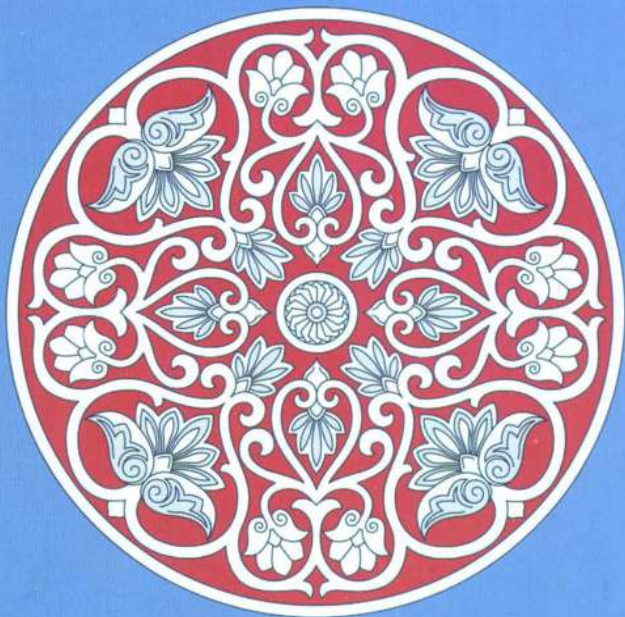


E A S Y

Good Deeds



MUFTI MUHAMMAD
TAQI USMANI

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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MUFTI TAQI USMANI

Translated by
Javed Iqbal

Edited by
Mufti Taqi Usmani &
Prince Ghazi ibn Muhammad



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Author

Mufti Taqi Usmani

Translation

Javed Iqbal

Editing

Mufti Taqi Usmani & Prince Ghazi ibn

Hadith referencing

Shaikh Muhammad Tayyab (Darul Uloom
Karachi) and Javid Iqbal

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Yahya Batha

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Publisher's Dedication

*For Umm Imran
whose tireless dedication and facilitation
enables our Honourable Shaykh to
share his priceless gems with us.*

(YAHYA BATHA)

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Publisher's Forward

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, Most Merciful and Compassionate. I bear witness that there is no god but Allah alone, without partners, and that Muḥammad ﷺ is His servant and Messenger. I invoke the blessings and peace of Allah upon his final Messenger, Muḥammad, his family and companions, along with all those who follow them in goodness until the Day of Rising.

Al-Bukhārī and Muslim have narrated a hadith from Sayyidah Ā'ishah ؓ that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "The most beloved of actions to Allah are those that are regular, even if they are little."

In this book, the honourable Shaykh Mufti Taqi Usmani has compiled, from the teachings of Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ, those deeds that are very easy to implement and practice regularly. It is hoped that readers will study this book and then find time on a daily basis to incorporate the easy deeds mentioned into the mundane daily routine. By doing this, Allah willing, we can be included in the virtue of the abovementioned hadith.

We are indebted to our honourable Shaykh Mufti Taqi Usmani for putting together this wonderful piece of work and presenting readers with the knowledge of many easy good deeds, along with important guidelines on how to practice them. He has done us a further favour by kindly allowing us the opportunity to translate and publish this work anew. May Allah ﷻ protect him, keep him safe, keep his shadow over us for many years to come and allow us to benefit from him even more.

I would also like to thank my dear friend Shaykh Javed Iqbal

for accepting our offer to translate this wonderful work with much care and diligence. Gratitude is also extended to Rafat Farooqui, PA to Shaykh Mufti Taqi Usmani, for requesting Shaykh Muhammed Tayab of Darul Uloom Karachi to do the initial referencing (*takhrīj*) of hadiths and others sources, and our heartfelt gratitude is extended to him also. Shaykh Javed Iqbal also aided in editing and adding more references, and his contribution was vital in this regard.

I would also like to thank His Royal Highness Prince Ghazi ibn Muhammad for taking his valuable time out to read the final draft and subsequently writing a blurb.

And, ultimately, we thank Allah for enabling us to publish this excellent work, praying that He accepts all our efforts, and makes it a means of our forgiveness and entrance into the Garden. *Āmin*.

YAHYA BATHA



Preface

ALLAH ALMIGHTY HAS created this world with the objective that His servants conduct their lives in a good manner according to His Commands, and strive for the betterment of not only this life, but also of the eternal life of the Hereafter, focusing on the good deeds that are pleasing to Him. But, engrossed in worldly pursuits, we often neglect this very purpose of our life, in favour of aiming to maximise wealth or making this life more and more enjoyable—an objective that is in any case seldom achieved.

There are very few people who pay due care to the betterment of the eternal life to come after this transitory one, even though everyone knows for sure that he (or she) has to leave this world forever sooner or later; even a staunch atheist cannot deny this obvious fact. No one even knows how long he will live, or how soon he will leave. No exact prediction is possible; no previous notice is necessary. Death may knock at a person's door at any time, and he will then lose whatever he earned or owned. How astonishing it is to neglect this reality! Still, it is a fact that many of us do not pay heed to the fate we will have to encounter in the life to come.

Islam has directed us to lead our lives in a way that maintains a reasonable balance between our desire to make this life enjoyable to a reasonable extent while at the same time looking after the betterment of our next life in a practical manner. Unfortunately, there is a widespread misunderstanding that practising the Islamic way of life is very difficult, and consequently requires one to sacrifice most worldly

benefits, pleasures and comforts. The result of this misconception is that many people, presuming these difficulties are real, do not take even some steps towards this direction. The fact, on the contrary, is that Islamic precepts are not so difficult in the first place, and the one who sincerely wishes to tread this path is always helped by Allah Almighty to make both his lives (earthly and eternal) good and comfortable.

Secondly, even if some Islamic precepts seem to entail some effort or difficulty, it is in fact negligible as compared to the huge eternal benefits one may earn by exerting these efforts. After all, a person has to face some difficulties in earning his livelihood here, but he eagerly bears all these difficulties, or even loves to undergo them, because he knows he is going to earn a reward for them at the end. Similarly, if there is some difficulty in observing some Islamic precepts, and at the end of the day one is to gain great eternal rewards beyond imagination, then why should one be reluctant to face these difficulties?

Thirdly, apart from some Islamic precepts that require some labour or effort, Islam has given us a long list of actions that do not require much effort, nor do they consume much time or money. Despite this, they still entail great reward in the Hereafter. By acting upon them, we can accumulate a huge treasure of virtuous acts to our credit in our Record of Deeds.

Today, we are not cognizant of the true value of increasing our credit in our Record of Deeds, as we are used to measuring the value of everything in monetary terms. But when death will close our eyes, and we are presented before our Creator, the entire scenario will change. No gold, silver, coins or currency notes will be of any benefit in that life. The only currency that may buy the comforts of that life will be nothing but a person's good deeds credited to his account during his earthly life. On that occasion, one will realise the true value of even a minute good deed. If the account of good deeds is very poor at that moment, one will have nothing but remorse for the negligence committed in his earthly life. Then he will wish that he had performed

some more good acts to increase the volume of his record of virtuous acts. However, this remorse and wishful desire will be of no avail, as the time of doing good deeds will have expired.

The noble Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ used to appreciate the true value of virtuous acts. They were so ambitious about performing good deeds that whenever they came to know about an act, however small, that might bring Allah's Pleasure, they tried to practise it immediately. If the reward of such an act came to their knowledge at a later stage, they expressed their grief about the opportunities they had missed before, and thereafter made it their consistent practice.

Sayyidunā Abū Hurayrah ؓ narrated a saying of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to Sayyidunā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar ؓ that whoever offers the funeral prayer (*ṣalāt al-janāzah*) of another person will get the reward of one *qirāt* (i.e. one carat of gold); and the one who accompanies the *janāzah* until it is buried will have the reward of two *qirāts*, each of which will be equal to the size of Mount Uḥud. 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar ؓ, on hearing this, asked Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah ؓ who confirmed it. At that moment, he said at once: "Alas! We have missed out on many *qirāts* in the past."¹

Thus, every good deed that may earn Allah's Pleasure is an invaluable wealth one should yearn to gain. It is only in this earthly life that the good deeds may be credited to our account. As soon as this life comes to an end, the whole chapter will be closed, with no opportunity to add a single virtue to one's credit—except through deeds whose rewards and benefit continue even after one's demise (*ṣadaqah jāriyyah*). Therefore, we must use whatever time is left at our disposal to maximise our good deeds, and not waste it in negligence and carelessness. In particular, if we miss even those good deeds that do not require much labour, effort or time, it is certainly a horrible loss that will carry unbearable remorse in the Hereafter.

¹ Muslim (945).

Keeping this in mind, I have tried in this brief booklet to compile, with some elaboration, a list of those good deeds that are very easy to perform without exerting much effort or consuming much time. Most of them may be performed even when we are engaged in our daily routine. Only a little care is required to add many rewarding acts to our credit.

Points to remember before reading the book

Before starting the study of this book, some points are necessary to keep in mind:

1. The list of the acts mentioned in this book is by no means exhaustive. It deals only with the deeds that one can easily begin with. That is why the obligatory acts, like prayer (*ṣalāh*) and fasting (*ṣawm*), have not been discussed. It must be remembered that the requirements of our religion are not restricted to these acts. Every Muslim should therefore fulfil all such requirements. However, the basic aim of the present book is twofold:

Firstly, for those Muslims who already fulfil the mandatory requirements of Islam, the aim of the book is to persuade them towards increasing their record of good deeds by adding these acts to their normal routine.

Secondly, the address is to those who, under the misconceived assumption of difficulties of religion, have made themselves indifferent to it. The book invites them to begin with these easy good deeds. If they make themselves used to them, it will hopefully bring them close to other virtuous acts, help them remove the impression of difficulties of religion, and make them full practising Muslims, *in shā' Allāh*.

2. For such beginners, it is advisable to adopt a gradual approach in the acts of worship that are not obligatory (*nafl*), keeping in view their surrounding circumstances and possibilities of their consistency. It happens sometimes that a beginner, under the zeal of improving himself speedily, starts burdening himself with a lot of voluntary

(*nafl*) acts of worship, but after exhausting his energy, abandons even obligatory acts. If a person spent most of the night in praying *tahajjud*, then was overcome by sleep and missed the obligatory Dawn Prayer (*Fajr ṣalāh*), he has lost much and gained less.

3. The reader will find many hadiths in this book in which forgiveness of sins is promised for some very easy acts. It should be remembered that this forgiveness relates only to the minor sins (*ṣaghā'ir*).

The Holy Qur'an says:

﴿إِن تَجْتَنِبُوا كَبَائِرَ مَا تُنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ نُكَفِّرْ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ﴾

If you abstain from the major [sins] from what you have been forbidden, We shall write off your [minor] sins. (4:31)

Since a Muslim is supposed to have only minor sins (and not the major ones) on his record, these hadiths have promised full forgiveness for him. Otherwise, major sins are not normally forgiven without repentance (*tawbah*). Moreover, the sins of violating the rights of other human beings are not forgiven even by repentance only. What is required for their pardon is that the relevant person forgoes his right, or has his right duly fulfilled.

4. Keeping these points in mind, one should not forget what the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said in an established hadith:

لَا تَحْقِرَنَّ مِنَ الْمَعْرُوفِ شَيْئًا، وَلَوْ أَنْ تَلْقَى أَخَاكَ بِوَجْهِ طَلْقٍ

Never take any good deed as trivial, not even to meet your brother with a smiling face.¹

The Holy Prophet ﷺ has in this hadith warned against an attitude that is often initiated by Satan (*shayṭān*). It happens sometimes that there is an opportunity to do a good act that appears very small, and one thinks that such a trivial act cannot benefit him while he is

1. Muslim (2626).

unable to meet more important requirements of religion, and thus he deprives himself of even this opportunity. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has reminded us that no good deed is insignificant. We must take every opportunity to do a good deed, even an apparently small one. It is not unlikely that Allah ﷻ approves that small act, and by His Blessing the rest of our life is totally reformed.

Originally, this booklet was written in Urdu. Then, the late Professor Muhammad Shamim, one of my best friends, rendered it in English, and it was published in Pakistan under the title "Easy Good Deeds". Now, Shaykh Javed Iqbal from Birmingham has not only reviewed the English translation, but also carried out a full *takhrīj* (referencing) of the hadiths quoted therein, giving their full references, and added some beneficial footnotes as well.¹

May Allah ﷻ approve the effort of both translators and bless them with best rewards. While this new version is being published by Turath Publishing, I deemed it fit to write this introduction anew. I hope this new version will be more beneficial than the first one and will contribute to appreciating the real value of good and virtuous deeds. The readers are requested to study it with sincere intention to practise these acts to the best possible extent. May Allah ﷻ bless us with His *tawfiq* (ability) to conduct our life according to His Pleasure. *Āmīn*.

MUHAMMAD TAQI USMANI

Darul Uloom Karachi

28th Dhu'l-Qa'dah 1436

¹ Credit for referencing the hadith is due to Shaykh Muhammad Tayyab, Darul Uloom Karachi. References were cross-checked, further references were added and amendments made where necessary [Tr. note].

Good Intention

Intention is an alchemical formula that Allah ﷻ has given the believers, and which can with a little effort turn even dust into gold. The Prophet ﷺ said in one hadith:

إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ

Actions are based upon intentions.¹

Some people misunderstand this hadith to mean that through a good intention, impermissible deeds become permissible and sins become acts of reward. This is totally wrong. A sin is always a sin and will remain impermissible, regardless of how noble the intention is. For instance, if a person steals from someone's house with the intention of giving the stolen wealth in charity, he will not be absolved of the sin of stealing.

The correct meaning of this hadith is as follows:

1. Any good deed will only earn reward if performed with the right intention. For instance, *ṣalāh* will only earn reward when one prays for the pleasure of Allah ﷻ. If a person performs *ṣalāh* to impress others, he will actually be sinful instead of earning reward.

2. The second meaning, which is what we wish to discuss here, is that permissible deeds do not inherently earn a person reward or punishment. However, if they are done with a good intention, they become acts of worship and earn reward.

For example, eating is a permissible act. However, if one eats with the intention to use the strength gained from the food to obey Allah

¹ Bukhārī (1) and Muslim (1907).

ﷻ, the act of eating will earn reward. Similarly, if one eats with the intention of fulfilling the rights of the body which Allah ﷻ has ordained, or to enjoy the food and thus sincerely thank Allah ﷻ, eating with these intentions will also earn one reward.

In summary, there is no permissible action in life that cannot be transformed into an act of worship and thus reward through a good intention.

Hereunder are a few examples of how we can make our daily actions a means of reward:

- (a) All aspects of earning a livelihood, whether by trade, employment, agriculture or workmanship, will be a means of reward if done with the intention of rightly fulfilling the duties enjoined by Allah ﷻ towards oneself and one's family. Furthermore, if one intends to spend whatever remains, after fulfilling one's personal and family needs, to help the poor and for other righteous deeds, one will earn further reward.
- (b) When a person is studying and intends to serve humanity through his knowledge, he will continue to earn reward for this intention as long as he is engaged in his studies, *in shā' Allāh*.¹ Examples of this are a student of religion studying to propagate the religion, a medical student to serve the ill, an engineering student to serve his people, or studying any other skill to serve those in need of one's skills.
- (c) Moreover, whatever profession a person adopts, one should think that sustenance is the responsibility of Allah ﷻ. A person will receive it in any case and there are many ways to acquire it, but choosing this particular profession is to serve

¹ *In shā' Allāh* translates as: 'if Allah wishes'. However, it has been written in its transliterated form throughout the work instead of its translation. This is because *in shā' Allāh* is a phrase which Muslims use habitually, and maintaining the transliteration helps to preserve this [Ti. note].

the creation thereby. In this manner, this profession will also become a means of reward.

For example, if someone becomes a doctor, his intention behind choosing this means of livelihood among others should be to help people who are suffering. In this case, he will earn reward for his intention, even if he charges reasonably for his services. And when this is genuinely his intention, there will be occasions when he will see a poor patient, and thus treat him for free or at a discounted rate.

Another person wants to trade in clothes, choosing this profession amongst others to help people fulfil the religious obligation of clothing themselves. It is hoped this will also earn a person reward, *in shā' Allāh*. Similarly, a civil servant who hopes to have opportunities to fulfil people's needs will also earn reward for his intention, *in shā' Allāh*. In short, there is no profession in which a good intention cannot be made.

- (d) Likewise, a person should wear good clothes to show the blessings Allah ﷻ has granted him and to please those who see him, not so they might consider him lofty or wealthy.
- (e) One should love his children, because it was the practice of the Prophet ﷺ to love children.
- (f) One should help out around the home, because the Prophet ﷺ would lend a hand to his family in household chores.
- (g) One should speak cheerfully with one's wife and children, as it was a practice of the Prophet ﷺ and he enjoined treating them well.
- (h) Hospitality should be shown to guests, because honouring one's guest is a practice of the Prophet ﷺ and among the rights of a believer.
- (i) If one is to plant a sapling or tree in the garden or home, the intention should be to benefit people or animals and to please onlookers.

- (j) One should make one's handwriting legible and pleasant, so that people find it easy to read.
- (k) A woman should adorn herself to please her husband, and a man should remain neat and presentable to please his wife.
- (l) One should engage in permissible recreation within limits, to remain active and energetic for performance of obligatory actions (*farā'id*).
- (m) One should wear a watch to know *ṣalāh* times and to help spend one's time in good deeds, by appreciating the value of time.

These are just a few miscellaneous, brief examples. Otherwise, as Imam Ghazālī رحمته has rightly stated in *Ihyā' al-'Ulūm*, there is no permissible action in a person's life which, if done with the right intention, cannot be changed into an act of reward. Even if the husband and wife make love, with the intention of fulfilling each other's rights and keeping themselves chaste, they will be rewarded for this action too.

2

Du'ā' (Supplication)

Allah ﷻ loves His servants making *du'ā'* to Him. If a person is constantly asked for one thing or the other, no matter how generous he may be, he will eventually get fed up and become angry. With Allah ﷻ, however, He becomes more pleased the more one asks of Him. A hadith even states that whoever does not ask of Allah ﷻ, He becomes angry with him.¹

Furthermore, *du'ā'* is not just a means of achieving one's goals, but rather an act of worship in itself. In other words, *du'ā'* for one's personal and worldly needs is considered an act of worship and one is rewarded for it. The more one engages in *du'ā'* the closer one draws to Allah ﷻ. Moreover, a person should not only engage in *du'ā'* at times of constraint and difficulty, but rather one should regularly make *du'ā'* during times of happiness too.

A hadith states that whoever wants his *du'ā'* to be answered during difficult times should make abundant *du'ā'* during comfortable times.²

Allah ﷻ has promised in the Qur'an: "Call Me, I will respond to you."³

This promise of Allah ﷻ can never be wrong. Thus, one should make *du'ā'* with conviction of its acceptance.

However, acceptance has different forms. At times, one receives what he made *du'ā'* for, but sometimes Allah ﷻ knows the desired object not to be appropriate or beneficial for this person, so Allah ﷻ

1 Tirmidhī (3373).

2 Tirmidhī (3382).

3 Qur'an 40:60.

grants something better and more beneficial, either in this world or in the Hereafter. Thus, every *du'ā'* has three benefits:

1. One's needs are fulfilled through *du'ā'*;
2. One is rewarded for every *du'ā'*;
3. Abundant *du'ā'* strengthens one's relationship with Allah ﷻ.

Furthermore, although it is part of the etiquette of *du'ā'* to face the *qiblah* (direction of the Ka'bah), raise one's hands, make *du'ā'* verbally, and to begin the *du'ā'* with praise of Allah ﷻ and blessings (*ṣalāt*) upon the Prophet ﷺ, one can also make *du'ā'* without these things if the opportunity does not allow. In this way, Allah ﷻ has made the act of *du'ā'* so simple that one can make *du'ā'* almost anywhere and at any time, for example, whilst one is on the move or busy working. And if one cannot make *du'ā'* verbally, such as in the bathroom, one can still make *du'ā'* in one's heart.

Also, *du'ā'* is not only for major affairs, but rather one should ask Allah for every need, large or small. A hadith teaches us to make *du'ā'* even when one's shoelace breaks.¹

Thus, one should develop the habit of making *du'ā'* to Allah ﷻ whenever the smallest of needs arise. Even when faced by the most ordinary trouble, one should ask Allah ﷻ for its removal. Just as a child calls upon its mother when in need of something or when experiencing the minutest difficulty, a servant should call upon Allah ﷻ and do so continuously. No matter what work one is engaged in, one should keep asking Allah ﷻ for something or the other. Make a habit of this and see for yourself. *In shā' Allāh*, one will progress rapidly as a result.

¹ Tirmidhi (3604).

3

Prophetic Du'ā's

Although one should make *du'ā'* to Allah ﷻ for all one's needs, the Leader of Both Worlds ﷺ has taught us some specific *du'ā'*s for different occasions during the day and night; for example, upon waking up, before entering and after leaving the bathroom, when performing *wuḍū'* (ablution), on entering and leaving the mosque, on entering the house, before and after eating, after hearing the *adhān* (call to prayer), when dressing, when looking in the mirror, and before going to sleep. In short, he taught us different *du'ā'*s for each occasion, and which are exceptionally comprehensive and beneficial for all our religious and worldly needs. If we were to spend a whole lifetime thinking, we would not be able to make *du'ā'*s like the Leader of Both Worlds ﷺ taught us.

