



A New Beginning

Preparing for Our Return to Him

*And this worldly life is not but diversion and amusement.
And indeed, the home of the Hereafter -
that is the [eternal] life, if only they knew.
Noble Qur'an, Al-Ankabut (29:64)*

Our dear brother/sister,

Assalaamu alaykum wa rahmatullaahi wa barakatuh!

We pray for the strength of your faith in Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala in facing this heavy challenge, in shaa Allah.

We may experience different extreme emotions because of the challenge that we're facing. We need to remember that this is normal and not a sign of weakness. Cry if we must if we think it will help us feel better--this does not mean we are weak or impatient. Even the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) had moments when he cried while praying to Allah. What is important is that we continuously fight and have faith in Him. We may also speak with our loved ones if we think it might help, or give ourselves enough time to rest, and then focus on things that might prevent becoming preoccupied with worries or sad thoughts.

*Because it is normal during times like this to feel mixed emotions such as fear, sadness and anger, and because reading has been proven to be one effective way to avoid becoming preoccupied with troubling news and to reduce our stress levels, here is a reading material, **A New Beginning**, which aims to help us focus on eternal life and perform to the best that we can things that*

are pleasing to Allah while we are still in this world, in shaa Allah.

A New Beginning is a reminder that our life in this world is not permanent; it will end to give way to our eternal life. Perhaps, it is shocking, saddening or even infuriating to think that we will be leaving this world. It could also make us feel impatient and wanting to end it soon. However, thinking about the fact that we will leave this world can also be an opportunity to give more attention to preparing for our return to Him. This could also be what we need to see the countless blessings around us.

We need not read this quickly--it's not a race, after all. There are times we may also want to repeatedly read certain parts we love, commit it to memory and more importantly etch it in our hearts. And even better, let's also share this and the lessons we learned with our loved ones, in shaa Allah.

Read. Reflect. Recharge our faith.

So, come on! Let's prepare to the best of our abilities for our return to Allah.

FACING A NEW CHALLENGE

Hearing the news for the first time that we tested positive for an illness can come as a shock. It can make everything feel surreal. And, while we are trying to deal with the many emotions happening all at the same time, not to mention the questions that run through our head, we often find ourselves having to keep ourselves calm and composed in front of health workers and our family or friends who are with us.

It is important to remember: the roller coaster of emotions and thoughts are a normal part of experiencing something unexpected. Pause. Take deep breaths, as many as needed. Take a seat. Have a glass of water. And, remember: *we do not need to process everything all at once*. One step at a time. One day at a time. In shaa Allah.

It is normal to feel relaxed one moment, then worried the next; very engaged in conversations one moment, then feel like just sleeping the whole day the next. This *is* normal. And, these mood changes can last upto two weeks or even more, depending on our conditions. What is important is while we are undergoing the needed medical procedures, we try our best to keep ourselves busy with beneficial activities that we love and that we can do in our temporary situation. It can be taking much-needed sleep, communicating with our loved ones, maintaining a journal, or reading a book. It is also very normal and even good to ask for help or express what we need to those around us.

And, when we can't help but wonder why things like this happen to us, may we remember Prophet Ayyub/Job

(peace be upon him) who was tested with a grave illness aside from loss of loved ones and properties but remained patient and faithful to Allah. May we also remember that the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) said:

“Everything has a reality, and the servant will not reach the reality of faith until he knows that what afflicted him could never miss him, and that what missed him could never have afflicted him.” (Ahmad)

There is divine wisdom behind every event. We must tell our hearts that there is goodness in what Allah decrees. Hence, may we take this pause with positivity and patience, in shaa Allah.

"No fatigue, nor disease, nor sorrow, nor sadness, nor hurt, nor distress befalls a Muslim, even if it were the prick he receives from a thorn, but that Allah expiates some of his sins for that." (Bukhari)

ACCEPTING THE REALITY OF LIFE IN THIS WORLD

And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient,

Who, when disaster strikes them, say, "Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return."

Those are the ones upon whom are blessings from their Lord and mercy. And it is those who are the [rightly] guided.

Noble Qur'an, Al Baqarah (2): 155-157

If we ponder on the above verses, we will understand that challenges are a normal part of worldly. Sometimes they come one at a time, and other times all at once. It is a reminder that this world is not our real home. *Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi rajioon* ("Indeed, we belong to Allah and indeed to Him we will return"). We will return to Allah. We are destined to live eternally and, in shaa Allah, through His compassion and mercy, we will live in Jannah (Paradise).

Though Allah gives us tests, He also informed us how to handle them: *pray, be patient, and have much faith*. Things may look dark right now, but before we know it, with prayers, patience and faith, all these will end soon and our efforts will be rewarded, in shaa Allah.

Being patient: how can we practice this? Think about past life challenges. What good activities did we find effective to overcome them? Can we perform these activities now?

Pray and keep the faith: Perhaps because of the many tasks we need to accomplish daily, there were times that we forgot to make time for our obligatory prayers and other acts of worship. This is our chance to make up for them, in shaa Allah. Pray and have faith. Have faith and hold on to what Allah said in the Qur'an,

"Verily, with every hardship comes ease."

Noble Qur'an, *Al Shahr* (94): 6

REMEMBRANCE OF ALLAH (*Dhikrullah*)

*Those who believe, and whose hearts find rest in the
remembrance of Allah:
Verily, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest.
Noble Qur'an, Ar Rad (13): 28*

How often do we remember Allah? Are we able to make time to utter words of remembrance of Him? Are we able to ask for forgiveness for our shortcomings and sins? Are we able to reflect on His reminders from the Noble Qur'an and hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ)?

