepts the easiest recital of the Qur'an in prayers. If a Muslim cannot pray standing, he is allowed to pray in a sitting position, if s/he cannot pray in sitting posture they can pray lying down. If this is also difficult for the believer they can pray through signs. If one cannot find water for ritual ablutions then s/he can use earth to make a symbolic ablution." (Maktubat, Letter 191)

Imam Rabbani also explains how God makes Islam easy for all kinds of obligations, such as giving alms. The love of possessions in mankind is natural; hence any ideology that rejects this is not good for mankind. Islam accepts this reality but warns against worshipping the worldly possessions and sharing them with the poor in a reasonable way:

"Obligatory charity is only one fortieth of the wealth if one is considered to be well-off. Charity is only obligatory from trade goods and the animals that are grazed in the pastures for free. God only commands that one goes on pilgrimage once in life and only if one has the financial power to do so."

People who have no knowledge of Islam think that Islam is full of restrictions and prohibitions. Therefore, they think that a Muslim's life is full of misery since s/he cannot do anything they desire. This is not a true.

According to Imam Rabbani, Allah the Almighty has forbidden only those things which are harmful to humans. Secondly, the forbidden things are very limited in number in comparison to the halal, allowed things.

"Allah the Almighty allows the use of most food, drinks and materials of clothing. He has forbidden only few things and we must know that He has done this for the good of mankind."

If He has forbidden wine he has allowed many kinds of juices which are good for the health and very tasty. All kinds of juices, cinnamon, and flower waters are permissible to drink. These are all very healthy and good and easy to drink. If one leaves such good things and drinks alcoholic drinks, which take away one's mind and put one's life into danger, what benefit can one find in these?. What a great difference there is between these two kinds of drinks."

According to Imam Rabbani, although the religion is so easy and natural it is not possible to understand those so-called believers who suggest that the religion is difficult and needs to be reformed so as to make it easier. These people have already destroyed their nature and have fallen into perversion. Or possibly these people are hypocrites who claim to believe for worldly interests.

"Despite all this ease, if one finds the commandments of Islam difficult that is because the hardened hearts have a lack of just judgment. (insaf). The soul of such a person is sick."

In the same way that things which are easy for a healthy person become difficult for a sick person, similarly those whose inner worlds are darkened by their egos will find the commandments of Islam difficult."

One can easily erase their sins by asking forgiveness from God, but the darkness that has found a place in one's heart due to a love for this world cannot be easily removed.



A person who suffers from the spiritual illness of the heart will not believe fully in what the Prophet (pbuh) has brought. Their faith is only on their tongue, not in their hearts.



A person who suffers from the (spiritual) illness of the heart will not believe fully in what the Prophet (pbuh) has brought. Their faith is only on their tongue, not in their hearts."

This warning from Imam Rabbani is important since some people in the Muslim world are asking for reforms in Islam and trying to change the commandments of Islam according to their whims. Such people are not serious in their desires, if Islam is changed as they wished, after a short period they will be still unhappy and will ask for some more changes in the commandments until nothing remains from the religion. Their practice of Islam is at best reluctant. According to Imam Rabbani a real believer will practice Islam lovingly and diligently.

"The sign of real faith is that a believer should feel lightness while fulfilling the commandments. Their heart is happy. Those who do not like Islam and who do not wish to follow its commandments cannot be called believers, but they hypocrites. Allah the Almighty describes them in the holy Quran as follows: 'hard to the unbelievers is that which you call them to...'" (Shura, 42:13)

Rumi warns those who would like to commit sins by changing the law:

You are commenting upon the verses of the Qur'an in order to find excuses to commit sins. You must rather comment upon your own nafs (try to understand yourself) rather than understanding the Qur'an (with this evil mentality). (Mathnawi v. I, verse:1080)

According to Imam Rabbani, the love for this world is the source of all sins and mistakes. One can easily erase their sins by asking forgiveness from God, but the darkness that has found a place in one's heart due to a love for this world cannot be easily removed. (Letter 171)

Hence, in order to prevent committing sins Imam Rabbani advises us that we should refrain from meeting worldly people who only think of their worldly interests. According to him, meeting and befriending such people is like a poison that kills one's soul.