These *du'ā'*s are not time-consuming or effortful, nor are *wuḍū'* or raising of the hands required for them. If one were to memorise these *du'ā'*s with a little effort, one would secure immense benefits in both worlds, and good deeds will continue to accrue in one's record with great ease.

Hence, every Muslim should memorise these *du'ā'*s. There are many books in which these *du'ā'*s have been recorded. *Munājāt-i-Maqbūl* of Ḥakīm al-Ummah Mawlānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānawī ﷺ comprises many of these *du'ā'*s. One should memorise them, and also make one's children memorise them and habitually read them from childhood. *In shā' Allāh*, one will also earn reward when these *du'ā'*s are read.

Du'ā' for others

Just as one should make *du'ā'* for one's own needs, it is an act of great virtue to also make *du'ā'* for one's relatives, friends and Muslims in general. It is stated in a hadith that when a Muslim makes *du'ā'* for his brother in his absence, an angel makes *du'ā'* that he also receives the same.¹

Therefore, if you know of any Muslim in difficulty or worry, make *du'ā'* for him. In fact, one should make *du'ā'* for the unbelievers too, by asking Allah ﷻ to guide them to Islam. In this way, one will earn the reward of *du'ā'*, alongside the virtue of wishing well for others.

1 Muslim (2732).

4

Seeking Forgiveness (Istighfār)

Allah ﷻ has made seeking forgiveness (*istighfār*) an antidote for the poison of sins. *Istighfār* means to seek forgiveness from Allah. The worst of sins against Allah can be forgiven through repentance and seeking forgiveness. Thus, whenever a minor or major sin is committed, it should be atoned for immediately through repentance and seeking forgiveness. One should seek forgiveness even after undesirable matters (*khilāf awlā*) have been committed. Furthermore, one should seek forgiveness abundantly, even though one may not have apparently committed any sin.

Every Muslim knows that the Leader of Both Worlds ﷺ was infallible and pure from all sins, yet despite this he said, "I seek Allah's forgiveness and repent to Him more than seventy times a day."¹

In another hadith, the Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said, "Whoever adheres to seeking forgiveness, Allah makes for him an exit from every constriction, a relief from every worry, and grants him sustenance from where he does not imagine."²

Hence, one should make a habit of seeking forgiveness at all times, and at the least a hundred times daily.

Sayyid al-Istighfār (The chief formula for seeking forgiveness)

One can seek forgiveness in any language. However, a concise formula in Arabic is:

1 Bukhārī (6307) and Tirmidhī (3255).

2 Abū Dawūd (1518), Ibn Mājah (1819), and Nasā'ī (456).

أَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ رَبِّي مِنْ كُلِّ ذَنْبٍ وَأَتُوبُ إِلَيْهِ

I seek forgiveness from Allah, my Lord,
from every sin and repent to Him.

One particular formula to seek forgiveness has a number of virtues mentioned for it in hadiths, and it has been named the chief formula to seek forgiveness (*sayyid al-istighfār*). This particular formula to seek forgiveness is:

اللَّهُمَّ أَنْتَ رَبِّي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ، خَلَقْتَنِي وَأَنَا عَبْدُكَ، وَأَنَا عَلَى
عَهْدِكَ وَوَعْدِكَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُ، أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ سَرٍّ مَا صَنَعْتُ،
أَبُوءُ لَكَ بِنِعْمَتِكَ عَلَيَّ، وَأَبُوءُ لَكَ بِذَنْبِي، فَاغْفِرْ لِي فَإِنَّهُ لَا
يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

O Allah! You are my Lord. There is no god but You. You created me and I am Your servant; and I am under Your covenant and pledge to the best of my ability. I seek Your refuge from the evil I have committed. I acknowledge Your favour upon me, and I also acknowledge my sin to You. So forgive me, for none forgives sins besides You.

A hadith states that whoever recites this with full conviction in the morning and dies before the evening shall be among the people of Paradise. And whoever says it with full conviction in the evening and dies before the morning shall be among the people of Paradise.¹

In particular, one should briefly contemplate one's shortcomings committed throughout the day before going to sleep, and seek forgiveness for all of them.

¹ Bukhārī (6306) and Tirmidhī (3390).

5

Dhikr (Remembrance) of Allah

Dhikr (remembrance) of Allah ﷻ is such an enjoyable and simple act of worship that it can be performed at all times, with little thought, and it has countless virtues and benefits. Allah ﷻ has enjoined His *dhikr* in the Noble Qur'an in many places. For example:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ ذِكْرًا كَثِيرًا﴾

O you who believe, remember Allah abundantly (33:41)

It is obvious that *dhikr* does not benefit Allah ﷻ in any way, as He is in no need of His servants remembering Him. *Dhikr* is essentially of benefit to the servant, as abundant *dhikr* strengthens one's bond with Allah ﷻ and nourishes the soul, through which it is raised and strengthened. Through this spiritual strength, it becomes easy to overcome *shaytān* and one's base desires (*nafs*). And every time a person performs *dhikr*, good deeds are added to his record.

A Companion asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, "Which worship is most virtuous and highest in rank with Allah on the Day of Judgement?" The Prophet ﷺ replied "*Dhikr* of Allah Most High"

A Companion once said to the Prophet ﷺ, "O Messenger of Allah! The commandments of Islam are many, so tell me something I can hold onto firmly."

He ﷺ replied, "Keep your tongue moist with Allah's *dhikr*."²

¹ *Jāmi' al-Uṣul* (2562) on the authority of Razin. Similar wording has been narrated by at-Tirmidhī (3376).

² Tirmidhī (3375).

Sayyidunā Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said, “The likeness of a house wherein Allah is remembered and a house wherein Allah is not remembered is like that of the living and the dead.”

Another hadith states that the Prophet ﷺ said, “No people stand from a gathering in which they do not remember Allah, except it is as if they have stood from over a donkey’s corpse, and it will be a means of remorse for them [on the Day of Judgement].”² This means they will regret wasting so much time.

This is why a hadith mentions that the Prophet ﷺ taught the following words to be said at the end of every gathering, through which the shortcomings of the gathering will be expiated:

سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ وَبِحَمْدِكَ، لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا
أَنْتَ، أَسْتَغْفِرُكَ وَأَتُوبُ إِلَيْكَ

You are perfect, O Allah, and with Your praise. There is no god besides You. I seek Your forgiveness and repent to You.³

In spite of the great virtues of *dhikr*, Allah ﷻ has made it so simple that He has not attached any conditions to it. If someone performs *dhikr* attentively and in the state of *wuḍū’* whilst facing the *qiblah*, it is most excellent. However, if this is not possible, one can carry out this act of worship whilst engaged in other works. Even *wuḍū’* is not required, to the extent that one can remember Allah ﷻ even in the state of major impurity (*janābah*).⁴ However, one should not perform

1 Bukhārī (630) and Muslim (779).

2 Abū Dāwūd (4855).

3 Abū Dāwūd (4857). Similar wording has been narrated by an-Nasa‘ī (1343) and in his *‘Amal al-Yawm wa’l-Laylah* (397).

4 It is not permissible to recite the Qur’an in the state of major impurity [Tr. note].

verbal *dhikr* when unclothed or in unclean places like the bathroom. It is nonetheless permissible to do so in one's heart in such places.

Thus, the reward of this great worship can be attained at all times without any difficulty or effort. It is, however, appropriate to fix a certain time during the day or night when one sits specifically to do *dhikr* attentively, in the state of *wuḍū'* and whilst facing the *qiblah*. And at all other times, however much *dhikr* one is enabled to do in all circumstances, it is indeed a great blessing.

For specific formulas of *dhikr*, reading the following books is very beneficial:

1. *Faḍā'il adh-Dhikr* by Shaykh al-Ḥadīth Mawlānā Muḥammad Zakariyyā ؒ.
2. *Dhikrullāh* by Mawlānā Muftī Muḥammad Shafī' ؒ.
3. *Ma'mulāt-i-Yawmiyyah* by my master and my support, Dr. 'Abd al-Ḥayy 'Arifī ؒ.

Some concise formulas of *dhikr* are mentioned hereunder, which one should make a habit of reading regularly:

1. A hadith mentions that our Prophet ﷺ said the following four phrases are most beloved to Allah: ¹

سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ

Pure from all defects is Allah, all praise is for Allah,
there is no god but Allah, and Allah is the Greatest.

2. Another hadith mentions that two phrases are most beloved to the Most Merciful (*Ar-Raḥmān*), light on the tongue, but heavy in the Scales: ²

1 Muslim (2137) and Abū Dāwūd (4958).

2 Bukhārī (6682) and Muslim (2694).

سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَبِحَمْدِهِ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ الْعَظِيمِ

Pure from all defects is Allah, and with His praise.
Pure from all defects is Allah, the Tremendous.

3. In one hadith, we are told to abundantly read:

لَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ

because these words are among the treasures of Paradise.¹

- 4.

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ، لَهُ الْمُلْكُ

وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ، وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

There is no god besides Allah, Alone without a partner. For Him is the dominion and for Him is all praise. And He has power over everything.

A hadith states that if one recites these words in the morning, he will receive the reward equivalent to that of freeing ten slaves from the progeny of Sayyidunā Ismā'īl ؑ, ten good deeds, ten of his sins will be forgiven, his status will be raised by ten, and he will be protected against *shayṭān* until evening. If he recites these words in the evening, the same benefits are achieved until morning.²

- 5.

حَسْبِيَ اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ

وَهُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ

¹ Bukhārī (6484) and Muslim (2704).

² Abū Dāwūd (5077) and Ibn Mājah (1867).

Enough for me is Allah. There is no god but Him. In Him I have placed my trust, and He is the Lord of the Great Throne.

A hadith states that whoever reads the above seven times in the morning and evening, Allah will suffice him against his worries in this life and the Hereafter.¹

¹ Abū Dāwūd (5081) and Ibn as-Sunnī in his *ʿAmal al-Yawm wa'l-Laylah* (71).

Blessings upon the Prophet ﷺ

Many virtues of sending blessings (*ṣalawāt*) on the Prophet ﷺ have been narrated in hadiths, to the extent that separate books on this topic can be prepared. In fact, many scholars have written books specifically on this topic.

In one hadith, the Prophet ﷺ said, "Someone came to me from my Lord, Most Dignified and Exalted, and said, 'Whoever from your ummah sends blessings on you once, Allah writes ten good deeds for him, forgives ten of his [minor] sins, elevates his status by ten stages, and returns the same to him.'"¹

Sayyidunā Anas رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said, "Whomsoever I am mentioned before should send blessings on me; and whoever sends blessings on me once, Allah sends ten mercies on him."²

The best invocation of blessings is that which is recited in *ṣalāh*, and the shortest is *ṣalla'llāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*, through which one will gain the reward of sending blessings nonetheless. Also, when the Prophet's ﷺ exalted name is written, one should write *ṣalla'llāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* in full. Using abbreviations such as *ṣād* or *ṣaḥam* [or *SAW* or *PBUH*] is not sufficient.

1 Aḥmad, (16352) and Abū Ya'la (1425).

2 Nasā'ī in *ʿAmal al-Yawm wa'l-Laylah* (6t) and Ibn as-Sunnī (380).

7

Gratitude

Allah ﷻ bestows countless bounties upon people all the time. These blessings are so many that they cannot be enumerated. Allah ﷻ says in the Noble Qur'an:

﴿وَأِنْ تَعُدُّوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ لَا تُحْصُوهَا﴾

If you count the bounties of Allah, you
cannot count them all. (16:18)

Shaykh Sa'di ؒ says that if one were to put aside all other bounties, just the blessing of life is immeasurable, as every breath contains two blessings; inhaling and exhaling. If one were to inhale but not be able to exhale, it would be an affliction, and the reverse of this would be a second affliction. Hence, every breath comprises two blessings, and each separate blessing necessitates gratitude. Therefore, if an individual were to thank Allah ﷻ once with every breath, it would still be insufficient to express gratitude just for the blessing of breathing; how then can a person be grateful for all the countless blessings?

In summary, it is impossible to thank Allah ﷻ adequately, but nonetheless, abundantly thanking Him is a most beloved action and earns countless reward. It leads to an increase in bounties and strengthens one's connection and love for Allah ﷻ. Allah ﷻ said:

﴿فَاذْكُرُونِي أَذْكَرُكُمْ﴾

So Remember Me, and I will remember you. (2:152)

In another place, He says:

﴿وَسَنَجْزِي الشَّاكِرِينَ﴾

And soon We shall reward those who are grateful. (3:145)

He also says:

﴿لَئِن شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ وَلَئِن كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ﴾

If you express gratitude, I shall certainly give you more, and if you are ungrateful, then My punishment is severe. (14:7)

Allah ﷻ loves a grateful servant and hates an ungrateful person, as ingratitude is a sign of extreme narrow-mindedness. An ungrateful person focuses on the slightest trouble which befalls him and loses sight of the countless blessings he is being showered with at that very moment of difficulty. On the contrary, a grateful person is mindful of the bounties of Allah ﷻ, even in the midst of his pain. He expresses gratitude for these blessings, and at the same time, prays for his difficulty to be removed.

Let us take a person who falls ill. If he is ungrateful, he will forget all the blessings of Allah ﷻ, and regard himself as the most oppressed and troubled person, uttering words of ingratitude. On the contrary, if he is grateful, he will think how the health which he enjoyed for most of his life was such a great blessing, despite the grief and worry he is now experiencing due to illness. He will also think how the means of comfort he has, in the form of people nursing him and the medicines at his disposal, are such a great blessing. He will thank Allah ﷻ for protecting him against more fatal illnesses, when thinking about those who are more ill than him. He will definitely make *du'ā'* for his recovery, not in a complaining manner, but by expressing his feebleness and inability. Even if he is worried because of his illness, there will be no element of ingratitude or complaining in this worry.

Shayṭān's foremost attack on a person is to make him ungrateful. The Noble Qur'an tells us that when Iblis was granted respite until the Day of Judgment, he expressed his intention to mislead Allah's servants and attack them from every direction. In stating the outcome of his attacks, he said:

﴿وَلَا تَجِدُ أَكْثَرَهُمْ شَاكِرِينَ﴾

You will not find most of them grateful. (7:17)

This shows that *shayṭān's* greatest desire and effort is to deprive the servants of Allah ﷻ from gratitude and to make them ungrateful. If, on the other hand, someone is determined to be grateful, *shayṭān* cannot influence him. In short, being grateful to Allah ﷻ is a great act of worship and only takes a few moments to perform.

It is mentioned in a hadith:

الطَّاعِمُ الشَّاكِرُ بِمَنْزِلَةِ الصَّائِمِ الصَّابِرِ

The one who eats and is grateful is like
the one who fasts and is patient.¹

Therefore, one should develop a habit of thanking Allah ﷻ for every blessing and comfort, big or small, which a person experiences on a daily basis. On returning home to find one's family are safe and well, be grateful; when presented with good food, be grateful; when one feels a pleasant breeze, be grateful; when one is pleased to see a child happily at play, be grateful. In other words, one should make a habit of always expressing gratitude for everything which brings a person pleasure and comfort. If not verbally, it should at least be done in one's heart.

The pious elders have prescribed that just before going to sleep, one should contemplate Allah's blessings for a while and thank Him

1 Tirmidhi (2486) and Ibn Mājah (1764).

for each of them individually. For example, one should think: all praise is for Allah (*al-ḥamduli-llāh*), my family and I have good health; *al-ḥamduli-llāh*, I have a roof over my head; *al-ḥamduli-llāh*, I have a comfortable bed; *al-ḥamduli-llāh*, my life and wealth are safe. In short, one should contemplate each individual comfort and go to sleep after having thanked Him for them.

Undoubtedly, true gratitude for the blessings of Allah ﷻ is to make one's life conform to the pleasure of Allah ﷻ. However, if one makes a habit of expressing gratitude abundantly, in one's heart and also verbally, it is a great act of worship. It is hoped, *in shā' Allāh*, that the rest of one's actions will be rectified because of this.

Whilst there are no specific words to express one's gratitude to Allah ﷻ and everyone can thank Him in their own language, the Prophet ﷺ has taught us some comprehensive words to express gratitude, through which one will be thanking Him many thousands of times just by reciting once.

These words are as follows:

اَللّٰهُمَّ لَكَ الْحَمْدُ حَمْدًا دَائِمًا مَّعَ دَوَامِكَ وَ لَكَ الْحَمْدُ حَمْدًا
خَالِدًا مَّعَ خُلُوْدِكَ وَ لَكَ الْحَمْدُ حَمْدًا لَا مُنْتَهٰى لَهٗ دُوْنَ
مَشِيَّتِكَ وَ لَكَ الْحَمْدُ حَمْدًا لَا يُرِيْدُ قَائِلُهٗ اِلَّا رِضَاكَ وَ لَكَ
الْحَمْدُ حَمْدًا عِنْدَ طَرْفَةِ كُلِّ عَيْنٍ وَ تَنْفُسِ كُلِّ نَفْسٍ

O Allah, to You belongs all praise, as everlasting as Your Everlastingness; to You belongs all praise, as eternal as Your Eternalness; to You belongs all praise, for which there is no limit besides Your Will; to You belongs all praise, praise that the speaker of which only desires Your Pleasure;

and to You belongs all praise with every blink of the eye and with every breath.¹

The following words of praise can also be read:

اللَّهُمَّ لَكَ الْحَمْدُ عَدَدَ خَلْقِكَ وَمِدَادَ
كَلِمَاتِكَ وَزِنَةَ عَرْشِكَ وَرِضَا نَفْسِكَ

O Allah, to You belongs all praise, according to the number of Your creation, the ink of Your words, the weight of Your Throne and Your own Pleasure.

It is narrated from Sayyidunā ‘Abdullāh ibn al-Ghannām ؓ that the Prophet ﷺ taught the following words of gratitude:

اللَّهُمَّ مَا أَصْبَحَ بِي مِنْ نِعْمَةٍ أَوْ بِأَحَدٍ مِّنْ خَلْقِكَ فَمِنْكَ
وَحَدِّكَ، لَا شَرِيكَ لَكَ، فَלَكَ الْحَمْدُ، وَلَكَ الشُّكْرُ

O Allah! Whatever blessing I, or any of Your creation, have received this morning, is from You alone. You have no partner. To You belongs all praise and all thanks.

The Prophet ﷺ said that whoever says these words in the morning has fulfilled the right of gratitude for that day, and whoever says these words² in the evening has fulfilled the right of gratitude for that night.³

1 Similar wording has been narrated by Ṭabarānī in *Al-Awsat* (5538) and Bayhaqī in *Shu‘ab al-Imān* (4389).

2 When reading this in the evening, the words مَا أَصْبَحَ بِي should be replaced with مَا أَنْتَسَى; this will alter the translation from “morning” to “evening”. [Tr. note]

3 Nasā’ī, *As-Sunan al-Kubrā* (9835); and Abū Dāwūd (5073).

'Patience'

Allah ﷻ has created three realms in the universe. The first realm is of complete bliss and comfort, without even a trace of grief or pain. This is the realm of Paradise. The second realm is of extreme pain and grief, without a trace of bliss or comfort. This is the realm of Hellfire. Then there is the realm wherein there is both happiness and grief, and pain and comfort; this is the earthly life.

Consequently, neither has there been nor will there ever be a person who has never experienced any difficulty at some stage of his life. A person, regardless of how rich, pious or powerful he may be, will experience pain as well as pleasure, and difficulty as well as comfort. Even great messengers experienced difficulties and worries.

Hence, a person who wants to be totally immune from difficulties and problems is ignorant of the very nature of this life, and this aspiration of his can never be accomplished. The degree of difficulties will definitely vary, but complete immunity from difficulties and problems in this life is impossible.

قید حیات و بندہ نعم اصل میں دونوں ایک ہیں

موت سے پہلے آدمی نعم سے نجات پائے کیوں؟

The imprisonment of life and the shackles
of grief are in fact the same thing;

How then can one be saved from grief before death?

In short, every person will face difficulties and worries in this earthly life, in one form or the other. If a person displays impatience, con-

stantly complains about his worries and laments his fate, it will still not be able to fully protect him against worries. In fact, he will always find his difficulties to be constraining. A further great harm of his impatience is that he will receive nothing in return for these difficulties, which could have been a means of reward.

In contrast to this is a person who, in times of pain and sorrow, thinks of the short-livedness of this mundane difficulty, how nobody is totally safe from the difficulties of this life, and that no decision of Allah ﷻ is void of wisdom, regardless of whether we understand this wisdom or not. This person concludes that he should not complain about Allah's decision, but rather accept it. Even if he is grieved by this difficulty and his heart is overwhelmed with grief, he does not object to Allah's decision, because he believes only Allah ﷻ knows what is best for him. He turns to Allah ﷻ alone, asking Him to make this difficulty beneficial in his favour, to comfort and console his heart, and to protect him in future from difficulties that will cause him anguish.