Alhamdulillah for unexpected events that help us give attention to this aspect of our lives. Now is our chance to do all these acts of worship as much as we can while we are confined to our rooms, in shaa Allah.

But, what benefits do we actually get from doing them? Well, aside from the fact that they may help us avoid becoming preoccupied with sad or troubling things, we may also earn tremendous rewards in the hereafter, in shaa Allah. As is stated in a hadith,

*Abu al-Darda' narrates: The Prophet once asked his companions:
"Shall I tell you about the best of all deeds, the best act of piety in
the eyes of your Lord, which will elevate your status in the
Hereafter, and carries more virtue than the spending of gold and*

silver in the service of Allah or taking part in jihad and slaying or being slain in the path of Allah? The dhikr of Allah."

(Ahmad; Tirmidhi; Ibn Majah; Hakim)

MashaAllah! How heavy on the scales are good deeds and remembrance of Allah, right? Let's also remember that we can also do these things not just after our five daily prayers. As is stated in the Qur'an,

Who remember Allah while standing or sitting or [lying] on their sides and give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth, [saying], "Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly; exalted are You [above such a thing]; then protect us from the punishment of the Fire.

Noble Qur'an, Ali 'Imran (3):191

So come and learn various ways to praise and supplicate to Him that will help us become closer to Him, too, in shaa Allah!

Glorifying and praising Allah

Ka'b bin 'Ujrah (May Allah be pleased with him) reported:

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, "There are some words, the reciters of which will never be disappointed. These are: Tasbih [saying 'SubhanAllah' (Allah is free from imperfection)], thirty-three times, Tahmid [saying 'Alhamdulillah' (praise be to Allah)] thirty-three times and Takbir [saying 'Allahu Akbar' (Allah is Greatest)]

thirty-four times; and these should be recited after the conclusion of every prescribed prayer."

[Muslim]

Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with him) reported:

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, "He who recites after every prayer: SubhanAllah (Allah is free from imperfection) thirty-three times; Alhamdulillah (praise be to Allah) thirty-three times; Allahu Akbar (Allah is Greatest) thirty-three times; and completes the hundred with: La ilaha illallahu, wahdahu la sharika lahu, lahul-mulku wa lahul-hamdu, wa Huwa 'ala kulli shai'in Qadir (there is no true god except Allah. He is One and He has no partner with Him. His is the sovereignty and His is the praise, and He is Omnipotent), will have all his sins pardoned even if they may be as large as the foam on the surface of the sea."

[Muslim]

Abu Malik Al-Ash'ari (may Allah be pleased with him) reported:

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: "Purity is half of iman (faith). 'Al-hamdu lillah (all praise and gratitude belong to Allah)' fills the scales, and 'subhan-Allah (how far is Allah from every imperfection) and 'Al-hamdulillah (all praise and gratitude belong to Allah)' fill that which is between heaven and earth."

[Muslim]

If we think about it deeply, we can never count the things for which we should thank Allah, subhanAllah! Before we

continue reading this booklet, why not pause a bit and try to list some of the things for which we should thank Him? Complete the following sentence several times:

“Alhamdulillah for _____.”

Example:

Alhamdulillah for my eyes that help me read right now.

Alhamdulillah for the air that He gives us ever so freely.

Alhamdulillah for our hands.

Continue completing this statement. Everything that comes to mind--material or immaterial blessing--that He granted us. If you have a pencil and some papers, try to list your answers. And, if you notice that this is starting to make you feel better, it would perhaps be good to do this daily.

Seeking Allah’s forgiveness (*Istighfar*)

Ponder on the following ahadith about repenting and seeking His forgiveness:

Sayyiduna ‘Abdullah ibn Mas‘ud (may Allah be pleased with him) reports that Nabi (sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said:

*“Whoever says **Astaghfirullahal ‘Azim Alladi La ilaha illa Huwal Hayyul Qayyumu wa atubu ilayhi** (I ask for Allah Almighty’s forgiveness, there is no god but He, The Ever Living, the*

Eternal, and to Him I repent) thrice, his sins will be forgiven even if he had fled from battle"

[Hakim]

Ibn 'Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) reported:

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, "If anyone constantly seeks pardon (from Allah), Allah will appoint for him a way out of every distress and a relief from every anxiety, and will provide sustenance for him from where he expects not."

[Abu Dawud]

Aren't they so reassuring? Sometimes we really feel so far from Him that we can never go back because of our mistakes in life. But, if we go back to the hadith, we will understand that it is never too late to return to Him, The Most Compassionate, Most Merciful, and that a great reward awaits us when we ask for forgiveness. Let's never forget that Allah's mercy will always, always be bigger than His wrath. If He did not want to guide us, He wouldn't have sent His Holy Scriptures and prophets to guide us in the first place. Let us never underestimate His mercy, and let us never ever lose hope. As what He also said in the Qur'an,

Say, "O My servants who have transgressed against themselves [by sinning], do not despair of the mercy of Allah . Indeed, Allah forgives all sins. Indeed, it is He who is the Forgiving, the Merciful."

Noble Qur'an, Az-Zumar (39):53

So let's keep in mind and internalize this supplication from the hadith and continuously move closer to Allah-- *Astaghfirullahal 'Azim Alladi La Ilaha illa Huwal Hayyul Qayyumu wa atubu ilayhi*.

Along with seeking Allah's forgiveness and striving to avoid the same mistakes again, let's also take this opportunity to ask ourselves--*do I still have ill feelings toward someone? Is there someone whom I have not yet forgiven?*

It is important to also do this as we prepare for our new beginning. Isn't it more wonderful to be with no emotional baggage with us? Wouldn't this please Allah more--that we have it in us to forgive others for His sake? In shaa Allah, just as we have hope in our hearts that He will forgive us no matter how much and how heavy our sins are, may we also find it in our hearts compassion and love for our fellow creations of Allah.