The Spiritual Counsel of Ibn al Jawzi

"I heard that Gabriel (pбуh) came to the Prophet (pбуh) and he was crying. Gabriel asked him, 'O Messenger of God, what has made you cry?' he said, 'do you not cry?' Gabriel said, 'O Muћammad! My eyes have not been dry since Allah created the Hell fire out of fear of disobeying Him and thus being thrown into it.'

His name was Abu 'l-Faraj ibn al Jawzi, and he was a descendent of the first Caliph Abu Bakr (ra). He was born in 508 AH. His works were many and al-Dhahabi is quoted as having said, "I have known no one from the 'ulama who has written as much as he (Ibn al-Jawzi) did." His grandson, Abu al-Muzaffar Sibt al-Jawzi said "I heard my grandfather say from the pulpit: 'With these two fingers of mine I wrote two thousand volumes; one hundred thousand [wayward Muslims] repented at my hands; and twenty thousand [non-Muslims] entered Islam.' He used to recite the entire Qur'an once a week and would not come out of his house except for jum'a or to gatherings. He renounced the world and shared little in it... He never joked with anyone, nor jested with little boys, nor ate anything that came from illicitness or which he was unsure of.'

He lived a life of scholarship and perseverance on the Path of Allah, which like so many who tread the path of Sacred Knowledge, led to him being tested and tried for upholding what he believed to be correct. He once stated from the pulpit: "O commander of the believers! If I speak out, I shall fear you and if I remain silent, I shall fear for you. I have decided to put my fear for you ahead of my fear of you. For the saying of one who counsels: 'Itaqillah!' is better than that of one who says: 'You belong to a house that has been forgiven.' [i.e. *Ahl al-Bayt*].

One who has not tasted the sweetness of the drink of predawn has not reached the knowledge of what is good.

He died in 597 AH. His grandson learned from his mother that on his death-bed Ibn al-Jawzi was heard to be addressing invisible visitors and saying: "What do you want me to do with these peacocks?" He died between maghrib and `isha on the night before Friday, the 13th of Ramadan. He was washed before fajr and the people of Baghdad followed his coffin to the cemetery of Ahmad ibn Hanbal. The crowd was so great that by the time the place where he was to be buried was reached it was time for Jum`a prayer. During the remainder of the month, people recited the Qur'an at his grave uninterruptedly, day and night. The night after Ibn al-Jawzi's burial the hadith scholar Ahmad ibn Salman al-Sukr saw him in his sleep, standing on a pulpit made of pearl, preaching to the angels.

Allah the Highest has graced us with an opportunity to benefit from a series of lessons given by Ibn al-Jawzi. In each issue of Sufi Wisdom the reader will be given a new lesson upon which they can ponder and act. May Allah forgive any shortcomings in the original work and in its translation that is presented here.

May Allah the Highest bless Ibn al-Jawzi and grant him peace and felicity; May He allow us to attain guidance and comprehension through his works. Amen.

Counsel Number One: Cry out of Fear of Allah

My brothers, if the soul were to ponder what lies before it, and if it were to remember the rights of others and those of its own that have been transgressed - if this were the case the grief would have delivered its blood (i.e., it has gone beyond mere tears). It is only right that one who has so long been involved in sin should cry; their days have been spent in sin and their loss is protracted with nights spent in misdeeds.

And before him lies the severity of death, which has within it the different shades of punishment. Abu 'Imran al Jawni said, "I heard that Gabriel (pbuh) came to the Prophet (pbuh) and he was crying. Gabriel asked him, 'O Messenger of God, what has made you cry?' he said, 'do you not cry?' Gabriel said, 'O Muhammad! My eyes have not

been dry since Allah created the Hell fire out of fear of disobeying Him and thus being thrown into it." Yazid al-Qaraashi said, "Verily Allah has angels whose eyes will continue to flow like rivers until the Day of Reckoning around His Throne. They tremble as if blown by the wind out of their fear of Allah. So Allah Almighty says to them, 'O, My angels, what causes you fear whilst you are my slaves?' They reply, 'O, Lord, had your Might and Power appeared to the inhabitants of earth as it has appeared to us, they would not be able to swallow food nor water, and they would go out into the desert and low just as the cows low.'"