This attitude is called patience (*ṣabr*). The benefit of patience is that a person is consoled thereby, his restlessness is lessened, his heart is comforted, and he also receives immeasurable reward from Allah ﷻ on this difficulty.

The Noble Qur'an states:

﴿إِنَّمَا يُوفَى الصَّابِرُونَ أَجْرَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ﴾

Certainly those who observe patience will be given their reward in full without measure. (39:10)

It is important to note that feeling grief in one's heart at times of difficulty is not sinful; even to cry naturally when faced by an affliction or difficulty is not an act of impatience. Impatience is to object to Allah's decision and to complain. Even if one's heart is ablaze with grief, tears are flowing from one's eyes, one feels distressed and wants to keep crying, but there is belief in the wisdom of Allah ﷻ as opposed

to objecting to His Decree, this is patience upon which Allah ﷻ has promised immeasurable reward.

A sign of such patience is that whenever one experiences any grief, the following is said:

إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

We belong to Allah and to Him we shall return.

Allah ﷻ says regarding those who say these words at times of affliction:

﴿أُولَئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوَاتٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ

وَرَحْمَةٌ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُهْتَدُونَ﴾

Those are the ones upon whom there are blessings from their Lord, and mercy as well; and those are the ones who are on the right path. (2:157)

Therefore, our pious elders have rightly said that patience is equal to a thousand acts of worship and through it a person soars to unimaginable heights of spirituality.

Also, it does not require a major catastrophe or difficulty to occur for one to exercise patience or to recite:

إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

A person encounters many minor things in everyday life which bother a person; one should get into a habit of reading these words on such occasions too.

Sayyidah Umm Salamah ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said:

إِذَا أَصَابَتْ أَحَدَكُمْ مُصِيبَةٌ فَلْيَقُلْ إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

اللَّهُمَّ عِنْدَكَ أَحْتَسِبُ مُصِيبَتِي فَأَجْرُنِي فِيهَا وَأَبْدَلْنِي خَيْرًا مِنْهَا

When an affliction befalls any of you, he should say: We belong to Allah and to Him we shall return. O Allah! With you do I expect reward for my affliction, so reward me for it and replace it for me with something better.¹

A hadith states that the Prophet ﷺ recited *innā li-llāhi wa innā ilayhi rājiʿūn* when a lamp went out.² This shows that one should recite this when faced with even minor troubles, and in this manner, one can earn the reward of patience when encountering the small annoyances we face on a daily basis. A person is pricked by a thorn, one's clothes get caught on something, a person slips, the electricity fails in one's home, one hears of a sad incident, or one loses something; in all such instances one should read *innā li-llāhi wa innā ilayhi rājiʿūn*. One should firmly instil the belief in one's heart that there is divine wisdom behind every unpleasant incident. This is what patience means and one earns perpetual reward for practising it.

Another point to be remembered is that just as shedding tears over some grievous event is not contrary to patience, working to remove the suffering is not contrary to patience either. For example, it is not against the spirit of patience to take medicine when one is ill. Similarly, to look for a job when unemployed does not contradict patience. One should use all of these means and also make *duʿā'* for removal of the particular difficulty. Even groaning due to extreme pain is not against patience. The reality of patience is, as explained above, not to object to or complain about the Decree of Allah ﷻ, and to keep reading *innā li-llāhi wa innā ilayhi rājiʿūn*.

This appears to be a small action, but the reward which is recorded with Allah ﷻ is unimaginable at this moment.

1 Muslim (918) and Abū Dāwūd (3119).

2 Abū Dāwūd, *Kitāb al-Marāsil* (402).

‘Beginning all Important Work with *Bismi-llāh*

To begin any important work with *bismi-llah* (with the name of Allah) is a salient feature of Islam and is part of the identity of a Muslim. The Prophet ﷺ said:

كُلُّ أَمْرٍ ذِي بَالٍ لَمْ يُبْدَأْ فِيهِ بِبِسْمِ اللَّهِ فَهُوَ آتِرٌ

Every important work not started with *bismi-llāh* is imperfect.¹

It is a *sunnah* (practice) of the Prophet ﷺ to initiate every important work with *bismi-llāh*, so every Muslim should emulate this *sunnah* by making a habit of it. *Bismi-llāh* should be recited when entering and leaving the house; when mounting and disembarking one’s mount or vehicle; when one’s vehicle falters or if one stumbles himself; on entering and leaving the mosque; before entering the lavatory and immediately upon coming out of it; before eating and drinking, before dressing and putting on shoes; before reading a book, writing a letter or any written piece; before starting one’s daily work; before conducting a new transaction; in fact, every change of state should be preceded with *bismi-llāh*. Likewise, women too should say *bismi-llāh* before cooking; when adding any ingredients to the food; on taking out the food; when sewing or knitting any item of clothing; and when dressing a child.² Children should also be taught to say *bismi-llāh*.

1 Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghḍādī in *Al-Jāmi‘ li-Akhlāq ar-Rāwī* (1232) with reference to *bismi-llāh*. Abū Dāwūd (4808), Ibn Mājah (1894), Ibn Ḥibbān (2796) and others have narrated the same, but with “praise” (*ḥamd*) in place of *bismi-llāh*.

2 This is not specific to women, but only mentioned with particular reference to

If one habitually begins one's day-to-day activities with *bismi-llāh*, it will become an effortless action, which with a little effort, will lead to a continuous increase in good deeds in one's record. In fact, those actions which seem mundane will turn into acts of worship by beginning them with *bismi-llāh*.

Muslims and non-Muslims both carry out worldly activities, but there is a world of difference between the two. The unbeliever does all of this in absentmindedness, whilst a Muslim begins everything with *bismi-llāh*. In essence, he is affirming that nothing can be accomplished without ability from Allah ﷻ. Because he affirms this, his worldly acts also become religious and acts of worship.

Reading the book on the virtues of *bismi-llāh*, entitled *Bismi-llāh ke Faḍā'il awr Masā'il*, authored by my respected father Mawlānā Muftī Muḥammad Shafī' ﷺ, will be beneficial too.

them as they generally carry out these tasks. [Trans. note]

To Initiate Greetings of *Salām*

Greeting Muslims with *salām* is another salient sign of Islam and is part of a Muslim's identity. Many of its virtues have been mentioned in hadiths, in particular the reward of initiating *salām* to a fellow Muslim. A hadith states, "The closest person to Allah is one who greets them with *salām* first."¹

Greeting with *salām* is not restricted to one's acquaintances, but rather there is great reward for saying *salām* to people we are not acquainted with but know to be Muslims. The Prophet ﷺ was asked which actions are best for a Muslim. He ﷺ mentioned a number of actions, among which he said, "To greet with *salām* those whom you know and those whom you do not know."²

It is reported about Sayyidunā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar ؓ that sometimes he would leave his house only to say *salām* to any Muslim he would come across and to thus increase his good deeds.³

The correct interpretation of this hadith, however, is that one should spread *salām* abundantly, not that a person greets everyone he sees, as this is not possible and may cause inconvenience to others.⁴

It is also a *sunnah* to say *salām* to one's family when entering the house. The Prophet ﷺ said to his special attendant, Sayyidunā Anas ؓ, "O my son! When you go to your family, say *salām*; it will be a blessing for you and your family."⁵

1 Abū Dāwūd (5197) and Tirmidhi (2694).

2 Bukhāri (12) and Muslim (39).

3 Mālik, *Al-Muwatta'* (2763).

4 Ibn al-Mufliḥ, *Al-Ādāb ash-Shar'īyyah*, 1:396.

5 Tirmidhi (2698).

Even when entering an empty house, one should say *salām* with the intention of greeting the angels. On such occasions, Sayyidunā ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar رضي الله عنه used to say:

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْنَا وَعَلَى عِبَادِ اللَّهِ الصَّالِحِينَ

Peace be upon us and upon Allah's righteous servants.¹

A hadith also encourages the greeting of *salām* to be said clearly so it is clearly understood.² Also, although the *sunnah* of *salām* is fulfilled by saying *as-salāmu ‘alaykum*, adding *wa rahmatu-llāhi wa barakātuh* is more rewarding.

Sayyidunā ‘Imrān ibn al-Ḥuṣayn رضي الله عنه relates that a man came to the Prophet ﷺ and said: *as-salāmu ‘alaykum*, to which the Prophet ﷺ responded. The man then sat down, and the Prophet ﷺ said, "Ten" (i.e. the person who greeted earned ten rewards). Another man came and said: *as-salāmu ‘alaykum wa rahmatu-llāhi*, to which the Prophet ﷺ responded. The man then sat down, and the Prophet ﷺ said, "Twenty" (i.e. the man had earned twenty rewards). A third man came and said: *as-salāmu ‘alaykum wa rahmatu-llāhi wa barakātuh*, to which the Prophet ﷺ responded. The man then sat down, and the Prophet ﷺ said, "Thirty" (i.e. he had earned thirty rewards).³

It should be borne in mind that *salām* is a *sunnah* when the person being greeted is not busy and one feels greeting him with *salām* will not disturb him. If there is fear his work will be disturbed by greeting him, if for example a person is engaged in reciting the Qur’an, *dhikr*, nursing the sick, studying, or engaged in anything which will be impacted if he is distracted, one should not say *salām* until he has finished.

Similarly, it is not right to either say *salām* to somebody who is

1 Ibn Abi Shaybah (26353).

2 Bukhārī, *Al-Adab al-Mufrad* (1005), on the authority of Sayyidunā ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar رضي الله عنه.

3 Abū Dawūd (5195) and Tirmidhī (2689).

addressing a congregation or to those listening to him. However, if a group of people are sitting quietly and somebody passes by or intends to join the gathering, he should say *salām* once and any person among the gathering can respond. In this manner, the *sunnah* of saying *salām* and the obligation of responding will be fulfilled.

To initiate *salām* is a *sunnah*, but to respond is obligatory; whoever does not reply to it will be sinful.

Also, when a person receives a letter in which *as-salāmu ‘alaykum* is written, one should verbally respond upon reading it.¹

1 Nawawi in his commentary of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (under hadith. 2160).

II

Visiting the Sick

Visiting the sick is an act of great reward and among the rights of one Muslim over another, as taught by the Prophet ﷺ. Some jurists have regarded it as obligatory (*wājib*), but the correct view is that it is a *sunnah*.

Sayyidunā 'Iḥwān ᷺ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said, "When a Muslim visits his sick Muslim brother, he remains in the garden of Paradise."¹

Sayyidunā 'Alī ᷺ said that he heard the Prophet ﷺ say, "No Muslim visits an ill Muslim in the morning except that seventy thousand angels pray for him until evening, and if he goes to visit him in the evening, seventy thousand angels pray for him until the morning, and he is granted a garden in Paradise."²

It was an established practice of the Prophet ﷺ to visit the ill among his acquaintances, when he came to know of their being poorly.

The etiquette of visiting the sick is to put one's hand on the sick person's forehead and inquire regarding his illness, as long as putting the hand on his forehead does not cause him inconvenience. If there is fear it will inconvenience him, one should neither place one's hand on his forehead nor ask him regarding his condition. It is sufficient in such situations to ask those who are looking after him.

The Prophet ﷺ taught the following *du'ā'* to be recited seven times when visiting the sick:

1 Muslim (2568).

2 Tirmidhi (969).

أَسْأَلُ اللَّهَ الْعَظِيمَ رَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ أَنْ يَشْفِيكَ

I ask Allah the Tremendous, Lord of
the Great Throne, to cure you.

He further said that Allah ﷻ will cure the sick person through this *du'ā'*, provided his time of death has not come.¹

The Prophet ﷺ also used to recite the following *du'ā'* regularly when visiting the sick:

أَذْهِبِ الْبَأْسَ رَبَّ النَّاسِ وَاشْفِ أَنْتَ الشَّافِي
لَا شِفَاءَ إِلَّا شِفَاؤُكَ شِفَاءً لَا يُعَادِرُ سَقَمًا

Remove the discomfort, O Lord of mankind, and grant cure,
for You are the One who cures. There is no cure besides Your
cure, [so grant] a cure that does not leave any trace of illness.²

Also, the Prophet ﷺ used to say the following when visiting the sick:

لَا بَأْسَ، طَهُورٌ إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ

No harm, but purification, *in shā' Allah*.³

It should always be borne in mind that more emphasis has been placed on the visitor not causing the sick even the slightest trouble, rather than the actual virtues of visiting the sick. There is a great risk of sin, as opposed to being an act of reward, if one's visit becomes a means of inconveniencing the sick person or those looking after him.

Therefore, if visiting the patient is detrimental to his health, it is not permissible to insist upon this. In such cases, returning after asking about the patient's condition from outside the patient's room

1 Abū Dāwūd (3106) and Tirmidhi (2083).

2 Abū Dāwūd (3883).

3 Bukhārī (5656).

and making *du'ā'* for him will secure the reward of visiting the sick. Similarly, there is no need to unduly notify the patient of one's visit. If the intention is to make the patient happy, those looking after the patient should be asked to inform him of one's visit when convenient and that one was making *du'ā'* for him.

It has also been emphasised in hadiths that the visitor should not sit for too long with the patient, but rather for a short time, as the patient is usually inconvenienced by lengthy visits. However, if the patient wants a close friend to stay with him for comfort, there is no harm for such individuals to stay longer.

It is also very important to choose the right time to visit. It is incorrect to visit a patient when his rest or other engagements will be disrupted. Hence, one should find out beforehand when it will be appropriate to visit.

Participation in Funeral (Janāzah) Ṣalah & Burial

Great virtues have been mentioned in hadiths for participating in the funeral (*janāzah*) ṣalāh of a Muslim and also attending the burial at the graveyard. In fact, the Prophet ﷺ deemed it the right of a Muslim that his funeral prayer be performed and the bier accompanied to the graveyard. Although performing the funeral prayer and attending the burial is a collective obligation (*farḍ kifāyah*)—meaning the obligation is lifted from the whole community if a few people perform it and others will not be sinful for not participating—they are nonetheless acts of great reward.

Sayyidunā Abū Hurayrah ؓ narrates that Allah's Messenger ﷺ said, "Whoever prays the funeral prayer will have one carat (*qirāt*) [of gold], and whoever follows it until it is buried will have two carats, one of them—or the smallest of them—being equal to Uḥud."¹

Scholars say that the bounties of Paradise and the rewards one will receive there can neither be conceived in this world nor possibly be put into words. Thus, the Prophet ﷺ would use expressions which were commonly used in worldly matters, to make it easier to understand.

In light of this, the Prophet ﷺ referred to the reward for attending a funeral as a carat, a measure of gold and silver. However, the Prophet ﷺ added that it should not be understood as a carat in its mundane meaning, but rather it will be as great as Mount Uḥud. In summary, the reward of performing the funeral prayer is separate to the reward of attending the burial; both are acts of great reward.

¹ See footnote 1.

In another narration, the following has been mentioned: "Whoever [before the funeral is raised] goes to the house of the deceased will receive one carat. If he then follows the funeral, he will receive another carat. Then, if he performs the funeral prayer, he will receive another carat. And if he waits till the burial is completed, he will receive another carat."¹

This means that each of these four actions is a good deed in itself and each carries a separate immense reward.

Sayyidunā ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar ؓ was not aware of this hadith. When he came to know of it from Sayyidunā Abū Hurayrah ؓ and Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah ؓ also confirmed it, he said remorsefully, "We have missed out on many carats."²

Many people participate in the funeral prayer as a formality, but do not know how to perform it properly. One should make a little effort and learn how to perform it. Also, one should participate in the *ṣalāh* for Allah's Pleasure, not merely to fulfil a formality. This will be a means of great reward, *in shā' Allāh*. As already mentioned, it is a separate good deed to accompany the funeral after the prayers and attend the burial, and according to Mujāhid, this is better than performing supererogatory (*nafl*) prayers.³

1 Bazzar (8386).

2 See footnote 1.

3 ‘Abd ar-Razzāq (6274).

Consoling the Bereaved

It is also an act of great reward to console the family of the deceased and to comfort them through one's words and actions. Sayyidunā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said:

مَنْ عَزَّى مُصَابًا فَلَهُ مِثْلُ أَجْرِ فَاعِلِهِ

One who consoles an afflicted person
will receive the same reward.¹

It should be noted that some people consider condolence to mean expressing one's grief, and, instead of comforting the bereaved person's family, they actually cause them more grief by reminding them of their affliction.

Condolence (*ta'ziyah*) actually means 'to console'. Hence, it includes every method which provides solace to the grieving, consoles their hearts and reduces their feeling of anguish. Furthermore, the reward for this is not specific to death. In fact, the abovementioned hadith states reward for consoling any afflicted person. Thus, consoling a person afflicted in any way is a means of earning the same reward as the person suffering the difficulty or misfortune.

¹ Tirmidhī (1073).

14

Love for the Sake of Allah

Loving someone for Allah's Pleasure is also a great deed, for which many rewards have been promised. Loving for the sake of Allah ﷻ means one does not hold any ulterior motive, but rather one loves someone because he is more religious and pious, or he possesses knowledge of the religion, or is busy in the service of the religion, or because loving them has been commanded by Allah, such as one's parents. Such love has been referred to as "love for Allah (*ḥubb fi-llāh*)" in hadiths.

One hadith states that the Prophet ﷺ said, "Allah shall ask on the Day of Judgment, 'Where are those who loved one another for the sake of My Greatness? Today, I shall shade them when there is no shade besides My shade.'"¹

In another hadith, it is narrated: "On the Day of Judgment, those who had mutual love for the sake of Allah's Greatness shall be on pulpits of light and people will aspiringly marvel at them."²

Abū Idrīs al-Khawlānī, one of the famous Followers (*Ṭābiʿūn*) says he once visited Sayyidunā Muʿādh ibn Jabal ؓ in the Jāmiʿ Mosque of Damascus, and said to him, "By Allah, I love you for the sake of Allah." Sayyidunā Muʿādh ؓ repeatedly asked him to swear by Allah if he truly loved him for His sake. After he answered in the affirmative every time, Sayyidunā Muʿādh ؓ pulled him by his shawl towards himself and said, "Glad tidings! I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ saying that Allah said, 'My Love is assured for those who love each

1 Muslim (2566).

2 Tirmidhī (2390).

other for My sake, who sit with one another for My sake, who visit one other for My sake and spend money on one another for My sake.”¹

Because loving Allah’s righteous servants is actually due to one’s love for Allah ﷻ, it earns the reward of loving Allah ﷻ Himself, and as a result of this love, Allah ﷻ includes this lover among His beloved people.

It is stated in a hadith that a person asked the Prophet ﷺ, “When is the Final Hour?” The Prophet ﷺ asked, “What have you prepared for it?” The man said “Nothing, except that I have love for Allah and for His Messenger.” The Prophet ﷺ said “You shall be [on that Day] with whom you love.” Sayyidunā Anas ؓ, the narrator of the hadith, says that we have never been pleased with anything as much as with these words of the Prophet ﷺ. He further said, “I love the Prophet ﷺ, Abū Bakr ؓ and ‘Umar ؓ, and because of my love for them, I hope to be with them, even though I have not performed actions like theirs.”²

There are many hadiths of the same import, which show that loving someone for the sake of Allah ﷻ is an act of great virtue. Through this action, Allah ﷻ grants a person the ability to do good deeds in this life and will also bless him with the company of the righteous in the Hereafter.

Hence, one should love good people for the sake of Allah ﷻ and with the intention that Allah ﷻ will enable one to good and become pleased.

أَحِبُّ الصَّالِحِينَ وَلَسْتُ مِنْهُمْ لَعَلَّ اللَّهَ يَرْزُقُنِي صَالِحًا

I love righteous people, although I am not one of them.

Perhaps Allah will grant me righteousness.

1 Mālik, *Al-Muwatta'* (2744).

2 Bukhārī (3688).

A hadith also states, "When a person loves his brother, he should inform him that he loves him."¹

Sayyidunā Anas narrates that a person was once sitting by the Prophet ﷺ when another person passed by. The seated person said "O Messenger of Allah! I love this man." The Prophet ﷺ said "Have you told him?" The man replied in the negative. The Prophet ﷺ said "Tell him." The man then went to the other and said, "I love you for the sake of Allah." He replied, "May the One for whom you loved me love you!"²

1. Abū Dāwūd (5124) and Tirmidhī (2392).

2. Abū Dāwūd (5125).

Helping a Muslim

Helping a Muslim in an important task, to do it for him or to remove a difficulty of his, are also actions for which the Prophet ﷺ promised great reward.

Sayyidunā ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said,

مَنْ كَانَ فِي حَاجَةٍ أَخِيهِ كَانَ اللَّهُ فِي حَاجَتِهِ، وَمَنْ فَرَّجَ عَنْ
مُسْلِمٍ كُرْبَةً فَرَّجَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ بِهَا كُرْبَةً مِنْ كُرْبِ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ

Whoever remains assisting his brother, Allah will remain assisting him. Whoever removes a Muslim's worry, Allah will remove a worry among the worries of the Day of Judgment in return.¹

Giving someone directions, helping a person to carry something, and all other acts of serving the creation are included in the virtue of this hadith. Those who are of benefit to others are extremely virtuous in the eyes of Allah ﷻ.