PERFORMING THE OBLIGATORY PRAYERS (SALAH)

Abu Huraira reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, *"The first action for which a servant of Allah will be held accountable on the Day of Resurrection will be his prayers. If they are in order, he will have prospered and succeeded. If they are lacking, he will have failed and lost. If there is something defective in his obligatory prayers, then the Almighty Lord will say: See if my servant has any voluntary prayers that can complete what is insufficient in his obligatory prayers. The rest of his deeds will be judged the same way."*

[Tirmidhi]

While we are in this situation, it is also an opportunity for us to take this obligation seriously, in shaa Allah. It's never too late to do this while He is giving us each second, minute, or day. If we can perform this in the way it was ordered, let's do it, in shaa Allah. If our health and current situation prevents us from doing it as prescribed (e.g., we cannot stand), let's also remember that we can perform it while sitting. Also, instead of the regular *wudhu* or ablution, we can opt to perform *tayammum* or dry ablution. What's important is our intention and determination to perform *salah* in the most acceptable way in our current situation, in shaa Allah.

Importance of *Salah*

From the *Risale-i Nur* of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

"For such Prayers are enjoined on believers at stated times."
Qur'an 4:103

One time, a man great in age, physique, and rank said to me: "The prayers are fine, but to perform them every single day five times is excessive. Since they never end, it becomes wearying."

A long time after the man said these words, I listened to my soul and I heard it say exactly the same things. I looked at it and saw that with the ear of laziness, it was receiving the same lesson from Satan. Then I understood that those words were as though said in the name of all evil-commanding souls, or else they had been

prompted. So I said: "Since my soul commands to evil, one who does not reform his own soul cannot reform others. In which case, I shall begin with my own soul."

I said: O soul! Listen to five 'Warnings' in response to those words which you uttered in compounded ignorance, on the couch of idleness, in the slumber of heedlessness.

FIRST WARNING

O my wretched soul! Is your life eternal, I wonder? Have you any incontrovertible document showing that you will live to next year, or even to tomorrow? What causes you boredom is that you fancy you shall live for ever. You complain as though you will remain in this world to enjoy yourself for ever. If you had understood that your life is brief and that it is departing fruitlessly, it surely would not cause you boredom, but excite a real eagerness and agreeable pleasure to spend one hour out of the twenty-four on a fine, agreeable, easy, and merciful act of service which is a means of gaining the true happiness of eternal life.

SECOND WARNING

O my stomach-worshipping soul! Every day you eat bread, drink water, and breathe air; do they cause you boredom? They do not, because since the need is repeated, it is not boredom that they cause, but pleasure. In which case, the five daily prayers should not cause you boredom, for they attract the needs of your companions in the house of my body, the sustenance of my heart, the water of life of my spirit, and the air of my subtle faculties. Yes, it is by knocking through supplication on the door of One All-Compassionate and Munificent that sustenance and strength may be obtained for a heart afflicted with infinite griefs and sorrows and captivated by infinite pleasures and hopes. And it is by turning towards the spring of mercy of an Eternal Beloved through the five daily prayers that the water of life may be imbibed by a spirit connected with most beings, which swiftly depart from this transitory world crying out at separation. And being most needy for air in the sorrowful, crushing, distressing, transient, dark, and suffocating conditions of this world, it is only through the window of the prayers that a conscious inner sense and luminous subtle faculty can breathe, which by its nature desires eternal life and was created for eternity and is a mirror of the Pre-Eternal and Post-Eternal One and is infinitely delicate and subtle.

THIRD WARNING

O my impatient soul! Is it at all sensible to think today of past hardships of worship, difficulties of the prayers, and troubles of misfortune, and be distressed, and to imagine the future duties of worship, service of the prayers, and sorrows of disaster, and display impatience? In being thus impatient you resemble a foolish commander, who, although the enemy's right flank joined his right flank and became fresh forces for him, sent a significant force to the right flank, and weakened the centre. Then, while there were no enemy soldiers on the left flank, he sent a large force there, and gave them the order to fire. No forces then remained in the centre, and the enemy understood this and attacked it and routed him.

Yes, you resemble this, for the troubles of yesterday have today been transformed into mercy; the pain has gone while the pleasure remains. The difficulty has been turned into blessings, and the hardship into reward. In which case, you should not feel worn out, but make a serious effort to continue with a new eagerness and fresh enthusiasm. As for future days, they have not yet arrived, and to think of them now and feel bored and wearied is a lunacy like thinking today of future hunger and thirst, and starting to shout and cry out. Since the truth is this, if you are reasonable, you will think of only today in connection with worship, and say: "I am spending one hour of it on an agreeable, pleasant, and elevated act of service, the reward for which is high and whose trouble is little." Then your bitter dispiritedness will be transformed into sweet endeavour.

My impatient soul! You are charged with being patient in three respects. One is patience in worship. Another is patience in refraining from sin. And a third is patience in the face of disaster. (Suyuti, al-Durar al-Muntathira, 46; Suyuti, al-Fath al-Kabir, ii, 200) If you are intelligent, take as your guide the truth apparent in the comparison in this Third Warning. Say in manly fashion: "O Most Patient One!", and shoulder the three sorts of patience. If you do not squander on the wrong way the forces of patience Almighty God has given you, they should be enough to withstand every difficulty and disaster. So hold out with those forces!