Al-Hasan said, "When Adam (pbuh) was expelled from Paradise he cried for a hundred years - until the valleys of Sarnadeeb flowed with his tears; and Allah caused cinnamon and peppers to spring up from the water of this valley which was made up of the tears of Adam. He turned the birds of the valley into peacocks. Then Gabriel (pbuh) came to Adam and said, 'O Adam, raise your head, for you have been forgiven.' And he raised his head. Then he came to the House and he circumambulated it for a week, and he did not stop until he was immersed in tears." Ibn Asbaat said, "If the tears of all the inhabitants of earth were to be measured against the tears of Adam, his tears would be greater."

Wuhayb ibn al Warad said, "When Allah rebuked Noah (pbuh) He revealed to him, 'I give you counsel, lest you act like those who are ignorant.' And he cried for three hundred years until there appeared the likes of little streams below his eyes from crying." Yazid al Raqaashi said, "Verily he was called 'Noah' because he was one that would lament." (Nawwaah)

I lament over my soul and cry as a wrongdoer. Sins have led me and my back has

been made heavy. There is little that tastes sweet remaining with me. O, shame continues and there is no excuse for me.

Al-Suddi said, "David (pbuh) cried until grass sprouted from his tears. And when the arrow of destiny struck him he fell into a swoon of tears; his repentant tongue called out 'forgive me!' and a reply came, '...for all who have erred' so he began to say, 'forgive all those who have erred.'"

Suleyman al Taymi said, "David (pbuh) never drank water except that which was mixed with his tears." Mujahid said, "David (pbuh) asked Allah to place his sins in his hands so that he would see his sins whenever he ate or drank and cry. Often he would be brought a vessel two-thirds full; when he reached out to drink from it he would see his errors and it need only touch his lips before it began to overflow with his tears. One of those who had participated in the great battle against Goliath said, 'I saw him (David) and his tears were mixed with yellow. I said, "Over what have you cried blood?' He said, 'I have cried tears over my wavering to fulfil the rights of Allah and I have cried blood out of fear that I may not be accepted.' Then I saw him (David)

in a dream, and asked, 'What did Allah do to you?' He replied, 'He forgave me.' I said, 'And your tears?' David replied, 'They brought me closer. Allah said, 'O conqueror over what did you cry tears?' I said, 'I cried tears over my hesitation to fulfil Your rights.' Allah said, 'And blood?' I said 'I cried blood out of fear that my tears would not deliver me.' Allah said, 'O conqueror! I was not in need of any of this. By My Glory and Might, your guardian angels have been ascending with your pages for forty years without there once being an error recorded.'"

Abdullah ibn Amr said, "Yahya (pbuh) cried until his molars appeared." Mujahid said that



[Yahya] cried until the tears made streams on his cheeks. O, one whose sins are greater than can be encompassed! O, one who is content with being rejected and distant! O, one who is constantly erring! How many have rebuked you and advised you? If the illness of David has befallen you (i.e., hesitation in performing the rights of Allah), then lament as Noah did lament (i.e., regret your sins) and you shall live the life of Yahya (i.e., you will cry over your sins). It is narrated that Umar ibn al Khattab had two dark lines down his cheeks from crying. Abdullah ibn Umar would put out the lamps at night and then cry until his eyelids would adhere together. Abu Yunus ibn 'Ubayd said, "We would go to Abdullah ibn 'Umar and he would be crying until we all felt sorry for him." Sa'eed ibn Jubayr would cry until he become bleary-eyed. When Abu 'Imran al Jawni would hear the call to prayer his disposition would change and his eyes would fill with tears. The color of the face of Abu Bakr al Nahshali would change, when he would hear the call to prayer and he would start to cry. Nihad ibn Matar al 'adawy cried until he went blind, then his eldest son cried until his eyes became dim-sighted. Munsoor would cry until his eyes were worn out. His mother said, "O, my son! Were a murderer to kill you he would not be able to increase in you this state of fear." Hashim al Dastawayi cried until his eyesight was ruined; even though his eyes were open, he could not see. Yazid al Raqaashi cried for forty years until his eyes darkened and the tears had burnt channels into his face. Thabit al Banaani cried until he almost lost his sight. It was said to him "Let us cure you so that you do not cry", he replied, "There is no good in eyes that do not cry."