A hadith mentions:

خَيْرُ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ

The best of people are those who benefit people.²

1 Bukhārī (2442) and Muslim (2580).

2 Ṭabarānī, *Al-Kabīr* (13646), with slight variation in wording.

Therefore, every opportunity, be it big or small, to serve the creation should be sought out. This is a means of great increase in one's good deeds. Likewise, it is the duty of all Muslims to make every possible effort to protect others from being oppressed.

It is stated in a hadith that the Prophet ﷺ said, "A Muslim is a brother to another Muslim. He does not betray him, lie to him, or desert him."¹

It is stated in another hadith, "No person deserts his Muslim brother, in a situation where his sanctity is being violated and his honour is being tarnished, except that Allah will desert him in a situation he would like help in. No Muslim helps another Muslim, in a situation where his sanctity is being violated and his honour is being tarnished, except that Allah Most Great and Exalted will help him in a situation he would like help in."²

Part of helping a Muslim is to defend him against false allegations or false things being attributed to him. Sayyidunā Abū ad-Dardā' ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said,

مَنْ رَدَّ عَنْ عَرَضِ أَخِيهِ رَدَّ اللَّهُ النَّارَ عَنْ وَجْهِهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ

Whoever defends the honour of his brother, Allah will repel Hellfire from his face on the Day of Judgment.³

1 Tirmidhi (2040). The narration of Muslim (2564) has the wording: "He does not oppress him, desert him or consider him inferior."

2 Abū Dāwūd (4884).

3 Tirmidhi (1931).

Interceding in Permissible Matters

Interceding on behalf of a Muslim in lawful matters is an act of great reward. The Noble Qur'an states:

﴿مَنْ يَشْفَعْ شَفَاعَةً حَسَنَةً يَكُنْ لَهُ نَصِيبٌ مِّنْهَا﴾

Whoever makes a good recommendation, there shall be for him a share from it [in the Hereafter]. (4:85)

The Prophet ﷺ said:

إِشْفَعُوا تُؤْجَرُوا

Intercede, for you shall be rewarded.¹

Once the Prophet ﷺ was seated when a person came and asked him for something. The Prophet ﷺ faced his Companions and said "Intercede, for you shall be rewarded."²

Making a good recommendation (or interceding), whether it proves effective or not, is in itself a good deed. If it has the desired effect, it will hopefully double the reward, *in shā' Allāh*.

But it is important to note that interceding should be for a valid purpose, not for anything unlawful, because interceding for something unlawful is a grave sin. Hence, it is necessary to be certain that the person being recommended is truly deserving of the request being made, and that the matter for which it is being made is permissible.

¹ Abū Dāwūd (5132) and Nasā'ī (2557).

² Bukhāri (6027) and (1432).

Likewise, another point to be noted is that the intercession should not unduly burden the person to whom one is interceding. Firstly, one must check to see if this matter is really within his capacity. If it is beyond his capacity, one should not do so, as it may embarrass the person. And if one is unsure, one should not intercede in a determined manner, but rather clearly state that he should only do so if he is able to.

Even if he is able to comply, he may have a certain procedure or prioritisation code which he follows. In this case, one should not impose one's recommendation, but rather intercede in a manner which does not unduly pressurise him to oppose his procedure.

In this day and age, people have fixed in their minds that interceding is an act of reward, but its rules and etiquette as stipulated by the Shari'ah are disregarded. In particular, very few people consider that the person to whom one is interceding should not be inconvenienced. One should never forget that the Shari'ah has laid down rules and regulations for everything, and it is important they are borne in mind. It is totally impermissible to unduly trouble a Muslim for the sake of helping another.

Concealing the Faults of Others

If a person comes to know of a Muslim's fault, provided there is no fear of harm to another individual, it is an act of great reward to conceal it. Sayyidunā Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said,

لَا يَسْتُرُ عَبْدٌ عَبْدًا فِي الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا سَتَرَهُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ

No servant conceals the faults of another servant in this world except that Allah will conceal his faults on the Day of Judgment.¹

Sayyidunā 'Uqbah ibn 'Āmir رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said,

مَنْ رَأَى عَوْرَةً فَسَتَرَهَا كَانَ كَمَنْ أَحْيَا مَوْءُودَةً

Whoever sees a fault and conceals it is like one who saves a girl from being buried alive.²

Concealing a fault means not mentioning it to others and spreading it. However, it is important to bear the following points in mind:

1. It is not permissible to lie to conceal someone's fault. Hence, if one is asked regarding someone's fault, one should try to avoid answering, but if one is compelled to answer, nothing false should be stated.
2. It is only permissible to conceal a person's fault when its effect is confined to the individual himself. If it is feared it will harm another individual, it will be permissible, in fact rewarding, to inform the

1 Muslim (2590).

2 Abū Dāwūd (4891), Hākim (8162) and Bukhāri in *Al-Adab al-Mufrad* (758).

particular person. However, the intention must be to protect the other individual, not merely to disgrace this person. For example, there is a person who has a habit of usurping people's wealth deceitfully or being disregarding of paying back loans, and undiscerning people end up being harmed by dealing with him. In this case, there is no harm in informing those who are at fear of being harmed. Likewise, if a person has proposed to a woman and her family wish to know about him, it is permissible to honestly inform them regarding this individual. However, the intention in all of these cases should be to protect people from harm.

Similarly, if someone has committed a crime which could spread evil in society, there is no harm in bringing it to the attention of the relevant authorities, but rather this will be a means of earning reward. However, this is provided the intention is social rectification, not to take vengeance for a personal matter or to vent one's enmity.

Guiding towards Good

Encouraging others to do good is extremely meritorious. If a person is encouraged to do good due to one's efforts, the person who encouraged him will receive the same reward as the doer.

Sayyidunā Abū Mas'ūd al-Anṣārī رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "Whoever guides towards good will receive the same reward as the one who does it."¹

Furthermore, if this is done collectively, whereby many are encouraged to do a good deed and they consequently practise it, the person who called towards it will receive everyone's reward.

Sayyidunā Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said,

مَنْ دَعَا إِلَى هُدًى كَانَ لَهُ مِنَ الْأَجْرِ مِثْلُ أُجُورِ مَنْ تَبِعَهُ لَا يَنْقُصُ ذَلِكَ مِنْ أُجُورِهِمْ شَيْئًا وَمَنْ دَعَا إِلَى ضَلَالَةٍ كَانَ عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْإِثْمِ مِثْلُ آثَامِ مَنْ تَبِعَهُ لَا يَنْقُصُ ذَلِكَ مِنْ أُوزَارِهِمْ شَيْئًا

Whoever calls towards guidance will receive the same reward as those who follow him, without this decreasing anything from their reward. Whoever calls towards misguidance will incur the same sin as those who follow him, without this decreasing anything from their sin.²

This reward is gained if the person practises what the caller towards

¹ Muslim (1893).

² Muslim (2674).

good was advising. However, even if the person does not practise it, one will receive the reward for sincere advice nonetheless, as the hadith states:

أَمْرٌ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ صَدَقَةٌ وَنَهْيٌ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ صَدَقَةٌ

Enjoining good is charity and forbidding evil is charity.¹

Therefore, a person should avail of every opportunity to teach something good and not let such opportunities be wasted. However, it is important to bear in mind that one should adopt a method which does not disgrace or hurt the feelings of the person listening. One should neither rebuke publicly, nor should the approach be arrogant and condescending. Instead, a person should be told in privacy, with a soft tone that shows a heartfelt concern and wishing well for others. Also, a suitable time should be chosen in which the mind of the listener is not preoccupied. In short, it is extremely important to be mindful of a wise and sincere approach.

The Qur'an states:

﴿ادْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ﴾

Invite [people] to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good counsel. (16:125)

¹ Muslim (720).

Charity

Abundantly spending in charity is also an effective way to increase one's good deeds, have one's sins forgiven and protect oneself against the punishment of Hellfire. The Qur'an and Sunnah mention many virtues for spending in charity and different avenues of good, and these virtues can easily be compiled in a separate book. Shaykh al-Ḥadīth Mawlānā Muḥammad Zakariyyā Kāndhalawī ؒ has written a very comprehensive book on this topic, entitled *Faḍā'il-i-Ṣadaqāt*, which is why there is no need to relate these virtues in detail. Whoever wishes to read further can refer to it.

The point we wish to highlight here is that it is not necessary to spend a large amount to attain the virtues of charity. Every person can gain its virtue by spending according to his ability. If a person only possesses one rupee from which he spends one penny, in the eyes of Allah ﷻ this is no different to a person who possesses one hundred thousand rupees giving a thousand rupees in charity. It is sincerity which is of true value to Allah, and even the minutest amount of charity given sincerely is accepted by Allah ﷻ and secures its many virtues. To this effect the Prophet ﷺ said:

اتَّقُوا النَّارَ وَلَوْ بِشِقِّ تَمْرَةٍ

Protect yourself against Hellfire, even
if it be through half a date.¹

This means that if a person has nothing to give in charity besides

1: Bukhārī (1417) and Muslim (10:6).

half a date and he gives this to someone in need, even this amount is enough to gain the virtue of charity and to have one's sins forgiven. It is clear from this hadith that those who are struggling financially should not consider themselves deprived of the virtue of charity, but rather they can also gain a share of its reward by giving even a very small amount according to their ability.

Furthermore, some people become totally absentminded regarding charity once they have discharged their zakat and do not consider giving even a penny on top. In fact, they try to cover spending on all different avenues of good through their zakat alone. This is inappropriate. Zakat is an obligation which can only be spent on certain specific recipients and there are many acts of good for which zakat cannot be used, such as giving money to the mosque. Therefore, a person should spend money, besides one's zakat, on different avenues of good.

For this purpose, it was a practice of the pious elders to set aside a percentage of their wealth for charity. Whenever some money came into their possession, they would take this particular amount out and place it in a bag or envelope. Hakīm al-Ummah Mawlānā Ashraf `Alī Thānawī ؒ used to set aside a fifth of his earnings in this manner, whilst others took out a tenth or twentieth. A benefit of this method is that a person does not need to ponder when the need to spend in charity arises; the envelope itself will keep reminding a person to find a good cause to spend on. Moreover, it does not become burdensome to arrange for money when required and a person can regularly spend in charity with great ease.

If every person were to specify a certain percentage of his wealth in this manner, taking his financial situation into consideration, it would become a continuous method to earn reward. And it is not necessary to fix a fifth or a tenth; whatever little amount a person can set aside according to his circumstances is excellent.

Also, the main intention behind giving charity should be the

Pleasure of Allah ﷻ. Nonetheless, Allah ﷻ also grants abundantly in this life to those who regularly give in charity. A hadith states that charity does not decrease one's wealth,¹ which means Allah ﷻ blesses the sustenance of the one who is charitable.

¹ Muslim (2588).

20

Forgiving

If someone has been harmed by another person, he is allowed to take vengeance, within the bounds dictated by the Shari'ah. However, if he were to forgive instead of taking vengeance, Allah ﷻ would reward him immensely. The Noble Qur'an states:

﴿وَلْيَعْفُوا وَلْيَصْفَحُوا أَلَا تُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ﴾

And they should forgive and forego. Do you not like that Allah forgives you? (24:22)

Which person on the face of this earth has never committed any wrong? And every person wants Allah ﷻ to forgive him. Thus, if someone has been wronged by another individual, one should think that I should forgive him, just as I wish for Allah ﷻ to forgive me. The verse also indicates that whoever adopts forgiving others, it is hoped that Allah ﷻ will forgive his sins too, *in shā' Allāh*. This has also been established in a number of hadiths.

Sayyidunā Abū ad-Dardā' ﷺ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said,

مَا مِنْ رَجُلٍ يُصَابُ بِشَيْءٍ فِي جَسَدِهِ، فَيَتَصَدَّقُ بِهِ
إِلَّا رَفَعَهُ اللَّهُ بِهَا دَرَجَةً، وَحَطَّ عَنْهُ بِهَا حَطِيئَةٌ

No person is afflicted with any bodily harm and then forgives, except that Allah will raise him in rank and forgive him a sin thereby.

It is narrated in *Jāmi' at-Tirmidhī* that someone broke the tooth of

another person and the aggrieved had come to Sayyidunā Mu^ʿāwiyah رضي الله عنه to take vengeance. Sayyidunā Abū ad-Dardā' رضي الله عنه was also there and related the above hadith to him, whereafter this person decided not to take vengeance and forgave the assailant instead.¹

A point to consider is that if the aggrieved does not forgive but takes vengeance instead, by inflicting the same pain upon the assailant, what benefit will this achieve? Alternatively, if he inflicted a pain which cannot be avenged, not forgiving the assailant will mean he will be punished in the Hereafter. Again, one should contemplate what possible benefit is there for this individual that the assailant is punished in the Hereafter? On the contrary, forgiving him will mean the sins of the aggrieved are forgiven, he will be saved from the punishment of Jahannam, and Allah سبحانه will elevate his rank. Therefore, it is only logical that a person secure this virtue by forgiving others.

It should also be remembered that forgiving others only means not to take vengeance in this life or the Hereafter, and a person will attain this virtue if he forgives in this manner. However, it is not necessary for his heart to become totally clear towards this person, as this is not within the control of the individual. This primarily depends on the future behaviour of the assailant. Thus, if a person's heart is still reserved towards this individual and establishing a healthy relationship with him is not possible, a person will still attain the virtue of forgiving him, *in shā' Allāh*. This is on the condition that he decides not to take vengeance and has limited the relationship to the fulfilment of basic rights, such as responding to his greetings of *salām*.

Likewise, forgiving others does not mean a person should not take precautionary measures against being harmed by this person in future. If there is fear this person will reoffend in future, taking steps to ensure one is not harmed again does not go against the spirit of forgiveness. In such cases, one should forgive the previous grievance,

¹ Tirmidhi (1393) and Ibn Mājah (2693).

and seek help from people in authority against his harm in future. The virtue of forgiving will be attained even in such instances, *in shā' Allāh*.

And whenever the desire to avenge oneself stirs within a person's heart, he should think that the Prophet ﷺ never took revenge for himself.¹ Even when the unbelievers hurled stones at the Prophet ﷺ and he ﷺ bled profusely as a result, the words on the blessed tongue of the Prophet ﷺ were:

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِقَوْمِي، فَإِنَّهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

O Allah, forgive my people, as they do not know.²

1 Bukhārī (3560) and Muslim (2327).

2 Muslim (1792).

Being Soft-Spoken

Being kind to others is most beloved to Allah ﷻ and extremely rewarding. Sayyidah 'Āishah ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ رَفِيقٌ يُحِبُّ الرَّفْقَ، وَيُعْطِي عَلَى الرَّفْقِ مَا لَا
يُعْطِي عَلَى الْعُنْفِ، وَمَا لَا يُعْطِي عَلَى مَا سِوَاهُ

Allah is kind and loves kindness. He grants upon kindness what He does not grant upon harshness and what He does not grant upon anything besides it. ¹

In another hadith, Sayyidah 'Āishah ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said,

إِنَّ الرَّفْقَ لَا يَكُونُ فِي شَيْءٍ إِلَّا زَانَهُ
وَلَا يُنَزَعُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا شَانَهُ

Kindness is not found in anything except that it adorns it, and it is not removed from anything except that it tarnishes it. ²

Being soft-spoken means a person refrains from using harsh words or adopting a harsh approach due to being overcome with anger. One should speak to others with kind words and a soft tone. If there is a need to correct a person or express a difference of opinion with him,

¹ Muslim (2593).

² Muslim (2594).

one should adopt an approach which embodies sincerity, humbleness and a heartfelt concern, as opposed to abrasiveness and bitterness. If it is necessary to express one's anger towards a junior to rectify him, it should be measured according to need and with balance.

Kindness also includes refraining from constantly quarrelling and arguing with people over trivial issues, and keeping a good opinion of others as much as possible. Even when buying and selling, a person should not become argumentative and stubborn in negotiating a price or similar matters. If the transaction is reasonable, it should be completed, or otherwise left. However, it is incorrect to compel the other party to accept one's offer and to force them.

Sayyidunā Jābir رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said,

رَحِمَ اللَّهُ عَبْدًا سَمَحًا إِذَا بَاعَ، سَمَحًا
إِذَا اشْتَرَى، سَمَحًا إِذَا اقْتَضَى

May Allah have mercy on a person who is lenient when he sells, lenient when he buys and lenient when he demands.¹

Sayyidunā Hudhayfah رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said, "One of Allah's servants whom He had given wealth will be brought to Him. He will ask him, 'What actions did you do in the world?' He will say, 'O my Lord! You gave me wealth. I used to trade with people, and one aspect of my character was to forgive. I used to be lenient with the wealthy and grant respite to the poor. Allah will say, 'I am more worthy of this than you. [Addressing the angels He will say:] Forgive my servant.'"²

Sayyidunā Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said,

1 Bukhārī (2076).

2 Muslim (1560).

مَنْ أَنْظَرَ مُعْسِرًا أَوْ وَضَعَ عَنْهُ أَظْلَهُ اللَّهُ
فِي ظِلِّهِ يَوْمَ لَا ظِلَّ إِلَّا ظِلُّهُ

Whoever gives respite to a poor person or reduces [his debt] for him, Allah will shade him [under the Throne ('Arsh)] on the day there shall be no shade besides His.¹

Sayyidunā Abū Qatādah رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said,

مَنْ سَرَّهُ أَنْ يُنَجِّيَهُ اللَّهُ مِنْ كَرْبِ يَوْمِ
الْقِيَامَةِ فَلْيُنْظِرْ مُعْسِرًا أَوْ يَضَعْ عَنْهُ

Whoever it pleases that Allah should save him from the anxieties of the Day of Judgment should alleviate the difficulty of a person in difficulty or reduce his debt.²

1 Tirmidhī (1306).

2 Muslim (1563).

22

Reconciliation

If there is a dispute between two Muslims, it is an act of immense reward to reconcile between them. The Noble Qur'an states:

﴿إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ﴾

All believers are but brothers, therefore seek reconciliation between your two brothers. (49:10)

Another verse states:

﴿فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَصْلِحُوا ذَاتَ بَيْنِكُمْ﴾

So, fear Allah, and set your relations right. (8:1)

It is clear from these verses of the Noble Qur'an that reconciling between two Muslims and to work towards bettering their relationship is a very virtuous act. To achieve this objective, one should convey such points to each opposing group which will engender mutual love and dispel any misconceptions. It is even permissible, for this purpose, to say such things as seem untrue at face value. For example, if there is bitterness between two individuals and a person tells one of them that the other is praying for his well-being, intending that he is praying for the forgiveness of Muslims in general under which this individual is also included, this will be permissible.

Regarding this, the Prophet ﷺ said,

لَيْسَ الْكَذَّابُ الَّذِي يُصْلِحُ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ
فَيَنْمِي خَيْرًا أَوْ يَقُولُ خَيْرًا

The liar is not one who reconciles between people
and thus conveys or says a good word.¹

In another hadith, the Prophet ﷺ said,

يَعْدِلُ بَيْنَ الْإِثْنَيْنِ صَدَقَةٌ

Being fair between two people is a charity.²

Creating animosity and enmity between people is an act of *shaytān*,³ and we learn from a hadith that *shaytān* is not pleased with any action more than discord being created between people. A hadith states that he considers it his biggest achievement to create discord between a husband and wife.⁴ On the contrary, to better the relationship between two Muslims by dispelling misconceptions, especially between a husband and wife, is an extremely meritorious act.

This point should be taken into consideration more so by those who live under one roof. Furthermore, the disputes which occur in our communities between daughter-in-law and mother-in-law, and sisters-in-law, are usually due to disregarding this teaching of Islam. One's life in both worlds would become pleasant if this practice were to be implemented.

1 Bukhārī (2692) and Muslim (2605).

2 Bukhārī (2707) and Muslim (1009).

3 Qur'an 17:53.

4 Muslim (2813).

Supporting Orphans & Widows

Supporting orphans and widows is extremely meritorious. The Noble Qur'an states:

﴿وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْيَتَامَىٰ قُلْ إِصْلَاحٌ لَّهُمْ خَيْرٌ﴾

They ask you about the orphans. Say, "To work for their good is good." (2:220)

Sayyidunā Sahl ibn Sa'd رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said,

أَنَا وَكَافِلُ الْيَتِيمِ فِي الْجَنَّةِ هَكَذَا، وَأَشَارَ
بِالسَّبَّابَةِ وَالْوُسْطَىٰ، وَفَرَجَ بَيْنَهُمَا شَيْئًا

I and the one who looks after an orphan will be like this in Paradise. He indicated with his index and middle finger, keeping a small gap in between. ¹

This hadith mentions such an immense reward for looking after an orphan that it is difficult to even imagine. Such a person will be extremely close to the Prophet ﷺ in Paradise. To illustrate this extreme proximity, the Prophet ﷺ indicated that they will be as close as the index and middle finger are to one another.