FOURTH WARNING

O my foolish soul! Is this duty of worship without result, and is its recompense little that it causes you weariness? Whereas if

someone was to give you a little money, or to intimidate you, he could make you work till evening, and you would work without slacking. So is it that the prescribed prayers are without result, which in this guest-house of the world are sustenance and wealth for your impotent and weak heart, and in your grave, which will be a certain dwelling-place for you, sustenance and light, and at the Resurrection, when you will anyway be judged, a document and patent, and on the Bridge of Sirat, over which you are bound to pass, a light and a mount? Is their recompense little? Someone promises you a present worth a hundred liras, and makes you work for a hundred days. You trust the man who may go back on his word and work without slacking. So if One for Whom the breaking of a promise is impossible, promises you recompense like Paradise and a gift like eternal happiness, and employs you for a very short time in a very agreeable duty, if you do not perform that service, or you act accusingly towards His promise or slight His gift by performing it unwillingly like someone forced to work, or by being bored, or by working in half-hearted fashion, you will deserve a severe reprimand and awesome punishment. Have you not thought of this? Although you serve without flagging in the heaviest work in this world out of fear of imprisonment, does the fear of an eternal incarceration like Hell not fill you with enthusiasm for a truly light and agreeable act of service?

FIFTH WARNING

O my world-worshipping soul! Does your slackness in worship and remissness in the prescribed prayers arise from the multiplicity of your worldly occupations, or because you cannot find time due to the struggle for livelihood? Were you created only for this world that you spend all your time on it? You know that in regard to your abilities you are superior to all the animals, but in regard to procuring the necessities of worldly life you cannot compete with even a sparrow. So why can you not understand that your basic duty is not to labour like an animal, but to strive for a true, perpetual life, like a true human being. In addition, the things you call worldly occupations mostly do not concern you, and are trivial matters which you meddle in officiously. You neglect the essential things and pass your time acquiring inessential information as though you were going to live for a thousand years. For example, you squander your precious time on worthless things like learning what the rings around Saturn are like or how many chickens there are in America. As though you were becoming an expert in astronomy or statistics.

If you say: “What keeps me from the prayers and worship and causes me to be lax is not unnecessary things like that, but essential matters like earning a livelihood,” then my answer is this: if you work for a daily wage of one hundred kurush, and someone comes to you and says: “Come and dig here for ten minutes, and you will find a brilliant and an emerald worth a hundred liras.” If you reply: “No, I won’t come, because ten kurush will be cut from my wage and my subsistence will be less,” of course you understand what a foolish pretext it would be. In just the same way, you work in this orchard for your livelihood. If you abandon the obligatory prayers, all the fruits of your effort will be restricted to only a worldly, unimportant, and unproductive livelihood. But if you spend your rest periods on the prayers, which allow your spirit to relax and heart to take a breather, you will discover two mines which are an important source, both for a productive worldly livelihood, and your livelihood and provisions of the hereafter.

First Mine: Through a sound intention, you will receive a share of the praises and glorifications offered by all the plants and trees, whether flowering or fruit-bearing, that you grow in the garden.

Second Mine: Whatever is eaten of the garden’s produce, whether by animals or man, cattle or flies, buyers or thieves, it will become like almsgiving from you. (Bukhari, iii, 135; Muslim, ii, 1189; Ibn Hibban, v, 152; Musnad, iii, 184, 191.) But on condition you work in the name of the True Provider and within the bounds of what He permits, and see yourself as a distribution official giving His provision to His creatures.

So see what a great loss is made by one who abandons the prescribed prayers. What significant wealth he loses, and he is deprived of those two results and mines which would otherwise cause him to work eagerly and ensure his morale is strong; he becomes bankrupt. Even, as he grows old, he will grow weary of gardening and lose interest in it, saying, “What is it to me? I am anyway leaving this world, why should I put up with this much difficulty?” He will sink into idleness. But the first man says: “I shall work harder at both worship and licit activities in order to send even more abundant light to my grave and procure more provisions for my life in the hereafter.”

In Short: O my soul! Know that yesterday has left you, and as for tomorrow, you have nothing to prove that it will be yours. In which case, know that your true life is the present day. So throw at least

one of its hours into a mosque or prayer-mat, a coffer for the hereafter like a reserve fund, set up for the true future. Know too that for you and for everyone each new day is the door to a new world. If you do not perform the prayers, your world that day will depart dark and wretched, and will testify against you in the World of Similitudes. For everyone, every day, has a private world out of this world, and its nature is dependent on the person's heart and actions. Like a splendid palace reflected in a mirror takes on the colour of the mirror; if it is black, it appears black; if it is red, it appears red. Also it takes on the qualities of the mirror; if the mirror is smooth, it shows the palace to be beautiful, and if it is not, it shows it to be ugly. As it shows the most delicate things to be coarse, so you alter the shape of your own world with your heart, mind, actions, and wishes. You may make it testify either for you or against you. If you perform the five daily prayers, and through them you are turned towards that world's Glorious Maker, all of a sudden your world, which looks to you, is lit up. Quite simply as though the prayers are an electric lamp and your intention to perform them touches the switch, they disperse the world's darkness and show the changes and movements within the confused wretchedness of worldly chaos to be a wise and purposeful order and a meaningful writing of Divine power. They scatter one light of the light-filled verse,

“God is the Light of the Heavens and the Earth”

Qur'an, 24:35

over your heart, and your world on that day is illuminated through the light's reflection. It will cause it to testify in your favour through its luminosity.

