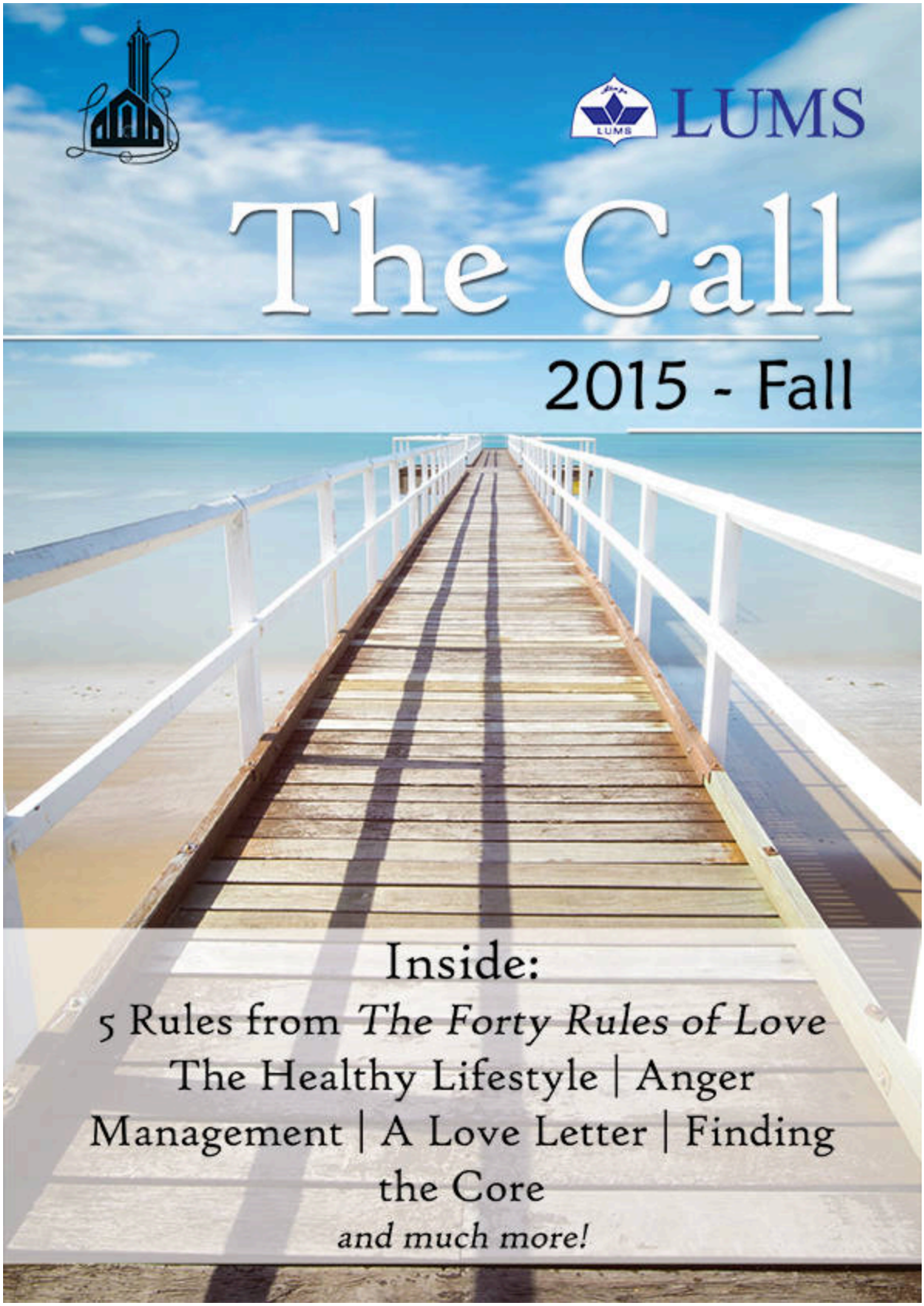

LUMS
The Call
2015 - Fall
Inside:
5 Rules from *The Forty Rules of Love*
The Healthy Lifestyle | Anger Management | A Love Letter | Finding the Core
and much more!