Sayyidunā Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrates in one hadith that the Prophet ﷺ clarified that regardless of whether the person looking

¹ Bukhārī (5304).

after the orphan is a relative, such as the mother, grandfather or brother, or unrelated, he will be entitled to a reward nonetheless.¹

With respect to widows, Sayyidunā Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

السَّاعِي عَلَى الْأَرْمَلَةِ وَالْمَسْكِينِ كَالْمُجَاهِدِ
فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَأَحْسَبُهُ قَالَ: وَكَالْقَائِمِ الَّذِي
لَا يَفْتُرُ، وَكَالصَّائِمِ الَّذِي لَا يُفْطِرُ

“One who spends on a widow or needy person is like the fighter in Allah’s path.” [The narrator adds:] I think he also said, “And he is like one who constantly stands in *ṣalāh* without a break and like one who fasts continuously.”²

Sayyidunā Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, “The best house among Muslims is one in which an orphan is treated well and the worst house among Muslims is one in which an orphan is mistreated.”³

The Qur’an and Sunnah are replete with virtues of supporting orphans and widows, but it is clear to gauge just from these few sayings how beloved this action is to Allah ﷻ. Therefore, whenever an opportunity to show kindness to an orphan or widow arises, one should avail of it and value whatever good or help we are able to offer. *In shā’ Allāh*, a person will definitely attain a share of these virtues, provided the intention is not to show off or boast of one’s kindness, but solely to attain the Pleasure of Allah ﷻ. And the effect of being sincere is that a person does not consider this action to be futile if he is not thanked for it or if he does not receive anything in return. He should rather think that reward is not from this person, but from Allah ﷻ.

1 Muslim (2983).

2 Bukhārī (6007) and Muslim (2286).

3 Ibn Mājah (3679).

Spending on One's Family

Every person worries about providing for his family. Besides a few insensitive people, the financial struggle of almost every person is solely to ensure his family can live a life of comfort and peace of mind. However, very few people know that spending on the lawful needs of one's family is an act of great reward.

Sayyidunā Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said, "A dinar which you have spent in Allah's cause, a dinar which you have spent to free a slave, a dinar which you gave in charity to a poor person, and a dinar which you spent upon your family; the greatest of them in reward is the one you spent on your family."¹

In this hadith, the Prophet ﷺ declared spending upon one's family as more virtuous than spending on other causes. The reason behind this is that spending on one's family is an obligation whereas other causes are voluntary, and it is obvious how the reward for an obligatory act is greater than that of a voluntary act. We also learn from this that spending on one's family is greater in reward when one's family members are in need. But if their needs have already been fulfilled adequately, spending on others besides them will be more rewarding.

The Mother of the Believers (*Umm al-Mu'minin*) Sayyidah Umm Salamah رضي الله عنها asked the Prophet ﷺ if she will be rewarded for spending on her sons from her previous marriage to Sayyidunā Abū Salamah رضي الله عنه; they are her own son after all and she cannot just abandon them. The Prophet ﷺ replied, "Yes, you will be rewarded for what you spend on them."²

1 Muslim (995).

2 Bukhārī (1467) and Muslim (1001).

Sayyidunā Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqās ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said:

إِنَّكَ لَنْ تُنْفِقَ نَفَقَةً تَبْغِي بِهَا وَجْهَ اللَّهِ إِلَّا أُجِرْتَ
بِهَا، حَتَّى مَا تَجْعَلُ فِي فِي امْرَأَتِكَ

You do not spend anything whereby you seek the Pleasure of Allah except that you will be rewarded for it, even the morsel you place in your wife's mouth.¹

It is clear from these hadiths that if a person spends on the lawful needs of his family, with the intention of complying with Allah's order to fulfil their rights and to please Him, he will gain the reward of charity for whatever he spends on them.

Consider the limitless kindness of Allah ﷻ; an action which a person does out of his own desire in any case becomes a great act of reward that surpasses the reward of spending in other causes, simply by adjusting one's perspective slightly. Therefore, a person should merrily spend in fulfilling the lawful needs of his family, for the sake of Allah ﷻ, and not be miserly and tight-fisted in this regard.

¹ Bukhārī (56) and Muslim (1268).

Good Conduct with Parents

The Qur'an and Sunnah have placed great emphasis on being good with one's parents. Among fellow humans, parents have the greatest rights. The Noble Qur'an has enjoined good conduct with parents in numerous places. Allah ﷻ says:

﴿وَاعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا﴾

Worship Allah, and do not associate with Him anything, and be good to parents. (4:36)

Elsewhere, He says:

﴿وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حُسْنًا﴾

We have instructed man to do good to his parents. (29:8)

Sayyidunā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd ؓ narrates that he asked the Prophet ﷺ what action was most beloved to Allah. The Prophet ﷺ replied, "Performing prayer at its correct time." He asked, "Then what?" The Prophet ﷺ replied, "Being kind to one's parents." He further asked, "Then what?" He replied, "Performing jihad in Allah's cause."

Sayyidunā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Amr ؓ narrates that a person came to the Prophet ﷺ and expressed his desire to participate in a jihad expedition, for the Pleasure of Allah ﷻ and to attain reward. The Prophet ﷺ asked, "Are your parents alive?" He replied, "Yes, they

1 Bukhārī (7534) and Muslim (85).

are alive." The Prophet ﷺ said, "Go and serve them well." In another narration, he said, "Perform jihad by serving them." ¹

We learn from these hadiths that if one's parents are in need of being served, provided performing jihad does not become an obligation upon every individual (*farḍ 'ayn*), serving them is more virtuous than participating in jihad. Most Muslims know about Uways al-Qarnī ؓ, a resident of Yemen who wished to visit the Prophet ﷺ, but was instructed by the Prophet ﷺ not to come but to serve his mother instead who was in need of being looked after. Consequently, he was unable to meet the Prophet ﷺ. However, he was granted such a lofty status by Allah ﷻ for serving his mother that eminent Companions ؓ would request him to make *du'ā'* for them. When he came to the blessed city of Madīnah during the caliphate of Sayyidunā 'Umar ؓ, Sayyidunā 'Umar ؓ went to meet him with great enthusiasm and to seek his prayers.²

Good conduct with one's parents is not usually an action which requires great effort, as a person is naturally disposed to loving his parents. The heart is by its nature inclined to serve them and be kind to them. On the contrary, parents do not like to extract difficult service from their children, due to their parental compassion towards them. A relatively small amount of service is enough to please them and earn their *du'ā'*s. Furthermore, Allah ﷻ has made this task so easy that according to one hadith, a person can earn the reward of Hajj by looking at one's parents lovingly.³ In short, a person can amass an abundant provision of rewards in his record by loving, obeying and serving one's parents.

This is why the Prophet ﷺ said, "May that person be disgraced, may that person be disgraced, may that person be disgraced, who finds one or both of his parents in old age but they do not enter

1 Bukhāri (3004) and Muslim (2549).

2 Muslim (2542).

3 Al-Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab al-Iman* (7856).

Paradise." ' This means that it is not difficult to earn Paradise for a person whose parents are old. Such a person can easily enter Paradise by loving them and serving them, but one who totally disregards this deserves to be disgraced.

Even among the parents, Allah ﷻ has made the mother's right to be served greater. Sayyidunâ Abû Hurayrah ؓ narrates that a person came to the Prophet ﷺ and asked, "O Messenger of Allah! Who is most deserving of my good conduct?" The Prophet ﷺ replied, "Your mother." He asked, "Then who?" He replied, "Your mother." Again he asked, "Then who?" He replied, "Your mother." When he asked a fourth time, the Prophet ﷺ replied, "Your father."²

On the basis of this hadith, scholars state that the mother's right is three times greater than that of the father. The reason for this is obviously because the difficulties borne by the mother in raising the child are not borne by the father; the mother's difficulties have been specifically mentioned in the Noble Qur'an. Secondly, the mother is generally more in need of being served than the father. For this reason, Allah ﷻ has given precedence to serving the mother.

Serving one's parents is among the basic duties of the children in all circumstances. However, the Qur'an and Sunnah place even more emphasis on serving and being kind to them when they become old and weak. The Noble Qur'an states:

﴿وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا إِمَّا يَبُلُغَنَّ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا أُفٍّ وَلَا تَنْهَرُهُمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا—وَإِخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيَانِي صَغِيرًا﴾

1 Muslim (2551).

2 Bukhārī (5971) and Muslim (2548).

Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and do good to parents. If any one of them or both of them reach old age, do not say to them: "uff" [a word or expression of anger or contempt] and do not scold them, and address them with respectful words, and submit yourself before them in humility out of compassion, and say, "My Lord, be merciful to them as they have brought me up in my childhood." (17:23-24)

The reason why more emphasis has been placed on serving one's parents in old age is because they are usually unable to benefit their children, be it financially or physically, once they are at this stage. Some self-centred people neglect them at this time. Furthermore, at times the parents become very irritable in old age and begin saying unpleasant things. The Noble Qur'an draws our attention towards remembering in such instances how the parents worked tirelessly to raise their children from infancy and bore with so many of their children's demands. Hence, it is now the duty of the children to bear with the demands of the parents and be patient with their unpleasantness, not allowing for any deficiency in kindness toward them.

At times, people neglect serving their parents and being good to them during their lifetime, but are regretful after their demise that they did not serve them whilst they were alive and that they have now lost this opportunity. Therefore, one should value this great fortune whilst they are still alive.

Nonetheless, attaining the virtue of kindness to one's parents is still possible even after their demise. Sayyidunā Abū Usayd رضي الله عنه narrates that they were once sitting with the Prophet ﷺ when a person from the Banū Salamah tribe came to him and asked, "O Messenger of Allah! Is there any remaining act of kindness towards my parents which I can show them after their demise?" The Prophet ﷺ said,

نَعْمَ، الصَّلَاةُ عَلَيْهِمَا، وَالِاسْتِغْفَارُ لَهُمَا، وَإِنْفَادُ

عَهْدِهِمَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمَا، وَصِلَةُ الرَّجِمِ الَّتِي لَا
تُوصَلُ إِلَّا بِهِمَا، وَإِكْرَامُ صَدِيقَيْهِمَا

Yes. Making *du'ā'* for them, seeking forgiveness on their behalf, fulfilling their promises, maintaining ties of kinship which can only be reached through them, and honouring their friends.¹

In this hadith, the Prophet ﷺ taught methods one can practise throughout his life to attain the virtue of kindness towards one's deceased parents.

¹ Abu Dāwūd (5142).

Good Conduct with Friends & Relatives of One's Parents

Just as good conduct with one's parents is an act of great reward, good conduct with friends and relatives of one's parents is also very virtuous. Sayyidunā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said:

إِنَّ أَبْرَّ الْبِرِّ أَنْ يَصِلَ الرَّجُلُ وَدَّ أَبِيهِ

The greatest act of righteousness is that a person maintains ties with those beloved to his father.¹

'Abdullāh ibn Dinār رضي الله عنه narrates that his teacher, Sayyidunā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه was once travelling to Makkah. He was riding a camel, but had taken a donkey along too. Whenever he would get tired of riding the camel, he would ride on the donkey for a while. He met a Bedouin on the way. Sayyidunā Ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه asked him his name and his father's name. After he replied, Sayyidunā Ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه gave him his donkey, and also removed his turban and gifted it to him. The companions of Sayyidunā Ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه asked why he had given him such expensive items when Bedouins are generally satisfied with much smaller items. He replied, "His father was my father's friend, and I heard the Prophet ﷺ saying, 'Among the greatest acts of righteousness is for a person to maintain ties with those beloved to his father.'"²

Thus, one of the best ways to increase one's record of good deeds is to maintain ties with friends and relatives of one's parents, and to treat them well.

¹ Muslim (2552).

² Muslim (2552).

27

Good Relations between Husband & Wife

For the husband and wife to treat each other well, take each other's needs into consideration, meet one another cheerfully and be patient upon anything displeasing from one another, are all acts of great reward.

The Prophet ﷺ said:

أَكْمَلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِيمَانًا أَحْسَنُهُمْ خُلُقًا،
وَخَيْرُكُمْ خَيْرُكُمْ لِنِسَائِهِمْ

The most perfect of believers in faith are
those with the best character. The best of you
are those who are best to their wives.¹

The hadith mentioning the reward for the morsel a husband places in his wife's mouth has already been cited. Another hadith mentions reward even for conjugal relations between husband and wife. Some of the Companions asked, "O Messenger of Allah! One of us fulfils his desire and is rewarded for it?" He ﷺ replied, "Tell me, if he were to fulfil it through unlawful means, would he be sinful? So, if he fulfils it lawfully he will be rewarded for it."²

As the husband and wife stay with each other all the time and spend their whole lives together, it is inevitable that at times they will experience upsetting things from each other. But if these instances are

1 Tirmidhī (1162).

2 Muslim (720).

made into a means of arguing and oppressing one another, their happiness in this life is destroyed, as well as the reward for good mutual relations. This is why Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ have taught us a golden principle for such occasions, which is that a person not focus on the negative points but look at the many positive points in their spouse. By focusing on the positive points, a person's displeasure will surely decrease.

﴿فَإِنْ كَرِهْتُمُوهُمْ فَعَسَىٰ أَنْ تَكَرَّهُوا شَيْئًا
وَيَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ فِيهِ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا﴾

If you dislike them, then it is quite likely that you dislike something and Allah has placed a lot of good in it. (4:19)

A hadith narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said,

لَا يَفْرُكُ مُؤْمِنٌ مُؤْمِنَةً، إِنْ كَرِهَ مِنْهَا حُلُقًا رَضِيَ مِنْهَا آخَرَ

No believing man should despise a believing woman. If he dislikes one of her qualities, he will surely like another.¹

If both husband and wife practise this principle by living with mutual love and trying their utmost to be good with one another, their marital life will be extremely blissful and they will continue to reap rewards due to their good relations.

1 Muslim (1469).

28

Maintaining Ties of Kinship

Good conduct with one's relatives is known as *ṣilat ar-rahim* (maintaining ties of kinship), an action very beloved to Allah ﷻ and for which he grants abundant reward. The Noble Qur'an enjoins maintaining ties of kinship in many places and has stated its virtues. It states:

﴿وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَبِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ﴾

And be good to parents and to kinsmen. (4:36)

Elsewhere it states:

﴿وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ﴾

Fear Allah in whose name you ask each other [for your rights], and fear [the violation of the rights of] the womb-relations. (4:1)

Sayyidunā Abū Hurayrah ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said,

مَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَلْيَصِلْ رَحِمَهُ

Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should maintain ties of kinship.¹

Sayyidunā Anas ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said:

مَنْ أَحَبَّ أَنْ يُسَطَّ لَهُ فِي رِزْقِهِ وَيُنْسَأَ لَهُ فِي أَثَرِهِ فَلْيَصِلْ رَحِمَهُ

¹ Bukhārī (6138).

Whoever likes his sustenance to be increased and his lifespan lengthened should maintain ties of kinship.¹

Maintaining ties of kinship means to behave kindly with one's relatives, share in their happiness and grief, and to help them where needed in a permissible manner.

However, a number of points must be borne in mind with respect to this:

Some people go to extremes to maintain ties of kinship and will not hesitate to commit a sin for this purpose, thinking this to be part of it. Examples of this are to take part in a sinful activity due to their persistence, to intercede for them unlawfully, or to secure a job for them which they are not entitled to. Remember that such actions are totally impermissible. Maintaining ties of kinship does not in any way mean that a person commit sins for his relatives. Thus, if a relative asks one to do something impermissible, it is necessary to decline politely.

Maintaining ties of kinship is rewarding when the objective is to please one's relatives for the Pleasure of Allah ﷻ. If it is merely done to reciprocate, show off, or follow customs, it is very unlikely one will earn the reward of maintaining ties of kinship. We live in a society which is shackled by customs and formalities. Thus, the most important thing for people when dealing with relatives is to do things to save face. Many things are unwillingly done, only to conform with customs. One should refrain from such thinking. Whatever good conduct we display with our relatives should be done willingly and to seek Allah's Pleasure. It is necessary to totally abstain from doing things to fulfil formalities or to save face.

Likewise, as maintaining ties of kinship should be exclusively for the Pleasure of Allah ﷻ, one should not expect this to be reciprocated by the other side. Even if the response we receive is not pleasant, one should not discard maintaining ties of kinship. In fact, this would

1 Bukhāri (598f) and Muslim (2557).

be a sign that one is maintaining ties for the sake of Allah ﷻ, not just for show.

This is why the Prophet ﷺ said:

لَيْسَ الْوَاصِلُ بِالْمُكَافِيٍّ وَلَكِنَّ الْوَاصِلُ
الَّذِي إِذَا قُطِعَتْ رَحِمُهُ وَصَلَّهَا

'The one who maintains ties is not he who reciprocates, but rather the one who maintains ties is the one who, when ties of kinship are cut, maintains them.'

Sayyidah Umm Kulthum bint 'Uqbah رضي الله عنها narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said:

أَفْضَلُ الصَّدَقَةِ الصَّدَقَةُ عَلَى ذِي الرَّحِمِ الْكَاشِحِ

The best charity is charity to a begrudging relative.¹

When one's relatives do not treat one well, good conduct with them is the pinnacle of maintaining ties and abundant reward has been promised for this. Sayyidunā Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrates that a person said to the Prophet ﷺ, "O Messenger of Allah! I have relatives whom I maintain ties of kinship with, but they break them. I am kind to them but they are bad to me. I am tolerant with them but they behave ignorantly with me." The Prophet ﷺ replied, "If it is as you said, it is as though you are feeding them hot ash, and there will remain with you a helper from Allah ﷻ as long as you remain like this."² In other words, they are earning themselves Hellfire due to their behaviour, but will not be able to harm you in any way. In fact, Allah ﷻ will help you against them.

1 Bukhārī (5991).

2 Ḥākim (1475) and Ṭabarānī, *Al-Kaḥir* (204).

3 Muslim (2558).

Good Treatment of Neighbours

Allah ﷻ has given neighbours many rights. The Prophet ﷺ said:

مَا زَالَ جِبْرِيلُ يُوصِينِي بِالْجَارِ حَتَّى ظَنَنْتُ أَنَّهُ يورثُهُ

Jibril ﷺ continued advising me regarding the neighbour
until I thought he would deem him an inheritor.¹

Sayyidunā Abū Shurayḥ ﷺ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said:

مَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَلْيُحْسِنْ إِلَى جَارِهِ

Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day
should be good to his neighbour.²

Sayyidunā Abū Hurayrah ﷺ narrates that he ﷺ said:

مَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَلَا يُؤْذِ جَارَهُ

Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day
should not harm his neighbour.³

The greatest right of neighbours is that we are fully mindful in every action not to inconvenience them. Alongside this is to help them at times of need, occasionally give them gifts, and to share in their grief and happiness. All of these actions carry great reward. If one's

1 Bukhāri (6015) and Muslim (2625).

2 Muslim (48).

3 Bukhāri (6018) and Muslim (47).

neighbours are in need of financial support, one should make provision for this too, as they might not necessarily have the same financial and social standing as us. If we have some poor neighbours, they are nonetheless our neighbours; they actually have greater rights, due to looking after them being more emphasised. If a neighbour is hungry, it is not merely an act of reward to feed him but in fact an obligation.

Likewise, it is necessary to treat well one's non-Muslim neighbours. On one occasion, Sayyidunā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar ؓ had a goat slaughtered. He had a Jewish neighbour and kept stressing to his family that they should send some of the meat to this Jewish neighbour too.¹

1. Abū Dāwūd (5152) and Tirmidhi (1943).

Being Cheerful & Courteous

Being cheerful and courteous with people is beloved to Allah ﷻ and an act of great reward. Sayyidunā Abū Dharr ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said:

لَا تَحْقِرَنَّ مِنَ الْمَعْرُوفِ شَيْئًا وَلَوْ أَنَّ تَلَقَى أَخَاكَ بِوَجْهِ طَلِقِ

Do not consider any good act inferior, even if it
be to meet your brother with a cheerful face.¹

In this hadith, the Prophet ﷺ stated meeting others in a cheerful manner to be a good deed. He also instructed us not to consider this deed to be insignificant or trivial. In other words, even this action can be a means of increase in your good deeds.