Beware, do not say: “What are my prayers in comparison with the reality of the prayers?”, because like the seed of a date-palm describes the full-grown tree, your prayers describe your tree. The difference is only in the summary and details; like the prayers of a great saint, the prayers of ordinary people like you or me, even if they are not aware of it, have a share of that light. There is a mystery in this truth, even if the conscious mind does not perceive it... but the unfolding and illumination differs according to the degrees of those performing them. However many stages and degrees there are from the seed of a date-palm to the mature tree, the degrees of the prayers and their stages are even more numerous. But the essence of that luminous truth is present in all the degrees.

O God! Grant blessings and peace to the one who said: "The five daily prayers are the pillar of religion," (Tirmidhi, Iman, 8; Ibn Maja, Fitan, 12; Musnad, v, 231, 237; al-Mustadrak, ii, 76.) and to all his Family and Companions.

[The Words]

UNDERSTANDING AND ACCEPTING THE REALITY OF DEATH

Often in our homes or even in society in general, it is easier to avoid talking about death and understanding thoroughly its reality. However, if we think of it, it should actually be normal and in fact must be discussed so we can prepare for it. Let's go back to the Quranic verse shared in this booklet in the beginning:

And this worldly life is not but diversion and amusement. And indeed, the home of the Hereafter - that is the [eternal] life, if only they knew.

Noble Qur'an, Al-Ankabut (29:64)

This is a beautiful reminder for all of us: we will depart this world not to disappear like a bubble but to proceed to our eternal life.

As what Ustad Bediuzzaman Said Nursi explained:

...death is a discharge from the duties of life; it is a rest, a change of residence, a transformation of existence; it is an invitation to eternal life, a beginning, the introduction to an immortal life. Just as life comes into the world through an act of creation and is appointed and determined, so departure from the world is created and determined, and is planned wisely and purposively. The ways

plants die, plant life being the simplest level of life, show their death to be a more orderly work of art than life. For although the death of fruits, seeds, and grains appears to occur through their decay and dissolution, it is in fact a sort of kneading that comprises exceedingly well-ordered chemical reactions and a balanced combining of elements and wise formation of particles; their unseen, orderly and wise deaths appear through the life of the new shoots. That is to say, the death of the seed is the onset of the shoot's life. Indeed, since its death is like life itself, it is created and regular the same as life is.

Moreover, the death of living fruits or animals in the human stomach is the beginning of their rising to the level of human life; it may therefore be said that being thus, their death is more orderly and created than is their life.

If the death of plant life, the lowest level of life, is created, wise, and ordered in that way, the death that befalls human life, the highest level of life, must be the same. Similarly, as a seed sown in the ground becomes a tree in the world of the air, so a man who is laid in the earth will surely produce the shoots of an everlasting life in the Intermediate Realm.

Now for the aspects of death that are bounties; we shall point out four of them.

The First: Death is a great bounty because it means one is freed from the duties and obligations of life, which become burdensome. It is also a door through which one passes in order to join and be united with one's friends, ninety-nine out of a hundred of whom are already in the Intermediate Realm.

The Second: It is to be released from the narrow, irksome, turbulent prison of this world, and to receive an expansive, joyful, troublefree immortal life, and to enter the sphere of the Eternally Beloved One's mercy.

The Third: There are numerous factors like old age which make life arduous and show death to be a far superior bounty. For example, if together with your very elderly parents who cause you

much distress you beheld before you your grandfather's grandfathers in all their pitiful state, you would understand what a calamity life is, and what a bounty, death.

Another example: one can imagine how difficult life is in the harsh conditions of winter for the beautiful flying insects, the lovers of the beautiful flowers, and what a mercy death is for them.

The Fourth: Just as sleep is a comfort, a mercy, a rest, particularly for those afflicted by disaster and the wounded and the sick, so too is death, the elder brother of sleep, a pure bounty and mercy for the disaster-struck and those who suffer tribulations that drive them to suicide. However, as is proved decisively in many of the Words, for the people of misguidance, death is pure torment the same as life, and pure affliction, but that is outside the discussion here.

[The Letters]

Because this is the reality, and because we are the highest form of creation, it would be best that we prepare for our return to Him using the intellect and abilities that He has given us, in shaa Allah. Let us also not think that others have an advantage over us just because of what they possess in this world. Remember what Allah informed us in the Qur'an,

Wealth and children are [but] adornment of the worldly life. But the enduring good deeds are better to your Lord for reward and better for [one's] hope.

Noble Qur'an, Al-Kahf (18:48)

So let's focus on doing good in the name of Allah. Have patience and faith that we will gain the rewards that He

promised. There may be a lot of challenges right now, in shaa Allah there will be so much ease in the hereafter, in shaa Allah

DEEPENING AND STRENGTHENING OUR FAITH CONTINUOUSLY

It was narrated that ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘Aas said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Allah will bring forth a man belonging to my ummah before all creatures and will spread ninety-nine scrolls [containing the record of his bad deeds] for him, each scroll extending as far as the eye can see. Then He will say, ‘Do you object to anything in this? Have my scribes who keep note wronged you?’ He will say, ‘No, my Lord.’ He will ask him, ‘Do you have any excuse?’ He will say, ‘No my Lord.’ Allah will say, ‘On the contrary, you have with Us a good deed, and you will not be wronged this Day.’ A slip of paper will then be brought out, on which are the words **‘Ashhadu an laa ilaaha ill-Allah wa ashhadu anna Muhammadan ‘abduhu wa rasooluhu (I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His slave and His Messenger).**’ Allah will say, ‘Bring your balance.’ The man will say, ‘O Lord, what is this slip of paper in comparison to these scrolls?’ And He will reply, ‘You will not be wronged.’ The scrolls will then be put in one side of the Balance and the slip of paper in the other, and the scrolls will become light and the slip of paper heavy, for nothing could compare in weight to the name of Allah.”