Al Hasan ibn 'Adqa said, "I thought that Yazid ibn Harun Bawaasit had the most beautiful eyes. Then I saw him after this and he was blind. I asked 'What happened to your beautiful eyes?' He replied, 'the tears of dawn have taken them; O, had you known what you have missed before the dawn you would not be able to bear sleep. At that time the convoy of the watchful had gone forth to the hearts of those who made remembrance. And the forgiveness has descended upon those who sought forgiveness. One who has not tasted the sweetness of the drink of predawn has not reached the knowledge of what is good.' Ata al Sulaymi was asked "What do you desire?"

He said, "I wish to cry until I do not have the energy to cry anymore" even though he cried day and night. And his continuous tears were always moist on his face.

One who is not equal to these examples in awareness of Allah will never know what has caused them to cry so. Just as one who has never seen Prophet Joseph (pbuh) will never know the pain of Jacob's heart (pbuh). One who does not spend the night with his heart filled with love will never understand how a heart breaks. Will you not cry at your hardness? O you whose intellect is numbed by your desires, will you not grieve over your heedlessness? And you who have turned towards the ephemeral world, it is as if you are already in your grave! And you who are continuously sinning, fear the result of your sins! O you who are most wretched in your actions, lament your misdeeds. Cry, for truly crying has overwhelmed us.

The Day of Resurrection is our appointed time for the lifting of veils and the tearing away of all covers.

Prophet Muhammad's exceptional life was established by Allah Almighty in the most beautiful way, both spiritually and physically, and he was then blessed as a favor for the whole of mankind.

ETERNAL AFFECTION AND THE ESSENCE OF LIGHT

The following is one of the famous Hadith Qudsi, or sayings of Allah:

"I was a hidden treasure (affection), and I wished to be recognized; this is why I created the universe."
(Ismail Hakki Bursevi, Kenzi Mahfi)

Thus we can understand that the universe and the whole of creation consist of Divine Affection. This is the reason why people see the world with a deep feeling of the soul, perceiving all the worldly belongings and wealth as a sign of love and affection, and why they realize that Allah Almighty has created everything; they accept this as evidence of His abilities and perfection.

Rumi explains the importance of love and affection for humans in the following poem:

'Know how pitiful is he who does not possess the Divine love and affection; he may even be inferior to a dog, because even Ashab-kehf's dog searched for tamed love, and found it; he reached spiritual pleasure and those special mortals attained heaven.'

The pious know that the reason for their creation is the bud of eternal affection:

'O beloved! If it was not for you I would not have created the universe.' Complimented with the title 'The Light of Creation', Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), has had the universe dedicated to him.

The spiritual events that happened to Prophet Muhammad prior to receiving the Revelation, the purification of his soul and the cleansing of the ego all acted as the basis for this.