Our Inspiration

It comes in books of Islamic learning that when Hadhrat Ibrahim (A.S) preached the Oneness of God to his people, they turned against him. At one point in their persecution against him, they lit a huge fire that was the biggest fire that had ever been seen by any who were present then. The heat of the fire was so intense that no one could even go near it without being burnt. Birds that flew over the fire high up in the air were burnt to a crisp, falling to their fiery deaths into the inferno below. It was in this fire that they planned to burn Hadhrat Ibrahim (A.S) alive, by launching him into it with the help of a huge slingshot. The story of what happened to Hadhrat Ibrahim (A.S) is currently not our focus though.

Some distance away from this scene, there was a Little Bird. Now this brave Little Bird would scoop up a few droplets of water from a nearby pond in her tiny beak and, unable to go anywhere even *near* the flames would drop those droplets a huge distance from the fire, then go back and fetch some more droplets, and repeat the routine. So someone asked the Little Bird, "O Little Bird! What are you doing? You cannot even fly within hundreds of meters of the fire, and even if you could reach the fire, what good would your tiny water droplets do?"

The Little Bird replied, "O my friend, you are correct, these droplets probably won't affect the fire one bit. But on the Day of Reckoning, if Allah the Most Supreme asks me, "O Little Bird, people were lighting a fire to burn My friend Ibrahim, what were *you* doing?", at least I will be able to say, "O Allah, I wasn't amongst those who were lighting the fire... I was amongst those who were trying to put it out."

That Little Bird inspires the entire effort of the LUMS Religious Society.

The Little Bird causes us to think about the question we might have to face one day in front of our Lord, "All around you, people were lighting the fires of heedlessness and neglect of My Deen... what were you doing?"

In short, LRS is our chance to say, "O Allah, we weren't amongst those who were lighting the fires... we were amongst those who were trying to put it out."

Our Vision

LRS aims at creating a forum for individuals who believe that religion affects and influences life in a number of vibrant ways, illuminating exclusive and undiscovered horizons. It's a platform for those who view religion as a source of enhancing one's sense of being, coherence, morality, and individuality leading to perfection in every walk of life without conflicting in any way with an individual's rational and productive lifestyle. With starting such a platform, LRS then aims to help realize ideas and innovative suggestions in creating such a model and environment for the rest and inviting others to relevant activities and events.

The society is dedicated to organizing events and activities to nurture meaningful dialogue, create awarenss and learn more about religion - from regular lectures by scholarly speakers to motivational seminars and debates.

This society would work great for all those who believe in discovering and holding on to their spiritual or religious side while living 'the LUMS life'. With every infinitesimal amount of your concentration focused on keeping up your grades and social life, the LRS offers you an opportunity to develop your inner self; wherein peace, tranquility and true satisfaction lie.

Our Team

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Letter from the President 2015-2016

A warm welcome to the LUMS community and all its new members!
We are so happy to present to you The CALL-after all the hard work put in by our great team!
The purpose of this magazine was to allow people to reflect on themselves and their spiritual side. The magazine is full of articles on different aspects of our religion; including personal reflections and advice on topics like anger and health management.
Even in this day and age, the era of looking everything up on one's phone, ipad and the works-a magazine-a work full of published traditional articles could never lose its beauty. At least not for me. A magazine could never be replaced by a computer screen because there's nothing compared to flipping through the pages of a good read and a cup of coffee (especially during Lahore winters). And for some reason, a computer screen just doesn't bring the joy of reading the way a magazine or a book does.
We sincerely hope you guys enjoy this more than we enjoyed working on it. We hope you read, reflect, learn and enjoy this read with a warm heart and a nice cup of coffee.
We can't thank the team enough.