Sayyidunā Abū ad-Dardā ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said:

مَا مِنْ شَيْءٍ أَثْقَلُ فِي مِيزَانِ الْعَبْدِ الْمُؤْمِنِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ
مِنْ حُسْنِ الْخُلُقِ، وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يُبْغِضُ الْفَاحِشَ الْبَدِيءَ

There is nothing heavier in the servant's scales
on the Day of Judgment than good character.
Allah despises an obscene, vulgar person.²

Sayyidunā Abū Hurayrah ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ was

1 Muslim (2626).

2 Tirmidhī (2002).

asked what will enter the most people into Paradise. He replied, "Consciousness of Allah (*taqwā*) and good character."¹

In another narration, Sayyidunā Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

أَكْمَلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِيمَانًا أَحْسَنُهُمْ خُلُقًا

The most perfect of believers in faith are
the best of them in character.²

Sayyidah ʿĀʾishah رضي الله عنها narrates that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

إِنَّ الْمُؤْمِنَ لَيُذْرِكُ بِحُسْنِ خُلُقِهِ دَرَجَةَ الصَّائِمِ الْقَائِمِ

A believer attains, through his good character, the rank
of one who is constantly fasting and standing in *ṣalāh*.³

Sayyidunā Jābir رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

إِنَّ مِنْ أَحَبِّكُمْ إِلَيَّ وَأَقْرَبِكُمْ مِنِّي مَجْلِسًا

يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَحْسَنُكُمْ أَخْلَاقًا

Amongst the most beloved to me among you
and those sitting closest to me on the Day of
Judgment are the best of you in character.⁴

Although all of these hadiths relating the virtues of good character are quite broad in context, meeting others cheerfully is an important aspect of it and will carry the same virtues.

1 Tirmidhi (2004).

2 Tirmidhi (2616).

3 Abū Dāwūd (4798) and Tirmidhi (2003).

4 Tirmidhi (2078).

Good Treatment of a Travel Companion

Just as Allah ﷻ has given many rights to a resident neighbour, He has also mentioned the rights of a travel companion. A travel companion is a person who is travelling with us on a journey, regardless of whether we are previously acquainted with him or not, such as a person sitting near us on a bus, train or aeroplane. The Qur'an has referred to such a companion as "the companion at your side" (*ṣāhib bi'l-janb*).¹ In other words, a travel companion is our neighbour for a short while.

The right of a travel companion is that he is not inconvenienced in any way. Some people will trouble those travelling with them to ensure their own comfort. Such people should consider that a journey is only for a short time and passes in one way or another. However, if one's travel companion is inconvenienced unjustly, this grave sin will be recorded in one's account forever. Furthermore, as this sin is related to the rights of the servants, it will not be forgiven merely through repenting until the aggrieved travel companion does not forgive. Furthermore, we generally do not come across those travelling with us after the journey or know where they live. Thus, after the journey comes to an end, there is no way to seek forgiveness for this sin under normal circumstances. In light of this, inconveniencing one's travel companion is a grave sin which is very difficult to have forgiven.

On the contrary, treating travel companions well, giving preference to them over one's self as much as possible, ensuring their comfort and rest, or in the least, being cheerful with them, are immensely rewarding acts and very easily become a means of amassing great reward.

¹ Qur'an 4:36.

Meeting One Another for Allah's sake

Meeting a Muslim brother solely for the Pleasure of Allah ﷻ is a very virtuous act. The meaning of meeting for the sake of Allah ﷻ is that there is no worldly objective behind it, but rather one is meeting this person as he is a pious individual, or a scholar through whose company one seeks to rectify oneself. Alternatively, it can be with the intention of making a Muslim happy through which Allah ﷻ will also become pleased. This meeting will also be considered for the sake of Allah ﷻ and will, *in shā' Allāh*, bear the same reward.

Sayyidunā Abū Hurayrah ﷺ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said:

مَنْ عَادَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ زَارَ أَخًا لَهُ نَادَى مُنَادٍ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ أَنْ طِبْتَ
وَطَابَ مَمَشَاكَ وَتَبَوَّأْتَ مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ مَنْزِلًا

Whoever visits an ill person or a brother of his for the sake of Allah, a caller calls out to him, "You are blessed, your walking is blessed and you have taken an abode in Paradise."¹

This hadith informs us that that meeting a Muslim with the intention of reward is a means of abundant reward. However, it should be remembered that this only applies to meeting those who will not be a cause of harm to one's faith. If there is fear that meeting this person will result in committing a sin, being negatively influenced by him, getting involved in backbiting or listening to it, or wasting a lot of time in useless talk, it is better to avoid meeting him and sitting in such company.

¹ Tirmidhī (2008) and Ibn Mājah (1443).

Honouring One's Guest

Honouring one's guest and due hospitality is an important branch of faith, which Islam has emphasised greatly.

Sayyidunā Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said:

وَمَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ، فَلْيُكْرِمْ صَيْفَهُ

Whoever believes in Allah and the Last
Day should honour his guest.¹

The meaning of honouring one's guest is to welcome him cheerfully and to feed him according to one's ability if it is time for food. In light of another hadith, we learn that among the rights of the guest is that special food is prepared for him on the first day if one is able to. This has been referred to as 'jāi'zah' in the hadith.²

However, mere formalities, ostentation and affectation should be avoided. The foremost aspect of honouring the guest is to provide comfort to him. Thus, if he is inconvenienced by eating, one should not be insistent, solely to fulfil a formality. In this case, honouring the guest is to bear his comfort and desire in mind.

On the other hand, the guest must not place undue burden on the host and overstay his welcome. A hadith in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim clearly prohibits this.³

1 Bukhāri (2018) and Muslim (47).

2 Muslim (1726).

3 Muslim (1726).

Removing an Obstacle from the Path

It is an act of great reward to remove impurity or anything from the path which would inconvenience passers-by, such as a thorn, obstacle or fruit peel that could cause a person to slip.

Sayyidunā Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

الإِيمَانُ بِضْعٌ وَسَبْعُونَ شُعْبَةً: فَأَفْضَلُهَا قَوْلٌ: لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ،
وَأَدْنَاهَا إِمَاطَةُ الْأَذَى عَنِ الطَّرِيقِ

Faith consists of more than seventy branches. The most virtuous of them is to say 'there is no god besides Allah' (*lā ilāha illa-llāh*) and the lowest of them is to remove something harmful from the path.¹

In another hadith, Sayyidunā Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

وَتَمْيِطُ الْأَذَى عَنِ الطَّرِيقِ صَدَقَةٌ

Removing harm from the path is a charity.²

Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها narrates that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

إِنَّهُ خُلِقَ كُلُّ إِنْسَانٍ مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ عَلَى سِتِّينَ وَثَلَاثِمِئَةِ مَفْصَلٍ،
فَمَنْ كَبَّرَ اللَّهَ، وَحَمِدَ اللَّهَ، وَهَلَّلَ اللَّهَ، وَسَبَّحَ اللَّهَ، وَاسْتَعْفَرَ

1 Bukhārī (9) and Muslim (35).

2 Bukhārī (2989) and Muslim (1009).

اللَّهُ، وَعَزَلَ حَجْرًا عَنْ طَرِيقِ النَّاسِ، أَوْ شَوْكَةً، أَوْ عَظْمًا عَنْ طَرِيقِ النَّاسِ، أَوْ أَمَرَ بِمَعْرُوفٍ، أَوْ نَهَى عَنْ مُنْكَرٍ، عَدَدَ السِّتِينَ وَالثَّلَاثِمِئَةِ فَإِنَّهُ يُمَسِّي يَوْمَئِذٍ وَقَدْ زَحَزَحَ نَفْسَهُ عَنِ النَّارِ

Every human among the children of Ādam was created with three hundred and sixty joints. Whoever proclaims the greatness of Allah (*Allāhu akbar*), praises Allah (*al-ḥamdu li-llāh*), recites *lā ilāha illa-llāh*, declares the purity of Allah (*subḥāna-llāh*), seeks Allah's forgiveness, removes a stone, thorn or bone from people's path, enjoins good or forbids evil three hundred and sixty times, he will walk on that day having freed himself from Hellfire.¹

In another hadith, the Prophet ﷺ related that a man was once walking along a path when he came across a thorny branch on the ground. He removed it to save people from harm, so Allah accepted this action and forgave him. Another hadith states that the Prophet ﷺ saw him wandering in Paradise.²

It is clear from these hadiths how important it is in Islam to keep roads clean and to protect people from harm. Great reward has been mentioned for removing a thorny branch from the path, a seemingly insignificant act. When removing harmful objects has been so highly encouraged, one can imagine how grave a sin it is to make the roads dirty and trouble passers-by as a result. Included in troubling passers-by is to park one's vehicle in a manner which obstructs other vehicles, makes it difficult for them to move, or to cause any form of difficulty to others by driving recklessly. All of the above are sins which must be avoided like any other major sin.

Likewise, traffic rules have been enforced to maintain order on

1 Muslim (1007).

2 Muslim (1914).

the roads. Abiding by them is not only compulsory by law but also a religious obligation. If a person abides by these rules with the intention of maintaining order in society, being a source of comfort to others and to safeguard others against harm, this will be a means of reward *in shā' Allāh*. However, if a person breaks these rules, he will incur double sin: one for inconveniencing others, and the other for disrupting and breaking the law.

It is sad that people do not consider these things to be sins, and people considered to be very religious and well-educated commit these sins without any hesitation. May Allah ﷻ give us all the true understanding of the religion and the ability to practise it. *Āmīn*.

Refraining from Arguments

Allah ﷻ totally dislikes arguments. The Noble Qur'an strongly censures an argumentative person¹, whilst a forbearing person who refrains from arguing is loved by Allah ﷻ and greatly rewarded. Sayyidunā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ once said, whilst addressing a person from the 'Abd al-Qays tribe:

إِنَّ فِيكَ خَصْلَتَيْنِ يُحِبُّهُمَا اللَّهُ: الْحِلْمَ وَالْإِنَاءَةَ

You possess two qualities which Allah
loves: forbearance and calmness.²

Therefore, if someone renounces his right or reconciles to eradicate wrong and to avoid confrontation, despite being in the right, the Prophet ﷺ has given such a person great glad-tidings.

Sayyidunā Abū Umāmah ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said:

أَنَا زَعِيمٌ بَبَيْتٍ فِي رِبْضِ الْجَنَّةِ لِمَنْ

تَرَكَ الْمِرَاءَ، وَإِنْ كَانَ مُحِقًّا

I guarantee a house on the outskirts of Paradise for the
person who leaves arguing, even if he is in the right.³

How fortunate is the individual for whom the Prophet ﷺ guarantees a house in Paradise! May Allah ﷻ grant this blessing to all Muslims. *Āmīn.*

1 Qur'an 2:204.

2 Muslim (17).

3 Abū Dāwūd (4800).

36

Learning Matters of the Religion

It is compulsory upon every Muslim to acquire enough knowledge of his religion whereby he can conduct his daily life according to the teachings of Islam. It is not necessary for every person to formally graduate as a scholar, but it is compulsory to learn about Islam according to necessity; for example, important rulings of prayer, fasting, zakat and Hajj, and what is permissible and impermissible in a person's daily affairs.

Moreover, learning the fundamental teachings of Islam is compulsory, but there is also promise of reward for acquiring this knowledge. In other words, every act of learning about one's faith is a good deed in its own right and for which the Qur'an and Sunnah have mentioned many virtues.

Sayyidunā Abū ad-Dardā' رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said:

مَنْ سَلَكَ طَرِيقًا يَبْتَغِي فِيهِ عِلْمًا سَهَّلَ اللَّهُ لَهُ طَرِيقًا إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ،
وَأَنَّ الْمَلَائِكَةَ تَتَضَعُ أجنحتها لِطالِبِ العِلْمِ رِضا بِمَا يَصْنَعُ

Whoever treads a path in which he seeks knowledge, Allah makes the path to Paradise easy for him. The angels spread out their wings for the seeker of knowledge, out of pleasure for his action.¹

This virtue is certainly for students who leave their homes to acquire knowledge of Islam. However, it is hoped that those who do not leave

¹ Abū Dāwūd (3641) and Tirmidhī, 4:345.

their homes to formally study the religion but just to learn something according to their need, or those who ask a scholar or mufti regarding an issue when the need arises, or who sit in a lecture with the intention of learning the religion, will also receive a share of this virtue.

Sayyidunā Anas رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said:

مَنْ خَرَجَ فِي طَلَبِ الْعِلْمِ فَهُوَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ حَتَّى يَرْجِعَ

Whoever sets out in search of knowledge is
in the path of Allah until he returns.¹

In short, whatever steps one takes to seek knowledge of any matter of Islam, one will attain the reward of seeking knowledge, *in shā' Allāh*. If a person reads reliable and reformative books with this intention, the same reward is hoped for, provided the books are reliable. One should choose books under the guidance of a scholar.

Thus, a person should value every opportunity to learn about Islam, as this is a means of increasing one's knowledge, bettering one's life and a constant increase in good deeds. Knowledge is a shoreless ocean; even the greatest scholar remains, and rightly so, in search of further knowledge. This is why a hadith states that a person who is eager for knowledge is never satiated. He is always in pursuit of more knowledge, and this acquisition of good deeds never comes to an end.

¹ Tirmidhi (2647).

Teaching Matters of the Religion

Learning about matters of the religion is an act of great reward, but teaching someone such matters is even greater in virtue. This is on the condition that the objective is not to boast about one's knowledge or show one's superiority, but rather to benefit others.

Sayyidunā Abū Umāmah رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَمَلَائِكَتَهُ وَأَهْلَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ حَتَّى النَّمْلَةَ فِي
جُحْرِهَا وَحَتَّى الْحُوتِ لَيُصَلُّونَ عَلَيَّ مُعَلِّمِي النَّاسِ الْخَيْرِ

Allah, His angels, the inhabitants of the heavens and the Earth, even the ants in their holes and even the fish, send blessings on those who teach people good.¹

Sayyidunā Sahl ibn Sa'd رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said to Sayyidunā 'Alī رضي الله عنه:

لَأَنْ يَهْدِيَ اللَّهُ بِكَ رَجُلًا وَاحِدًا خَيْرٌ لَكَ مِنْ حُمْرِ النَّعَمِ

For Allah to guide one man through
you is better than red camels.²

Red camels were highly valued by the Arabs. The meaning is that a person being guided through your teaching them is far better than the greatest wealth on Earth. Therefore, a person should value every

1 Tirmidhī (2685).

2 Bukhārī (2942) and Muslim (2406).

opportunity to teach anything regarding Islam and thus earn this virtue. In particular, one should regularly teach one's family members regarding Islam, as this is a great source of ongoing reward.

38

Respecting One's Elders

Although Islam teaches us that true virtue is through consciousness of Allah (*taqwā*) and knowledge, juniors have been instructed to respect those who are older than them.

Allah's Messenger ﷺ said:

لَيْسَ مِنَّا مَنْ لَمْ يَرْحَمْ صَغِيرَنَا، وَيَعْرِفَ شَرَفَ كَبِيرَنَا

He who does not have mercy on our young and recognise the respect of our elders is not from us.¹

Great virtue has been specifically mentioned for respecting a person whose hair has turned white.

Sayyidunā Abū Musa ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said:

إِنَّ مِنْ إِجْلَالِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى: إِكْرَامَ ذِي الشَّيْبَةِ الْمُسْلِمِ

Part of venerating Allah ﷻ is to honour
a Muslim whose hair is white.²

Sayyidunā Anas ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said:

مَا أَكْرَمَ شَابٌّ شَيْخًا لَيْسَتْهُ إِلَّا قَيْضُ اللَّهِ لَهُ مَنْ يُكْرِمُهُ عِنْدَ سِنِّهِ

No youngster honours an elderly person due

1 Abū Dāwūd (4943) and Tirmidhī (1920).

2 Abū Dāwūd (4843).

to his old age except that Allah will appoint people to honour him in his old age.¹

If a younger person among a delegation started to speak before the elders, the Prophet ﷺ would instruct him to let the elders speak first.² This clearly shows how the Prophet ﷺ emphasised the importance of respecting one's elders, and this is an act of great reward.

1 Tirmidhi (2022).

2 Bukhāri (6142) and (6143); and Muslim (1669).

39

Respecting the Signs of Islam

All such things which are considered the salient signs of Islam and Muslims are called the *'sha'āir'* of Islam, such as the Noble Qur'an, the House of Allah (*baytu-llāh*), mosques, sacred places, *ṣalāh*, *adhān* and so forth. Respecting these signs is also a great good deed.

The Noble Qur'an states:

﴿وَمَنْ يُعَظِّمْ شَعَائِرَ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّهَا مِنْ تَقْوَى الْقُلُوبِ﴾

If one observes the sanctity of the symbols of Allah, then such things emanate from the piety of the hearts. (22:32)

Being Kind to Children

Being kind to children is a *sunnah* of the Prophet ﷺ, and as already mentioned, the Prophet ﷺ said that a person who does not have mercy on our young is not among us.

A hadith states that when the Prophet ﷺ would hear a child crying whilst leading prayers, he would shorten the prayer, out of fear that the mother will be troubled on hearing her child cry.¹

The Prophet ﷺ would take small children in his lap, kiss them and play with them.² These are all *sunnah* acts and are a means of great reward when done with this intention.

1 Bukhāri (709) and Muslim (470).

2 Bukhāri (5997) and Muslim (2318).

41

Performing the Adhān

The *adhān* (call to prayer) is among the salient signs of Islam for which many virtues have been mentioned in hadiths. In a hadith of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the Prophet ﷺ said that if people came to know of the reward and virtue of performing the *adhān*, every person would wish to do so and one would have to draw lots to decide.¹

Generally, mosques have fixed people to call the *adhān*. However, if a person prays elsewhere where the sound of the *adhān* does not reach, it is a *sunnah* to call the *adhān* before *ṣalāh* here too. In such cases, one should definitely earn the virtue of calling the *adhān*.

Sayyidunā Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī ؓ once said to ʿAbdullāh, the son of Sayyidunā ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān ibn Ṣaʿṣaʿah ؓ, "I see that you are very fond of goats and the wilderness. Whenever you are among your goats or in the wilderness, and you call the *adhān* for prayer, call it loudly, because no jinn, human or anything else hears the sound of the person calling the *adhān* except that they will testify for him on the Day of Judgment." He then said that he heard this from Allah's Messenger ﷺ.²

We can gauge from this the immense virtue of calling the *adhān* and how we should never lag behind in any opportunity to do so.

1 Bukhārī (615) and Muslim (437).

2 Bukhārī (609).

Responding to the Adhān

It is the etiquette of the adhān that a person remain as quiet as possible whilst it is being called, and the Prophet ﷺ also emphasised that one responds to each phrase of the adhān, by repeating the very same words. However, after *حَيَّ عَلَى الْمَلَأَح* and *حَيَّ عَلَى الصَّلَاةِ* one should say:

لَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ

After *خَيْرٌ مِنَ النَّوْمِ* in the adhān for Fajr, one should say:

صَدَقْتَ وَبَرَزْتَ

Sayyidunā ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said, “When you hear the *mu’adhdhin*, say as he says. Then send blessings upon me, as whoever sends blessings on me once, Allah shall send ten blessings on him. Thereafter, ask Allah to grant me *al-Wasīlah*, for it is a station in Paradise which only one servant of Allah deserves. I hope I am that person. Thus, whoever asks for *al-Wasīlah* for me, my intercession is assured for him.”¹

In light of this virtue, the *du‘ā’* which the Prophet ﷺ taught for after the adhān includes supplicating for *al-Wasīlah*. The *du‘ā’* is as follows:

اللَّهُمَّ رَبِّ هَذِهِ الدَّعْوَةِ التَّامَّةِ، وَالصَّلَاةِ الْقَائِمَةِ،

¹ Muslim (384).

أَتِ مُحَمَّدًا الْوَسِيلَةَ، وَالْفَضِيلَةَ، وَابْعَثْهُ مَقَامًا
مَحْمُودًا الَّذِي وَعَدْتَهُ إِنَّكَ لَا تُخْلِفُ الْمِيعَادَ

O Allah, Lord of this perfect call and prayer to be established, grant Muḥammad *al-Wasīlah* and virtue, and raise him to the praised station You have promised him. Indeed, You do not defy Your promise.¹

Sayyidunā Jābir ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ gave glad-tidings of his intercession being assured for the person who reads this *du'ā'* after the call to prayer.

Moreover, to say the following after the *adbān* is also mentioned in a hadith:

وَأَنَا أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ
وَرَسُولُهُ رَضِيتُ بِاللَّهِ رَبًّا وَبِمُحَمَّدٍ رَسُولًا وَبِالْإِسْلَامِ دِينًا

I testify that there is no god but Allah, One and without partner, and that Muḥammad is His slave and Messenger. I am pleased with Allah as Lord, Muḥammad as Messenger and Islam as religion.²

Sayyidunā Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said whoever hears the *adbān* and says these words will be forgiven.

Responding to the *adbān* and then saying these *du'ā'*s thereafter does not take long or require any effort. It is just a matter of being mindful of this and getting into a habit. If one makes a habit of saying these words, immense reward can be attained without any time or

1 Bukhārī (614), Abū Dawūd (529) and Tirmidhī (211). The wording *innaka la takhīju-l-mī'ād* is narrated by al-Bayhaqī in *as-Sunan al-Kubra* (1933).

2 Muslim (386), Abū Dāwūd (525) and Tirmidhī (210).

effort. Therefore, a person should observe these points of etiquette, except if it is not possible due to a genuine reason.