The First and Last Page of the Calendar of Prophethood

Prophet Muhammad, whose divine light appeared before Adam but who physically appeared after all the other messengers, was both the first and the last in the line of prophets. In respect of creation Prophet Muhammad was the first, but in respect of time he was the last prophet. As he was the reason for the entire creation, Allah Almighty blessed him with the title 'Beloved'. Prophet Muhammad's exceptional life was established by Allah Almighty in the most beautiful way, both spiritually and physically, and he was then blessed as a favor for the whole of mankind. The manners and personality of Prophet Muhammad and his behavior towards mankind are an example for all. Allah Almighty created Prophet Muhammad as an example of perfect character for everyone. This is why he was sent into the community as a pitiful orphan, passing through all the grades and levels of life and becoming chief of state and Prophet, thus reaching the highest rank of authority and power. His display of excellent behavior and actions, his intelligence, capabilities and power are an example for human beings at any level or rank. In fact, Prophet Muhammad was sent by Allah the Merciful as an example for all of mankind from the time he was appointed to the Prophethood until the Day of Judgment. As we are told in the following verse:

"Ye have indeed in the Messenger of Allah an excellent exemplar for him who hopes in Allah and the Final Day, and who remember Allah much." (Ahzab, 33/21)

Before becoming Prophet, Muhammad lived a contented and dignified life, believing in the unity of Allah. Particularly during the last period before he was blessed with the duty of Prophethood, he would spend much of his time in worship; retreating to the mountain of light (Hira) and absorbing himself in deep contemplation, staying there for long periods.

The reason for this seclusion was the blatant perversity of his society and the sadness and affection he felt for those who were oppressed or destitute. In reality, all these trials were

preparation by Allah Almighty to reveal the Qur'an to mankind via the Prophet; this was to be our guide for life and it was to come to us through the holy heart of the Messenger. In the following Qur'anic verse we learn:

"Say: Whoever is an enemy to Gabriel-for he brings down the (revelation) to thy heart by Allah's will, a confirmation of what went before, and guidance and glad tidings for those who believe." (Baqarah, 2/97)

With these experiences Prophet Muhammad's heart had reached a state of purity and a level from which he could comment upon and instruct in the revelations. The Prophet's heart had now been prepared for the Revelation; for six continuous months he had received spiritual signs and inspirations. For an average person to take up such a heavy burden would have been impossible; normal human beings are not created with this kind of capability. But for Muhammad the mysterious veil of spirituality had been uncovered and it was time for this gift and power of mystery to surface.

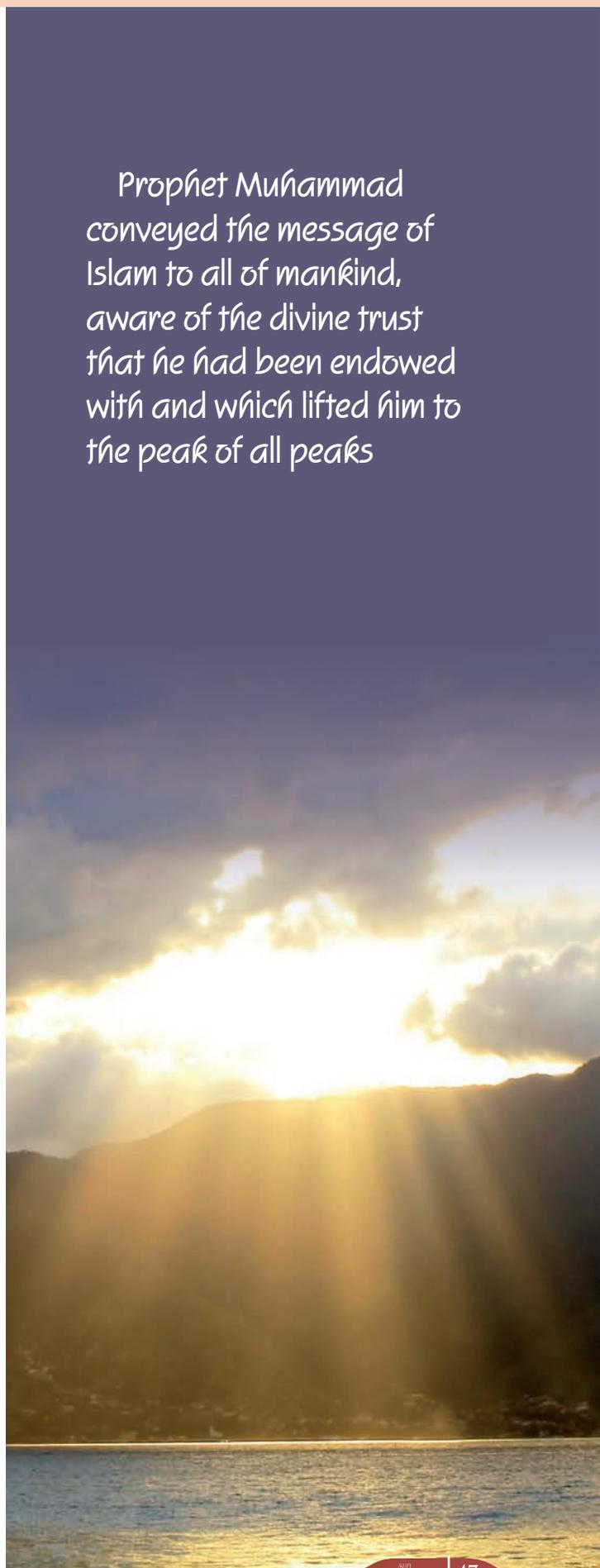
The Honored One of the Universe had combined the duties and power of all the prophets with his actions and character.