[Ahmad; Tirmidhi]

The hadith mentioned is a good reminder of the importance of strong faith in Allah. Though we may reach a point in our lives when we cannot move or get out of bed anymore because of our illness, may we always remember how important and how heavy in scales of deeds is faith in Allah. Come to think of it, its importance is not just for the hereafter. In fact, it is faith in Allah that gives us much strength and hope especially in times of challenges. It is what reminds us that after every hardship comes ease, Alhamdulillah.

La ilaha illAllah. Utter these words repeatedly. Understand it and internalize it. There is no god but Allah. Nothing and no one will ever be more important than Him.

Let's also try to memorize, internalize and repeatedly utter this:

La ilaha illAllah, Wahdahu la sharika lahu, la hul-Mulk, wa la hul-Hamd, yuhyiyu wa yumit, wa Huwa Hayyun la yamut, bi Yadihil-Khayr wa Huwa 'ala kulli shay'in Qadir wa ilayhi'l masir

(There is no god but God, He is One, He has no partner; His is the dominion, and His is the praise; He alone grants life, and deals death, and He is living and dies not; all good is in His hand, He is powerful over all things, and with Him all things have their end.)

Here's an excerpt from the Risale-i Nur that focus on the above supplication:

Be certain of this, that the highest aim of creation and its most important result is belief in God. The most exalted rank in humanity and its highest degree is the knowledge of God contained within belief in God. The most radiant happiness and sweetest bounty for jinn and human beings is the love of God contained within the knowledge of God. And the purest joy for the human spirit and the sheerest delight for man's heart is the rapture of the spirit contained within the love of God. Yes, all true happiness, pure joy, sweet bounties, and untroubled pleasure lie in knowledge of God and love of God; they cannot exist without them.

The person who knows and loves God Almighty may receive endless bounties, happiness, lights, and mysteries. While the one who does not truly know and love him is afflicted spiritually and materially by endless misery, pain, and fears. Even if such an impotent, miserable person owned the whole world, it would be worth nothing for him, for it would seem to him that he was living a fruitless life among the vagrant human race in a wretched world without owner or protector. Everyone may understand just how forlorn and baffled is man among the aimless human race in this bewildering fleeting world if he does not know his Owner, if he does not discover his Master. But if he does discover and know Him, he will seek refuge in His mercy and will rely on His power. The desolate world will turn into a place of recreation and pleasure, it will become a place of trade for the hereafter.

La ilaha illAllah, Wahdahu la sharika lahu, lahu-Mulk, wa lahu-Hamd, yuhyiy wa yumit, wa Huwa Hayyun la yamut, bi Yadihil-Khayr wa Huwa 'ala kulli shay'in Qadir wa ilayhi'l masir

(There is no god but God, He is One, He has no partner; His is the dominion, and His is the praise; He alone grants life, and deals death, and He is living and dies not; all good is in His hand, He is powerful over all things, and with Him all things have their end.)

Each of the eleven phrases of the above-mentioned sentence affirming divine unity contains some good news. And in the good news lies a cure, while in each of those cures a spiritual pleasure is to be found.

THE FIRST PHRASE: “There is no god but God”

This phrase conveys the following good news to the human spirit, suffering as it does countless needs and the attacks of innumerable enemies. On the one hand the spirit finds a place of recourse, a source of help, through which is opened to it the door of a treasury of mercy that will guarantee all its needs. While on the other it finds a support and source of strength, for the phrase makes known its Creator and True Object of Worship, who possesses the absolute power to secure it from the evil of all its enemies; it shows its master, and who it is that owns it. Through pointing this out, the phrase saves the heart from utter desolation and the spirit from aching sorrow; it ensures an eternal joy, a perpetual happiness.

THE SECOND PHRASE: “He is One”

This phrase announces the following good news, which is both healing and a source of happiness:

Man’s spirit and heart, which are connected to most of the creatures in the universe and are almost overwhelmed in misery and confusion on account of this connection, find in the phrase “He is One” a refuge and protector that will deliver them from all the confusion and bewilderment.

That is to say, it is as if “He is One” is saying to man: God is One. Do not wear yourself out having recourse to other things; do not demean yourself and feel indebted to them; do not flatter them and fawn on them and humiliate yourself; do not follow them and make things difficult for yourself; do not fear them and tremble before them; for the Monarch of the universe is One, the key to all things is with Him, the reins of all things are in His hand, everything will be resolved by His command. If you find Him, you will be saved from endless indebtedness, countless fears.

THE THIRD PHRASE: “He has no partner”

Just as in His divinity and in His sovereignty God has no partner, He is One and cannot be many; so too He has no partner in His

dominicality and in His actions and in His creating. It sometimes happens that a monarch is one, having no partner in his sovereignty, but in the execution of his affairs his officials act as his partners; they prevent everyone from entering his presence, saying: “Apply to us!”

However, God Almighty, the Monarch of Pre-Eternity and Post-Eternity, has no partner in His sovereignty, just as He has no need for partners or helpers in the execution of His dominicality.

If it were not for His command and will, His strength and power, not a single thing could interfere with another. Everyone can have recourse to Him directly. Since He has no partner or helper, no one seeking recourse can be told: “Stop! It is forbidden to enter His presence!”

This phrase, therefore, delivers the following joyful announcement to the human spirit: the human spirit which has attained to faith may, without let or hindrance, opposition or interference, in any state, for any wish, at any time and in any place, enter the presence of the All-Beauteous and Glorious One, the One of power and perfection, who is the Pre-Eternal and Post-Eternal Owner of the treasures of mercy, the treasures of bliss, and may present its needs. Discovering His mercy and relying on His power, it will find perfect ease and happiness.