It is also worth noting that if the call to prayer can be heard from many mosques one after the other, the *sunnah* is fulfilled by responding to the first *adhān* which can be heard clearly. There is no harm in not responding to the subsequent calls.¹

1 Ibn 'Abidin ash-Shāmī, *Radd al-Muhtār*.

43

Recitation of the Noble Qur'an

The Noble Qur'an is Allah's greatest gift to all humankind. Its real right is that it is practised after being understood. However, Allah ﷻ has also made recitation of the words of the Noble Qur'an, through His Mercy, a means of blessing for His servants. In other words, recitation of the Noble Qur'an is also an act of great reward. Some people out of their ignorance consider reciting the Qur'an without understanding to be pointless. They liken Allah's Book with other books, the reading of which, without understanding, would be taken as a futile act.

The Noble Qur'an is Allah's Book. Its teachings undoubtedly guarantee a person success in this life and the Hereafter, but its every word is a source of light and its mere recitation is also a means of great blessings and reward.

Sayyidunā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said:

مَنْ قَرَأَ حَرْفًا مِنْ كِتَابِ اللَّهِ فَلَهُ حَسَنَةٌ، وَالْحَسَنَةُ

بِعَشْرٍ أَمْثَالِهَا، لَا أَقُولُ: أَلَمْ حَرْفٌ، وَلَكِنْ:

أَلِفٌ حَرْفٌ، وَوَامٌ حَرْفٌ، وَمِيمٌ حَرْفٌ

Whoever recites one letter from the Book of Allah shall receive one reward, each reward being multiplied by ten. I do not say *Alif Lām Mīm* is one letter, but rather *alif* is a letter, *lām* is a letter and *mīm* is a letter.¹

¹ Tirmidhī (2910).

This hadith tells us that just reciting *Alif Lām Mīm* adds thirty good deeds to a person's record. We also learn from this hadith that this reward is achieved by reading without understanding also, because *Alif Lām Mīm* is a word which nobody understands (this is from the *huruf muqatta'āt* which is from the realm of the ambiguous (*mutashabihat*), the meaning of which only Allah ﷻ knows). The Prophet ﷺ made it clear by using this example that the reward for recitation is not dependent upon understanding; even without understanding one will be rewarded.

In short, when mere recitation of *Alif Lām Mīm* earns a person thirty rewards, imagine how much reward there is in reading one unit of prayer (*rukū'*) or one whole *surah*?

Therefore, every Muslim should make it a daily practice to recite some portion of the Qur'an in the morning, before busying himself with other commitments. If one cannot recite much, at least a quarter *juz'* should be recited, or even a *rukū'* if that is not possible. In this manner, hundreds of good deeds will be added to his account on a daily basis.

Likewise, every Muslim should memorise some chapters of the Noble Qur'an, so that he can recite them whenever he can from memory, without having to look in. In this manner, a person is able to increase his good deeds even while on the move.

Sayyidunā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said, "The person whose heart does not contain any portion of the Qur'an is like a derelict house."¹

1. Tirmidhi (2913).

44

*Recitation of Sūrat al-Fātiḥah
& Surat al-Ikhlās*

Recitation of any portion of the Noble Qur'an is an act of great reward. However, the Prophet ﷺ related specific virtues for certain sūrahs. Among the shorter sūrahs, the greatest virtues are for *Sūrat al-Fātiḥah* and *Sūrat al-Ikhlās* (*Qul huwa-llāhu aḥad*). *Surat al-Fātiḥah* has been declared the most virtuous part of the Qur'an in one hadith¹ and the greatest sūrah in another.²

In many hadiths, *Sūrat al-Ikhlās* has been declared equivalent to one third of the Qur'an.

Sayyidunā Abū Hurayrah ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ once said to the Companions, "Come together, for I am going to read a third of the Qur'an to you." Some of the Companions came together. Then the Prophet ﷺ came out and read *Qul huwa-llāhu aḥad* (i.e. *Sūrah al-Ikhlās*) and entered his house. He then came out after a while and said, "I said I shall read a third of the Qur'an to you. Know that this is equivalent to a third of the Qur'an."³

Sayyidunā Abū ad-Dardā' ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said, "Can anyone of you not recite a third of the Qur'an in one night?" The Companions ؓ said, "How can a person recite one third of the Qur'an in one night?" The Prophet ﷺ replied, "*Qul huwa-llāhu aḥad* is equivalent to a third of the Qur'an."⁴

1 Ibn Hibbān (774).

2 Bukhārī (4703).

3 Muslim (812).

4 Muslim (811).

This is why it is has remained a practice of the elders to recite *Sūrat al-Ikblāş* three times and gift the reward to the deceased.

45

Performing 'Wudū' Properly

Performing *wudū'* properly, in accordance to the Sunnah and by taking its etiquette into consideration, is a virtuous act for which great reward has been promised in hadiths.

Sayyidunā Uthman رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said:

مَنْ تَوَضَّأَ فَأَحْسَنَ الْوُضُوءَ، خَرَجَتْ خَطَايَاهُ
مِنْ جَسَدِهِ حَتَّى تَخْرُجَ مِنْ تَحْتِ أَظْفَارِهِ

Whoever performs *wudū'* in an excellent manner, his sins leave his body to the extent that they leave from under his nails.¹

Another hadith states that the Prophet ﷺ asked the Companions رضي الله عنهم, "Shall I not inform you of that whereby Allah removes sins and elevates ranks?" The Companions replied, "Yes, indeed, Messenger of Allah." The Prophet ﷺ replied, "Performing *wudū'* properly despite difficulties, taking many steps towards the mosque and waiting after one prayer for the next. This is guarding the frontier."²

This means that a person gains the reward of guarding the frontier during *Jihād* if he performs *wudū'* properly during cold weather or other circumstances which make *wudū'* difficult. The meaning of performing *wudū'* properly is to take all the *sunnah* acts and points of etiquette into consideration. Thus, a person should observe the proper etiquette of *wudū'* and learn how to perform it properly, as this is a means of increasing one's good deeds.

1 Muslim (245).

2 Muslim (351).

Using *Siwāk* (Toothstick)

The Prophet ﷺ related many virtues for using the *siwāk* (toothstick). Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said,

السُّوَاكُ مَطْهَرَةٌ لِلْفَمِ مَرْضَاةٌ لِلرَّبِّ

The *siwāk* cleanses the mouth and pleases the Lord.¹

Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said:

فَضْلُ الصَّلَاةِ بِالسُّوَاكِ عَلَى الصَّلَاةِ بِغَيْرِ سُوَاكٍ سَبْعُونَ ضِعْفًا

The virtue of a prayer after using *siwāk* is seventy times more than a prayer without using the *siwāk*.²

The virtues of *siwāk* have been mentioned in numerous hadiths and this is one of the most beloved practices of the Prophet ﷺ. It is beneficial in both this life and the Hereafter, and it is an action which does not require much effort or money. Thus, a person can easily increase his good deeds through this practice.

1. Nasā'ī (5); a similar narration has been mentioned in a chapter heading of Bukhari.

2. Aḥmad (26340) and Ḥākim (515).

47

Dhikr After Wudū'

Sayyidunā 'Umar رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "Whoever performs *wudū'* properly and then says:

أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ
وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ

All eight doors of Paradise are opened for him; he can enter from whichever one of them he wishes.¹

A narration in the *Sunan* of Abū Dawūd adds that one should look towards the sky when saying this,² and a narration in the *Sunan* of at-Tirmidhī has the following addition:

اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْنِي مِنَ التَّوَّابِينَ وَاجْعَلْنِي مِنَ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ

O Allah, make me among the repentant and make me among those who purify themselves.³

1 Muslim (234).

2 Abū Dāwūd (170).

3 Tirmidhī (55).

Tahiyat al-Wuḍū'

Performing two units of prayer (*rak'ahs*) after completing *wuḍū'* with the intention of *tahiyat al-wuḍū'*, regardless of why *wuḍū'* was performed, is a very virtuous deed. Sayyidunā 'Uqbah ibn 'Āmir ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said, "Whoever performs *wuḍū'* properly and then performs two *rak'ahs* of prayer, in which he turns with his face and heart to Allah, Paradise is assured for him."¹

Sayyidunā Abū Hurayrah ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said to Sayyidunā Bilal ؓ, "Inform me of an action of yours which you are most hopeful regarding, because I heard your footsteps in front of me in Paradise [during the Night Journey]." Sayyidunā Bilal ؓ replied, "The action which I have most hope regarding is that whenever I have performed *wuḍū'*, either during the day or night, I have prayed as much as Allah has written for me."²

It only takes a few minutes to perform two *rak'ahs* of *tahiyat al-wuḍū'*, but the reward for this action of a few minutes is immense. This is why a person should definitely observe this. If there is still time for *fard ṣalāh* after performing *wuḍū'*, it is better to perform two *rak'ahs* of *tahiyat al-wuḍū'*. However, if time is short, one should incorporate the intention of *tahiyat al-wuḍū'* within the *fard* or *sunnah ṣalāh*. It is hoped, *in shā' Allāh*, that a person will attain the reward of *tahiyat al-wuḍū'* due to one's intention.³

1 Muslim (234).

2 Bukhārī and Muslim.

3 It is important to bear in mind that voluntary (*nafl*) prayers should not be performed during the reprehensible and impermissible times [Tr. note].

Tahiyyat al-Masjid

It is also laudable (*mustahabb*) to perform two *rak'ahs* of *tahiyyat al-masjid* when entering the mosque. The Prophet ﷺ said, "Whenever one of you enters the mosque he should perform two *rak'ahs*."¹

These two *rak'ahs* of *tahiyyat al-masjid* should be performed exclusively with this intention. However, if it is time for the *farḍ* or *sunnah* prayers and a person includes the intention of *tahiyyat al-masjid* within the *farḍ* or *sunnah*, it is hoped that Allah, out of His Mercy, will not deprive a person of the reward of *tahiyyat al-masjid* due to his intention, *in shā' Allāh*.

Furthermore, *tahiyyat al-masjid* should be performed on entering the mosque and before sitting down. If, however, a person sat down for some reason, he can still perform *tahiyyat al-masjid*.

If there is not enough time to perform *tahiyyat al-masjid*, a person should at least recite:

سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ
وَلَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ الْعَلِيِّ الْعَظِيمِ

Pure from all defects is Allah, all praise is for Allah, there is no god but Allah, and Allah is the Greatest, and there is no power or strength except with Allah, the All-High, the Tremendous.

In fact, this should be repeated for as long as a person is in the mosque.²

1 Tirmidhi (316).

2 Nawawī, *Al-Adhkār*. Published by Turath Publishing 2015.

There is great virtue for this mentioned in a hadith and it has been referred to as the trees of Paradise.¹

¹ Tirmidhi (3462).

50

Intention of I'tikāf

Whenever a person goes to the mosque, whether it be for *ṣalāh* or otherwise, and he makes an intention for voluntary *i'tikāf* (seclusion), he will receive its reward for as long as he remains in the mosque.

Praying in the First Row

Congregational *ṣalāh* is twenty-seven times greater than performing *ṣalāh* individually, but even within the congregational *ṣalāh*, praying in the first row carries the greatest reward. The reward is so great that the Prophet ﷺ said:

لَوْ تَعْلَمُونَ مَا فِي الصَّفِّ الْمُقَدَّمِ لَكَاتَتْ قُرْعَةً

If people knew the virtue of the first row, they would have to draw lots [to reserve their place].¹

Sayyidunā Abū Umāmah ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said, "Allah and His angels send blessings on the first row."²

Sayyidunā 'Irbād ibn Sāriyah ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ sought forgiveness thrice for the first row and once for the second row.³

Thus, a person should try to perform every *ṣalāh* in the first row, but if this is not possible, whenever one has the opportunity. A person should try his best to gain the virtue of performing *ṣalāh* in the first row. However, it is not permissible to force one's way into the first row and inconvenience others as a result.

Sayyidunā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said:

1 Musīnī (439).

2 Aḥmad (22263).

3 Nasā'i (817) and Ibn Mājah (996).

مَنْ تَرَكَ الصَّفَّ الْأَوَّلَ مَخَافَةَ أَنْ يُؤْذِيَ أَحَدًا
 أَضَعَفَ اللَّهُ لَهُ أُجْرَ الصَّفِّ الْأَوَّلِ

Whoever leaves the first row out of fear of harming someone,
 Allah will grant him double the reward of the first row.¹

¹ Ṭabarānī, *Al-Awsaf* (537).

Filling the Gaps within a Row

Keeping the rows straight during congregational *ṣalāh* and filling any gaps therein have been highly emphasised and are acts of great virtue.

Sayyidunā ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said:

مَنْ وَصَلَ صَفًّا وَصَلَهُ اللَّهُ

Whoever joins a row [by filling a gap], Allah
will grant him His proximity.¹

Sayyidunā Abū Juḥayfa رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said, “Whoever fills a gap in the row, Allah will forgive him.”²

Furthermore, there is more reward in standing towards the right of the imam. However, if more people are standing to the right of the imam and the left side of the rows are empty, the hadiths mention double reward for standing on the left.³

1 Nasā’i (819).

2 Bazzār (4232).

3 Ibn Mājah (1557).

53

Isbrāq Ṣalāh

Isbrāq ṣalāh is a voluntary *ṣalāh* performed after sunrise, once the sun has risen slightly. This is approximately twelve minutes after sunrise. It is only two *rak'ahs* of *ṣalāh*, but immense virtue has been related for this *ṣalāh* in hadiths.

Sayyidunā Abū Hurayrah ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said, "Whoever regularly performs two *rak'ahs* of *ḍuḥā*, his [minor] sins are forgiven, even if they are as much as the foam on the sea."¹

Sayyidunā Abū Hurayrah ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ once sent some Companions on an expedition. They returned very quickly with a great deal of booty. One of the Companions expressed his surprise at this and said, "O Messenger of Allah! I have not seen any army which returned so quickly and acquired so much booty as this army." The Prophet ﷺ said, "Shall I not inform you of the person who returns even quicker than them and acquires more booty than them?" He then said, "The person who performs *wuḍū'* properly, goes to the mosque and performs *Fajr ṣalāh*, and then performs *isbrāq ṣalāh* [after sunrise], has returned quickly and returned with a great booty."²

The hadith of Sayyidunā Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī ؓ has already been mentioned, which states that there are three hundred and sixty joints in the human body and that a person should perform at least three hundred and sixty good deeds daily to free each of these joints from Hellfire. The Prophet ﷺ then mentioned the good deeds through which one can achieve this. He said that saying *subhāna-llāh*

1 Tirmidhī (476) and Ibn Mājah (1382).

2 Abū Ya'la (6559).

once is a good deed, saying *al-ḥamdu li-llāh* once is a good deed, saying *lā ilāha illa-llāh* once is a good deed, saying *Allāhu akbar* once is a good deed, enjoining good is a good deed, forbidding evil is a good deed. After mentioning a whole list of good deeds, he said:

وَيُجْزَىٰ مِنْ ذَلِكَ رَكْعَتَانِ يَرْكَعُهُمَا مِنَ الصُّحَىٰ

'Two rak'abs of *duḥā* suffice for all of these.'

This means that the two rak'abs of *ishrāq* are equivalent to three hundred and sixty good deeds. The best method of performing *ishrāq* is to remain seated in one's place after performing *Fajr ṣalāh*, engage in *dhikr* until sunrise and then perform the *ṣalāh*. A hadith states the reward of this *ṣalāh* is equivalent to a Hajj and 'umrah.² However, if a person cannot do this for some reason, he can perform this *ṣalāh* after returning home or attending to his work.

1 Muslim (720).

2 Tirmidhi (586).

Bathing & Applying Perfume on Friday

There is great virtue mentioned in hadiths for bathing on Friday. One should make intention of bathing for Friday when taking this bath. It is also a *sunnah* to apply perfume after taking a bath, and a person is rewarded for this if the intention is to follow the Sunnah.

Sayyidunā Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said:

مَنْ اغْتَسَلَ يَوْمَ الْجُمُعَةِ وَمَسَّ مِنْ طَيِّبٍ إِنْ كَانَ عِنْدَهُ
وَلَبَسَ مِنْ أَحْسَنِ ثِيَابِهِ ثُمَّ خَرَجَ حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ الْمَسْجِدَ
فَيَرْكَعُ مَا بَدَأَ لَهُ وَلَمْ يُؤْذِ أَحَدًا ثُمَّ أَنْصَتَ حَتَّى يُصَلِّيَ
كَانَ كَفَّارَةً لِمَا بَيْنَهَا وَبَيْنَ الْجُمُعَةِ الْآخِرَى

Whoever takes a bath on Friday, applies perfume if he has some, wears his best clothes, then leaves until he comes to the mosque, performs as much *ṣalāh* as he wishes without inconveniencing anyone, then remains silent until *ṣalāh* has been performed, it will expiate [his minor sins] until the next Friday.¹

Sayyidunā Abū Umāmah ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said, "Bathing on Friday removes [minor] sins from the roots of the hair."²

1 Aḥmad (3037).

2 Ṭabarānī, *Al-Kabir* (7996).

Furthermore, after having a bath on Friday and applying perfume, one should go to the mosque as soon as possible. One hadith states that angels stand at the doors of the mosque to right the names of those who come first. Those who come to the mosque first shall receive the reward of slaughtering a camel, those who come second shall receive the reward of slaughtering a cow, those who come third shall receive the reward of slaughtering a ram, those who come fourth shall receive the reward of giving a hen in charity, and those who come at the end shall receive the reward of giving an egg in charity. When the imam comes out to deliver the *khutba* (sermon), the angels then fold their scrolls.¹

1 Bukhārī (929) and Muslim (850).

Eating *Suḥūr* (Pre-Fast Meal)

Fasting, whether in Ramadan or on a voluntary basis, is a great act of worship, and to eat *suḥūr* (pre-fast meal) beforehand is also an act of reward.

Sayyidunā Anas رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "Eat *suḥūr*, for it contains blessings."¹

Sayyidunā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَمَلَائِكَتَهُ يُصَلُّونَ عَلَى الْمُتَسَحِّرِينَ

Allah and His angels send blessings on those who eat *suḥūr*.

Sayyidunā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

السُّحُورُ كُلُّهُ بَرَكَةٌ فَلَا تَدَعُوهُ وَلَوْ أَنْ يَجْرَعَ أَحَدُكُمْ جَرْعَةً مِنْ
مَاءٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ وَمَلَائِكَتَهُ يُصَلُّونَ عَلَى الْمُتَسَحِّرِينَ

Suḥūr is full of blessings. Do not leave it, even if it be to take a sip of water, as Allah Most Dignified and Exalted and His angels send blessings on those who eat *suḥūr*.²

It is preferable to eat *suḥūr* in the last portion of the night.

1 Bukhāri (1923).

2 Ibn Hibbān (3467); and Tabarāni, *Al-Awsat* (6434).

Breaking the Fast Quickly

A person should break his fast quickly once he is sure that the sun has set and this should not be delayed without a valid reason. Sayyidunā Sahl ibn Sa'd رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said, "People will remain with good as long as they break their fast quickly."¹

Sayyidunā Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said, "Allah loves those who break their fast quickly."²

1 Bukhārī (1957) and Muslim (1098).

2 Aḥmad (22804) and Tirmidhi (699).

Feeding a Fasting Person

Feeding a fasting person is a great act of reward.

Sayyidunā Zayd ibn Khālid al-Juhānī ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said:

مَنْ فَطَرَ صَائِمًا، كَانَ لَهُ مِثْلُ أَجْرِهِ، غَيْرَ أَنَّهُ
لَا يُنْقَصُ مِنْ أَجْرِ الصَّائِمِ شَيْءٌ

Whoever feeds a fasting person shall receive the same reward, without the reward of the fasting person being decreased at all.¹

Sayyidunā Salmān al-Fārisī ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said, "Whoever feeds a person fasting in Ramadan, his sins will be forgiven and his soul freed from Hellfire, and he shall receive the reward of the fasting person without his reward being decreased at all." The Companions ؓ said, "Not all of us can feed a fasting person." The Prophet ﷺ said, "Allah grants this reward to one who gives a fasting person a single date, water or a sip of milk."²

1 Nasā'ī (3331) and Tirmidhī (807).

2 Ibn Khuzaymah (1887).

Looking after the Household of a Person Participating in Hajj or Jihad

Hajj and jihad are great acts of worship. However, those who are unable to perform these acts of worship have been granted an excellent way by Allah ﷻ to share in the reward of these deeds; whoever helps in the preparation of a person performing Hajj or jihad, Allah ﷻ grants this person a share of the reward too. Likewise, looking after the needs of their families whilst they are away will also grant a person a share of their reward.

Sayyidunā Zayd ibn Khālid al-Juhānī ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said:

مَنْ جَهَّزَ حَاجًّا، أَوْ جَهَّزَ غَازِيًّا، أَوْ خَلَفَهُ فِي أَهْلِهِ، أَوْ فَطَّرَ
صَائِمًا، فَلَهُ مِثْلُ أَجْرِهِ مِنْ غَيْرِ أَنْ يَنْقُصَ مِنْ أَجْرِهِ شَيْءٌ

Whoever equips a person performing Hajj or a
person performing jihad (*mujāhid*), or looks after
his family in his absence, or feeds a fasting person,
shall receive the same reward as them, without
their reward being decreased in any way.¹

¹ Nasā'ī (3330).