In Prophet Muhammad nobility and dignity, moral quality and the manifestation of Divine perfection reached their peak. Commandments were given. Instruction was provided in 'cleansing of the heart' and 'purification of the *nafs*', the prayers and servanthood that were to be performed in front of Allah Almighty were taught with a clean heart. By living and displaying the best of morals Prophet Muhammad became the most perfect example of humanity.

The Essence of Tasawwuf

The essence of tasawwuf is a pure, clean, clear and healthy soul that has attained a certain level of affection for Allah; this is the cause of the divine union of the soul. The spiritual events that happened to Prophet Muhammad prior to receiving the Revelation, the purification of his soul and the cleansing of the ego all acted as the basis for this.

Prophet Muhammad conveyed the message of Islam to all of mankind, aware of the divine trust that he had been endowed with and which lifted him to the peak of all peaks



Prophet Muhammad's heart and soul had attained a certain level before he received the Revelation; the holy Prophet lived a life of good conduct and divinity. When he returned from the mountain of light with the divine order he had reached a glorious phase that was very different from his former life.

Spiritually communicating with Allah Almighty, absorbing every speck of light from the glory of unification and the merits of Allah, Prophet Muhammad had reached the peak of faith and submission; he would stand in prayer until his feet were swollen, shedding tears in adoration while still continuing his divine service.

Even when he slept Prophet Muhammad's heart was always alert; he never distanced himself from Allah's remembrance or contemplation for a single moment.

With the blessing of Allah Prophet Muhammad attained this nature of the heart and perfection; he continued to convey the message of Islam to all of mankind, aware of the divine trust that he had been endowed with and which lifted him to the peak of all peaks.

Prophet Muhammad rejected anything that would reflect on or prevent him from carrying out the divine duty that had been bestowed upon him and he acknowledged the duty of

worshipping Allah Almighty over everything else.

Fundamentally, by starting first with praise to the Lord of the Universe the result is the purification of the heart from evil feelings, thoughts, and preoccupations; only then can the Qur'an, which orders that the whole of creation take refuge in Allah alone, be a book of guidance for mankind until the Day of Judgment. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and his lifetime of actions are the guide for human conduct.

Affection for Prophet Muhammad is affection for Allah, obedience to him is obedience to Allah and rebellion against him is rebellion against Allah. Thus the blessed existence of Prophet Muhammad is a refuge of affection for mankind.

Tasawwuf, united with that which is evident that which is hidden in the life of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is a blend evident of great affection because every act of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is a form of tasawwuf.

In another account it is stated that tasawwuf is a divine privilege, starting with the 'blowing of the soul' into Adam (pbuh), the vision of the perfection his messenger on the Day of Judgment and the reflection of the dew of prosperity on hearts full of affection.

Affection for Prophet Muhammad is affection for Allah, obedience to him is obedience to Allah and rebellion against him is rebellion against Allah