THE FOURTH PHRASE: “His is the dominion”

That is to say, ownership is altogether His. As for you, you are both His property, you are owned by Him, and you work in His property. This phrase announces the following joyful and healing news:

O man! Do not suppose that you own yourself, for you have no control over any of the things that concern you; such a load would be heavy. Also, you are unable to protect yourself, to avoid disasters, or to do the things that you must. In which case, do not suffer pain and torment without reason, the ownership is another's. The Owner is both All-Powerful and All-Merciful; rely on

His power and do not cast aspersions on His mercy! Put grief behind you, be joyful! Discard your troubles and find serenity!

It also says: You love and are connected to the universe, which is the property of the All-Powerful and Merciful One, yet although it grieves you by its wretchedness, you are unable to put it right. So hand over the property to its Owner, leave it to Him. Attract His pleasure, not His harshness. He is both All-Wise and All-Merciful. He has free disposal over His property and administers it as He wishes. Whenever you take fright, say like İbrahim Hakki: "Let's see what the Master does; whatever He does, it is best;" understand this thoroughly and do not interfere!

THE FIFTH PHRASE: "His is the praise"

Praise, laudation, and acclaim are proper to Him, are fitting for Him. That is to say, bounties are His; they come from His treasury. And as for the treasury, it is unending. This phrase, therefore, delivers the following good news:

O man! Do not suffer and sorrow when bounties cease, for the treasury of mercy is inexhaustible. Do not dwell on the fleeting nature of pleasure and cry out with pain, because the fruit of the bounty is the fruit of a boundless mercy. Since its tree is undying, when the fruit finishes it is replaced by more. If you thankfully think of there being within the pleasure of the bounty a merciful favour a hundred times more pleasurable, you will be able to increase the pleasure a hundredfold.

An apple an august monarch presents to you holds a pleasure superior to that of a hundred, indeed a thousand, apples, for it is he that has bestowed it on you and made you experience the pleasure of a royal favour. In the same way, through the phrase "His is the praise" will be opened to you the door of a spiritual pleasure a thousand times sweeter than the bounty itself.

For the phrase means to offer praise and thanks; that is to say, to perceive the bestowal of bounty. This in turn means to recognize the Bestower, which is to reflect on the bestowal of

bounty, and so finally to ponder over the favour of His compassion and His continuing to bestow bounties.

THE SIXTH PHRASE: “He alone grants life”

That is to say, He is the giver of life. And it is He who causes life to continue by means of sustenance. He also supplies the necessities of life. And it is to Him that the exalted aims of life pertain and its important results look, and His are ninety-nine out of a hundred of its fruits. Thus, this phrase calls out in this way to ephemeral, impotent man, it makes this joyful announcement:

O man! Do not trouble yourself by shouldering the heavy burdens of life. Do not think of the transience of life and start grieving. Do not see only its worldly and unimportant fruits and regret that you came to this world. For the life-machine in the ship of your being belongs to the Ever-Living and Self-Subsistent One, and it is He who provides for all its expenses and requirements. Also, your life has a great many aims and results, and they pertain to Him, too.

As for you, you are just a helmsman on the ship, so do your duty well and take the wage and pleasure that come with it. Think of just how precious is the life-ship and how valuable its benefits; then think of just how Generous and Merciful is the Owner of the ship. So rejoice and give thanks and know that when you perform your duty with integrity, all the results the ship produces will in one respect be transferred to the register of your actions, that they will secure an immortal life for you, will endow you with eternal life.

THE SEVENTH PHRASE: “And deals death”

He is the one who causes death. He discharges you from the duty of life, changes your abode from this transitory world, and releases you from the labour of service. That is, He takes you from a transient life to an immortal one. This phrase, then, shouts out the following to ephemeral jinn and man:

Here is good news for you! Death is not destruction, or nothingness, or annihilation; it is not cessation or extinction; it is not eternal separation, or non-existence, or a chance event; it is not authorless obliteration. Rather, it is to be discharged by the

Author who is All-Wise and All-Compassionate; it is a change of abode. It is to be despatched to eternal bliss, to your true home. It is the door of union to the Intermediate Realm, which is where you will meet with ninety-nine per cent of your friends.

THE EIGHTH PHRASE: “And He is living and dies not”

That is to say, the Possessor of a beauty, perfection, and munificence that are infinitely superior to the beauty, perfection, and munificence to be seen in the creatures of the universe, and that arouse love; and an Eternal Object of Worship, an Everlasting Beloved, a single manifestation of whose beauty is sufficient to replace all other beloveds, has an enduring life through pre-eternity and post-eternity – a life free from any trace of cessation or ephemerality and exempt from any fault, defect, or imperfection. Thus, this phrase proclaims to jinn and man, to all conscious beings, and the people of love and ardour:

Here is good news for you! There exists an Everlasting Beloved who will cure and bind the wounds caused you by countless separations from the ones you love. Since He exists and is undying, whatever happens do not fret over the others. Furthermore, the beauty and generosity, virtue and perfection to be seen in them, the cause of your love, are, passing through many veils, the shadows of the palest of shadows of the manifestation of the Ever-Enduring Beloved’s ever-enduring beauty. Do not grieve at their disappearance, for they are mirrors of a sort. The mirrors being changed renews and embellishes the manifestation of the Beauty’s radiance. Since He exists, everything exists.