59

To Supplicate for Martyrdom

A person who is martyred in Allah's cause is fortunate indeed. Furthermore, Allah ﷻ grants the same immeasurable reward to those who yearn and make *du'ā'* for it.

Sayyidunā Sahl ibn Hunayf ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said:

مَنْ سَأَلَ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى الشَّهَادَةَ بِصِدْقٍ بَلَغَهُ اللَّهُ
مَنَازِلَ الشُّهَدَاءِ، وَإِنْ مَاتَ عَلَى فِرَاشِهِ

Whoever sincerely asks Allah for martyrdom, Allah will raise him to the status of the martyrs, even if he dies on his bed.¹

Sayyidunā Anas ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said:

مَنْ طَلَبَ الشَّهَادَةَ صَادِقًا أُعْطِيَهَا وَلَوْ لَمْ تُصِيبْهُ

Whoever sincerely seeks martyrdom, he will be granted it even if he does not achieve it [i.e. he dies on his bed].²

1 Muslim (1909).

2 Muslim (1908).

Starting One's Work Early in the Morning

Virtue has been mentioned in hadiths for starting one's daily work early in the morning.

The Prophet ﷺ made *du'ā'*:

اللَّهُمَّ بَارِكْ لِأُمَّتِي فِي بُكُورِهَا

O Allah, grant my ummah blessings in their early hours.¹

On the contrary, the Prophet ﷺ forbade sleeping after *Fajr ṣalāh* before sunrise and declared it a means of losing blessings.² On one occasion, the Prophet ﷺ saw Sayyidah Fāṭimah ؓ sleeping straight after *Fajr ṣalāh*. He woke her up and forbade her from sleeping at this time.³

¹ Tirmidhī (1212).

² Aḥmad (520).

³ Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab al-Īmān* (4731).

61

Remembering Allah in the Marketplace

When a person goes to the marketplace for trade (or for any purpose), it is an act of great reward to remember Allah ﷻ every now and then. A hadith states that the person who remembers Allah ﷻ among absentminded people is like a person who remains firmly fighting among those who flee the battlefield.¹

Abū Qilābah, a famous Follower (*Tabi'i*), relates that two people once met in the marketplace. One of them said to the other, "Let us seek Allah's forgiveness at a time when people are absentminded," whereafter the other person sought Allah's forgiveness. When one of them passed away afterwards, he came to the other person in a dream and said, "Allah forgave us on the day we met each other in the marketplace."²

Any form of remembrance in the marketplace is excellent, but the virtue of a certain invocation has been specifically mentioned in a hadith.

Sayyidunā 'Umar ﷺ narrates the following words from the Prophet ﷺ:

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ، لَهُ الْمُلْكُ وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ يُحْيِي
وَيُمِيتُ وَهُوَ حَيٌّ لَا يَمُوتُ، بِيَدِهِ الْخَيْرُ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

There is no god besides Allah, Alone without a partner. For Him is the dominion and for Him is all praise. He grants life

1 Bazzār (1754); and Tabarāni in *Al-Kabir* (9797).

2 Ibn Abī ad-Dunyā, *Husn az-Zann bi-llāh* (119).

and causes death. He is Alive and will not die. In His hands is all good. And He has power over everything.

The Prophet ﷺ said that whoever reads this when entering the marketplace, Allah will reward him with one million rewards, forgive one million (minor) sins and raise his status by a million.¹

One should memorise this and read it repeatedly whilst in the marketplace.

1 Tirmidhi (3428).

62

Refunding an Item

At times, a person will purchase an item but want to return it for some reason. In such instances, it is not binding upon the seller to take the item back, but if he decides to do so in view of the buyer's need or regret, a hadith mentions great virtue for doing this.

Sayyidunā Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said:

مَنْ أَقَالَ مُسْلِمًا بَيْعَتَهُ أَقَالَ اللَّهُ عَثْرَتَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ

Whoever retracts a Muslim's transaction, Allah will forgive his mistakes on the Day of Judgment.¹

1) Tabarāni, *Al-Awsat* (889).

Lending Money to a Needy Person

There is great reward for lending money to someone in need. Sayyidunā ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said,

كُلُّ قَرْضٍ صَدَقَةٌ

Every loan is a charity.¹

In fact, we learn from some hadiths that giving a loan is more rewarding than charity.²

This is probably because a loan is usually of an amount which is not given with the intention of charity, and it is given to a person who is needy and does not ask of others. Thus, there is more reward in fulfilling his need.

1 Bayhaqī (3563); and Ṭabarānī, *Al-Awsaṭ* (3498).

2 Bayhaqī (3564); and Ṭabarānī, *Al-Kabir* (79701).

64

Granting Respite to a Poor Debtor

The Qur'an and Sunnah mention great virtue for extending the loan period to a debtor who is in financial difficulty.

The Noble Qur'an states:

﴿وَإِنْ كَانَ ذُو عُسْرَةٍ فَنَظِرَةٌ إِلَىٰ مَيْسَرَةٍ﴾

If there is one in misery, then [the creditor should allow] deferment until [his] ease. (2:280)

Sayyidunā Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said:

مَنْ أَنْظَرَ مُعْسِرًا، أَوْ وَصَعَ لَهُ، أَظَلَّهُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ
الْقِيَامَةِ تَحْتَ ظِلِّ عَرْشِهِ يَوْمَ لَا ظِلَّ إِلَّا ظِلُّهُ

Whoever grants respite to a person in financial difficulty or lessens his debt, Allah will grant him the shade of His Throne, on the day there shall be no shade besides His.¹

Sayyidunā Hudhaifah رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said, "The angels extracted the soul of a man from the people before you. They asked him, 'Did you do any good?' He replied, 'I used to instruct my workers to grant respite to a person in difficulty and to be lenient with the financially stable.' Allah said [to the angels], 'Excuse my servant.'" In this manner he was forgiven.²

1 Tirmidhi (1306).

2 Bukhāri (2077) and Muslim (1560).

Being Truthful in Trade

Trading is usually considered a mundane activity. However, if it is done with the intention of earning lawful sustenance and fulfilling the rights of one's own self and family, it becomes a means of reward. This is provided one avoids unlawful matters. In light of this, virtue has been mentioned in hadiths for those who are truthful and trustworthy in their transactions.

Sayyidunā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said:

التَّاجِرُ الصَّدُوقُ الْأَمِينُ مَعَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالصِّدِّيقِينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ

The truthful, trustworthy tradesman will be with the prophets, truthful and martyrs on the Day of Judgment.¹

¹ Tirmidhī (1209).

66

Planting a 'Tree'

It is an act of great reward to plant a tree or plant in an appropriate location.

Sayyidunā Anas رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said:

مَا مِنْ مُسْلِمٍ يَغْرِسُ غَرْسًا أَوْ يَزْرَعُ زَرْعًا فَيَأْكُلُ
مِنْهُ طَيْرٌ أَوْ إِنْسَانٌ إِلَّا كَانَتْ لَهُ بِهِ صَدَقَةٌ

No Muslim plants a tree or grows crops, and then a bird or human eats of it, except that it will be a charity for him.¹

In other words, if an animal or human benefits from this tree or field, the person who planted it will continue to receive reward for it and it shall be an ongoing charity for him.

¹ Bukhārī (2320) and Muslim (1189).

Good Treatment of Animals

Islam has enforced animal rights, just as there are rights for humans. It is prohibited to unnecessarily cause pain to harmless animals. Even animals which are slaughtered should be slaughtered in a manner whereby they experience minimal pain.

The Prophet ﷺ ordered that the knife be sharpened before slaughter and the animal being slaughtered be given as much comfort as possible.¹

Having mercy on animals, rearing them, and giving them comfort is loved by Allah ﷻ and carries great reward.

The Prophet ﷺ once related a story of a man among the earlier nations. He felt extremely thirsty during a journey. After searching for water, he found a well which had no bucket. He went down into the well and quenched his thirst by drinking its water. As he was leaving, he noticed a thirsty dog which was licking mud due to severe thirst. The man felt pity for the dog, realising that it was feeling thirsty, just as he had been earlier. He took off his leather sock, climbed into the well, filled it with water and climbed out, clenching the sock by his teeth. He then gave water to the dog. Allah ﷻ loved this action so much that He forgave him.²

1. Tirmidhī (1409).

2. Bukhari (2363) and Muslim (2244).

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Killing Harmful Animals

Killing animals which cause harm to people is also a good deed for which a person is rewarded. There is promise of reward for killing snakes and scorpions.

Once whilst Sayyidunā ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd ؓ was lecturing, he saw a snake on the wall. He paused his sermon and killed the snake with a stick. He then said that he heard the Prophet ﷺ say:

مَنْ قَتَلَ حَيَّةً أَوْ عَقْرَبًا فَكَأَنَّمَا قَتَلَ مُشْرِكًا حَلَّ دَمُهُ

Whoever kills a snake or scorpion, it is as though he has killed a polytheist whom it has become lawful to kill.¹

Similarly, the Prophet ﷺ ordered the killing of chameleons. Sayyidunā Abū Hurayrah ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said, “Whoever kills a chameleon with one blow will receive such-and-such reward; whoever kills it with the second blow will receive such-and-such reward [the Prophet ﷺ mentioned less reward than before]; and whoever kills it with the third blow will receive such-and-such reward [the Prophet ﷺ mentioned even less than before].”²

Likewise, killing other harmful animals which pose an imminent threat to people also earns a person reward.

1 Bazzār (1847).

2 Muslim (2240).

Controlling the Tongue

The tongue is a great gift of Allah ﷻ. If a person wants to, he can use the tongue to accumulate provisions of good deeds for the Hereafter, or otherwise destroy his Hereafter. This is why many virtues have been related in hadiths regarding controlling the tongue and speaking less. Sayyidunā ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd ؓ relates that he asked the Prophet ﷺ, “Which is the best deed?” The Prophet ﷺ said, “Praying *ṣalāh* on time.” He then asked “Then which action?” The Prophet ﷺ said,

أَنْ يَسْلَمَ النَّاسُ مِنْ لِسَانِكَ

‘That people remain safe from your tongue.’

In other words, withhold your tongue from upsetting others, backbiting and deceit (among other things).

Sayyidunā ‘Uqbah ibn ‘Āmir ؓ asked the Holy Prophet, “What is salvation?”

He ﷺ said:

أَمْسِكْ عَلَيْكَ لِسَانَكَ، وَلْيَسَعَكَ بَيْتُكَ، وَابْكِ عَلَى خَطِيئَتِكَ

Control your tongue, let your house be sufficient for you and cry over your sins.²

Letting the house be sufficient means one should not unnecessarily

1 Tabarānī, *Al-Kabir* (9802).

2 Abū Dāwūd (4343) and Tirmidhī (2406).

leave the house and consequently get involved in wrong, and crying over one's sins means to express remorse on one's sins and to repent.

Another hadith states that the Prophet ﷺ said to Sayyidunā Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī ؓ, "Shall I not inform you of two actions which are light upon a person but heavy in the Scales? He replied, "By all means, O Messenger of Allah." He ﷺ then said:

عَلَيْكَ بِحُسْنِ الْخُلُقِ وَطُولِ الصَّمْتِ

Observe good character and lengthy silence.¹

The Prophet ﷺ once gave the same advice to Sayyidunā Abū ad-Dardā'.²

1 Ṭabarānī, *Al-Awsaṭ* (7103); and Abū Ya'la (3298).

2 Mundhirī, *At-Targhib* (4151), on the authority of Abū ash-Shaykh.

Avoiding Useless Talk & Activities

Anything which is of no use in this life or the next is useless, and avoiding such futile actions has been strongly emphasised in the Qur'an and hadiths.

The Noble Qur'an, when speaking about the characteristics of successful believers, says:

﴿وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنِ اللَّغْوِ مُعْرِضُونَ﴾

And who keep themselves away from vain things. (23:3)

Sayyidunā Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

مِنْ حُسْنِ إِسْلَامِ الْمَرْءِ تَرْكُهُ مَا لَا يَعْنِيهِ

From the excellence of a person's Islam
is to avoid useless things.¹

Hence, it is the duty of every Muslim to avoid useless debates, futile actions and pointless activities.

¹ Tirmidhī (2317).

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Six Good Deeds

It is stated in a hadith that the Prophet ﷺ guaranteed Paradise for a person who observes six actions. Sayyidunā ‘Ubādah ibn aṣ-Ṣāmit رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said:

اضْمَنُوا لِي سِتًّا مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَضْمَنْ لَكُمْ الْجَنَّةَ: اصْدُقُوا
 إِذَا حَدَّثْتُمْ، وَأَوْفُوا إِذَا وَعَدْتُمْ، وَأَدُّوا إِذَا اتَّمَنْتُمْ، وَاحْفَظُوا
 فُرُوجَكُمْ، وَغَضُّوا أَبْصَارَكُمْ، وَكَفُّوا أَيْدِيَكُمْ

Guarantee me six things and I shall guarantee you Paradise: be truthful when you speak; fulfil your promises; fulfil [trusts] when you are entrusted; protect your private parts [from unlawful acts]; lower your gaze; and withhold your hands [from harming others and sinning].¹

1 Bayhaqī in *Shu‘ab al-Īmān* (4802).

Beginning from the Right

Beginning from the right in laudable actions is pleasing to Allah ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ and an act of reward. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ liked to begin from the right in everything in *wuḍū'*, in combing his hair and in wearing his sandals.¹

Sayyidunā Abū Hurayrah ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said,

إِذَا لَبِسْتُمْ، وَإِذَا تَوَضَّأْتُمْ، فَابْدَأُوا بِأَيْمَانِكُمْ

When you dress and perform *wuḍū'*, begin from your right.²

Sayyidunā Abū Hurayrah ؓ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said,

إِذَا انْتَعَلَ أَحَدُكُمْ فَلْيَبْدَأْ بِالْيَمَنِ، وَإِذَا نَزَعَ فَلْيَبْدَأْ بِالشَّمَالِ

When any of you put on their sandals, they should begin from the right, and when removing, they should begin from the left.³

Similarly, the Prophet ﷺ ordered that one eats with the right hand and forbade from eating with the left hand. Sayyidunā Ibn 'Umar ؓ narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, "When one of you eats, he should eat with the right hand, and when one of you drinks, he should drink with the right hand."⁴

1 Bukhārī (5854).

2 Abū Dāwūd (4141) and Tirmidhī (1766).

3 Bukhārī (5855) and Muslim (2097).

4 Muslim (2020).

Even when something is to be distributed, it should be distributed from the right, as this was the practice of the Prophet ﷺ.¹

When entering the lavatory, one should enter with the left foot and exit with the right foot. When entering the mosque, the opposite should be observed by entering with the right foot and leaving with the left foot. Practicing all of these actions with the intention of following the Sunnah is a means of earning immense reward.

These are very simple actions, which with a little attention and becoming accustomed to, are a means of acquiring the divine light of the Sunnah. One should also make one's children acquire the habits of these actions from a young age.

¹ Bukhārī (2352) and Muslim (2029).

Cleaning & Eating a Dropped Morsel

The Prophet ﷺ also instructed us that if we accidentally drop a morsel of food on the floor whilst eating, it should be picked up and cleaned of any dirt particles, or even washed if needed, and then eaten. Sayyidunā Jabir ؓ narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, "When anyone of you drops a morsel, he should remove any dirt off it, eat it and not leave it for *shayṭān*. Upon finishing, he should lick his fingers, as he does not know in which part of his food there are blessings."¹

According to this hadith, disregard for sustenance given by Allah ﷻ is a satanic act and eating a morsel which has fallen on the ground is being appreciative of this sustenance. Picking up a dropped morsel and eating it after cleaning it will earn one reward, *in shā' Allāh*. One should observe these actions and avoid pretentious shame in this regard. It is, however, a different matter if the morsel is beyond being cleaned.

¹ Muslim (2033).

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Praising Allah upon Sneezing & its Response

Sayyidunā Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said, "Allah likes sneezing and dislikes yawning. When any of you sneezes he should say: *أَحْمَدُ لِلَّهِ* and whoever hears him should respond: *يَرْحَمُكَ اللَّهُ* (may Allah have mercy on you)."¹ It is the right of the one who sneezes and says al-ḥamdu lil-lāh that he receive a response.²

These are aspects of Islamic etiquette which every Muslim was once accustomed to, but it is sad that people are increasingly becoming oblivious to such practices. It is thus necessary to revive this etiquette and make it common practice.

1 Bukhāri, (6224).

2 Bukhāri (6223).

Fear of Allah

The greatness of Allah ﷻ demands that a person fears displeasing Him. Fearing the displeasure of Allah ﷻ is a deed that has been ordained repeatedly in the Qur'an and Sunnah, and whose virtues have been related. Sayyidunā 'Abbās ؓ, the uncle of the Prophet ﷺ, relates that they were sitting under a tree with the Prophet ﷺ, when dry leaves began to fall from the tree until only green leaves remained. The Prophet ﷺ asked, "What is the likeness of this tree?" The Companions ؓ replied, "Allah and His Messenger know best." The Prophet ﷺ said, "Its likeness is that of a believer who trembles with fear of Allah Most Exalted and Majestic. His sins are shed and his good deeds remain."¹

To create fear of Allah ﷻ, His greatness and power should be instilled in one's heart, the outcome of earlier nations should be contemplated, and the punishments mentioned in the Qur'an and Sunnah for the disobedient should be visualised. This will create fear of Allah in the heart and will curb the urge to commit sins, inappropriate acts and oppression. As a result, consciousness (*taqwā*) of Allah will be achieved, which is the basis of all good actions and the only path to rectification and success in both worlds. May Allah ﷻ grant us all this bounty. *Āmin*.

¹ Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab al-Īmān* (804).

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Optimism & Hope from Allah

Alongside the fear of Allah ﷻ, to hope for goodness from Him, due to His sheer Mercy, is a great deed. Sayyidunā Abū Hurayrah ﷺ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said:

إِنَّ حُسْنَ الظَّنِّ مِنْ حُسْنِ عِبَادَةِ اللَّهِ

Having a good opinion [of Allah] is part
of excellently worshipping Allah.¹

In a hadith *qudsi*², the Prophet ﷺ narrates that Allah ﷻ says:

أَنَا عِنْدَ ظَنِّ عَبْدِي بِي، وَأَنَا مَعَهُ حَيْثُ يَذْكُرُنِي

I am according to my servant's opinion of Me, and
I am with him when he remembers Me.³

Many virtues have been mentioned in the Qur'an and Sunnah for having good hope in Allah ﷻ. However, this means a person must remain committed to living according to Allah's divine Commands to the best of his ability. When deficiencies and errors occur despite his efforts, he should be hopeful of Allah's Mercy. But if one is totally unmindful of Allah's divine Commands, does not care to reform himself, and leaves himself free to be led by his lowly desires, yet still

1 Tirmidhi (3604).

2 A hadith in which the Prophet ﷺ relates directly on the authority of Allah [11. note].

3 Bukhārī (7405) and Muslim (2675).

expects divine Pardon and Mercy, such individuals have been severely criticised in hadiths.¹

The correct approach is that alongside efforts to rectify one's self, a person should combine the attitudes of fear of Allāh, and keeping a good opinion of Him by anticipating His Mercy. Sayyidunā Anas رضي الله عنه narrates that the Prophet ﷺ went to visit a youth who was on his death bed, and asked him, "How do you feel?" He replied, "O Messenger of Allah, I have hope in Allah but am also fearful of my sins." The Prophet ﷺ said, "They do not gather in the heart of a slave at such an occasion except that Allah grants him his hopes and saves him from what He fears."²

1 The Prophet ﷺ said, "The foolish one is he who sets himself in pursuit of his desires and places hopes in Allah" [Tirmidhī (2459)].

2 Tirmidhī (983).

A COMMON MISUNDERSTANDING which deters people from practising Islam is the idea that Islamic teachings are quite difficult to practise. Alongside this, there are many opportunities a person comes across on a daily basis to amass reward for the Hereafter, but which one misses due to lack of knowledge. *Easy Good Deeds* is a valuable book which details many good deeds that every person can easily practise without any major effort. The author has highlighted actions over a wide spectrum of areas, ranging from worship to social conduct, all of which entail minimal effort but reap abundant reward nonetheless. This concise work will help readers appreciate the importance of many righteous actions, realise how easy it is to perform them, and ultimately imbue them with the spirit to practise Islam in its entirety.

'Allama Taqi 'Uthmani in his person and in his many writings evinces a discernment that few human beings in any discipline have been blessed with. He has been given a beautiful mind, if ever there was one. This little book "Easy Good Deeds" navigates through the vast ocean of the Prophetic Sunnah—which addresses every mentality and age—and distills it into a simple, attractive and operable program for inculcating virtue into the souls of busy people in our modern age. It tells you exactly what to do and exactly what benefit you will receive from doing it. It is a kind of easy do-it-yourself "Ihya 'Ulum al-Din" for the Twenty-first century based strictly on the authentic Sunnah. I love this little book and most humbly recommend it to all Muslims, especially young people, to read, keep and reread every year in sha Allah. Prince Ghazi ibn Muhammad



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