THE NINTH PHRASE: “All good is in His hand”

Every good action you perform is transferred to His register. Every righteous deed you do is recorded with Him. Thus, this phrase calls out to jinn and mankind with the following good news:

O wretched ones! When you journey to the grave do not cry out in despair, “Alas! Everything we owned is destroyed, all our efforts are wasted; we have left the beautiful broad earth and entered the narrow grave,” for everything of yours is preserved, all your

actions written down, every service you have rendered recorded. A Glorious One in whose hand is all good and who is able to bring all good to fruition, will reward your service: drawing you to Himself, He will keep you only temporarily under the ground. Later, He will bring you to His presence. What happiness for those of you who have completed their service and duty; your labour is finished, you are departing for ease and mercy! Service and toil are over, you are going to receive your wage!

The All-Powerful One of Glory preserves seeds and grains, which are the pages of the register of last spring's deeds and the deposit-boxes of its services, and publishes them the following spring in glittering fashion, indeed, in a manner a hundred times more plentiful than the originals. The results of your life He is preserving in the same way, and will reward your service in a truly abundant fashion.

THE TENTH PHRASE: "And He is Powerful over all things"

He is One, He is Unique, He has power over everything. Nothing at all is difficult for Him. To create the spring is as easy for Him as to create a flower, and He creates Paradise with as much ease as He creates the spring. The innumerable artefacts which He continuously creates every day, every year, every century, witness with numberless tongues to His boundless power. Thus, this phrase too delivers good news:

O man! The service you have offered and the worship you have performed are not for nothing. A realm of reward, an abode of bliss, has been prepared for you. An unending Paradise is awaiting you in place of this fleeting world of yours. Have faith and confidence in the promise of the Glorious Creator whom you know and whom you worship, for it is impossible for Him to break His promise. In absolutely no respect is there any deficiency in His power; impotence cannot impede His works. Just as He creates your tiny garden, so He is able to create Paradise for you, and He

has created it and promised it to you. And because He has promised, He shall, of course, admit you to it!

We observe every year on the face of the earth that He gathers together and disperses with perfect order and balance, with perfect timing and ease, more than three hundred thousand species and groups of animals and plants. Most certainly such an All-Powerful One of Glory is capable of carrying out His promise.

Since, being thus absolutely Powerful He creates samples of the resurrection and Paradise in thousands of forms every year; and since, promising eternal bliss through all His revealed scriptures, He gives the glad tidings of Paradise; and since all His actions and deeds are carried out with truth, veracity, and seriousness; and since, through the testimony of all His works of art, all perfections point to and testify to His infinite perfection, there being in absolutely no respect any defect or fault in Him; and since the breaking of a promise, lying, falsehood, and deception are the ugliest of qualities besides being defects and faults; then most decidedly and most certainly that All-Powerful One of Glory, that All-Wise One of Perfection, that All-Merciful One of Beauty, will carry out His promise; He will open the gate to eternal bliss; He will admit you, O people of faith, to Paradise, which was the original home of your forefather Adam.

THE ELEVENTH PHRASE: “And with Him all things have their end”

Human beings are sent to this world, the realm of trial and examination, with the important duties of trading and acting as officials. After they have concluded their transactions, accomplished their duties, and completed their service, they will return and meet once more with their Generous Master and Glorious Creator who sent them forth in the first place. Leaving this transient realm, they will be honoured and elevated to the presence of grandeur in the realm of permanence. That is to say, being delivered from the turbulence of causes and from the obscure veils of intermediaries, they will meet with their Merciful Sustainer without veil at the seat of His eternal majesty. Everyone

will find his Creator, True Object of Worship, Sustainer, Lord, and Owner and will know Him directly. Thus, this phrase proclaims the following joyful news, which is greater than all the rest:

O man! Do you know where you are going and where you are being driven? As is stated at the end of the Thirty-Second Word, a thousand years of happy life in this world cannot be compared to one hour of life in Paradise. And a thousand years of life in Paradise cannot be compared to one hour's vision of the sheer loveliness of the Beauteous One of Glory. You are going to the realm of His mercy, and to His presence.

The loveliness and beauty in all the creatures of this world and in those worldly beloveds by which you are so stricken and obsessed and for which you are so desirous, are but a sort of shadow of the manifestation of His beauty and of the loveliness of His names; and all Paradise with all of its subtle wonders, a single manifestation of His mercy; and all longing and love and allurement and captivation, but a flash of the love of the Eternal Worshipful One and Everlasting Beloved. You are going to the sphere of His presence. You are being summoned to Paradise, which is an eternal feasting place. Since this is so, you should enter the grave not weeping, but smiling in expectation.

The phrase announces this good news as well: O man! Do not be apprehensive, imagining that you are going to extinction, non-existence, nothingness, darkness, oblivion, decay, and dissolution, and that you will drown in multiplicity. You are going not to extinction, but to permanence. You are being impelled not to non-existence, but to perpetual existence. You are going to enter not darkness, but the world of light. And you are returning to your true owner, to the seat of the Pre-Eternal Monarch. You will not drown in multiplicity, you will take your rest in the realm of unity. You are bound not for separation, but for union.”

*Glory be unto You! We have no knowledge save that which
You have bestowed upon us.
Verily, You are All-Knowing, All-Wise.
Noble Qur'an, Al Baqarah (2):32*

Our dear brother/sister,

Thank you so much for making some time to read this booklet. We hope it helped us even in a little way to feel closer to Allah and to see more clearly the wisdom behind and blessings in our current tests, in shaa Allah.

We pray that together we will be able to overcome this challenge, in shaa Allah. Let us continue to do our best, with the time given to us, to come closer to Him with deep faith, thanks, and patience no matter what we experience.

Again, thank you and may He grant us all a good end and a truly joyful eternal life! Ameen.