Sincerely,
Farah Asad Balagamwala

Letter from the Vice President 2015-2016

When we go shopping somewhere and see a security camera, we know inside that if one even tries to steal, one would certainly get caught and be reprimanded. Hence one stays away from stealing. Allah Ta'ala says in the Quran,

"... He is with you wherever you are ..." (57:4)

That means there's this one camera that is always watching us every second of the day, and one day, our life's video will be played in front of everyone - we know it, but we don't realize it. The Call is our little effort at moving towards that realization. May Allah Ta'ala Accept us and forgive us all.

Abdul Qadeer Khan

Letter from the Outgoing President 2014-2015

"Hayya las Salah" calls Qari Rizwan, the LUMS Mu'azzin, over the loudspeaker. The only noticeable reaction on campus is the lack of one. We are so busy in our own life that we have lost sight of its very purpose: to gain the pleasure of the Almighty. But the Mu'azzin never stops trying; he never gets dejected. LRS has a similar role to the Mu'azzin: to proclaim "The Call". A call to turn to that Lord who is ever turned towards you, to love that Lord who already loves you. It isn't important what sect you belong to, or even what religion you follow. What is important is that you NEED Him. And it is that need that this issue of "The Call" aims to help you realize. May Allah SWT accept this small effort and grant all those involved His everlasting pleasure, Ameen.

Zaid Saeed Khan

Letter from the Outgoing Vice President 2014-2015

All our lives we have been hearing about worshipping Allah SWT, about following the sunnah of our beloved Prophet SAW. We have been hearing all sorts of calls. Calls to prayer made first by the Mu'azzin, our parents, followed by our conscience telling us to get up and go pray. We hear and hear and hear. So did I.

But there is a difference between hearing and listening.

The first time I *listened* was when I discovered the concept of loving Allah SWT. Love. Yes, that was something new to me. Slowly, I realized worship is actually the highest form of love. And the reason I perhaps kept falling was because I was trying to go the other way round: worship without love.

This magazine is another such call. But a slightly different one as well. It's a call made out of love. Hopefully you'll enjoy it inshaAllah. And hopefully you too may start picking up the little soft calls whispering in these pages, and be able to hear and *listen* to them with the ears of your heart inshaAllah!
Happy reading! :)

Maryam Mazher

Letter from the Content Manager

There comes a time in every person's life when they feel a void, an emptiness, as if there is something missing from their lives that should have been there, like a phantom limb; a time when every person wonders, deep inside their hearts, that surely, surely, life was meant to be more than what it is right now. And yet they can not quite put their finger on what is causing them this unrest. Some people embark on the quest to find the missing puzzle piece to their heart, and some simply let themselves become immune to its absence until a time comes when they start to believe that this unrest is a part of who they are.

Allah SWT says in the Qur'an:

> "Verily, only in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest." (13:28)

This is a promise made by the Rabb Al-Alameen in the Qur'an Al-Kareem, that the only way to fill that swirling vortex inside your heart is to remember Him. That is the prescription and the cure for all our worldly and other-worldly ailments.

Unfortunately, today, our lives are so empty of the remembrance – dhikr – of Allah SWT, that it is no wonder we are living such stressful and discontent lives.

This magazine is a very small and humble attempt to plug ourselves back in to Allah SWT, to His Deen, to His Name. Attachments to people, places, and ideals will never fulfill us, and will never put our hearts at peace. Eventually, people will pass away and pass on, places will crumble, and old ideals will be replaced by new ones. But Allah SWT is the Eternal and Everlasting, and He is the True Beloved. Attachment to Him will not only benefit us in this world but will also be a Nur for us on the Day of Judgement. InshaAllah.

Allah SWT says about Himself that He is a "hidden treasure." And the more you delve into the reality of Allah SWT, and the more you discover Him, the more you will realize what a priceless treasure He is, and how lucky we are to have Him as our Lord, and to be His slaves every single day. That is the goal, and the ultimate purpose of our lives: Allah SWT.

May Allah SWT accept all our efforts in His path. Ameen.

Najia Navaid

5 Rules from The Forty Rules of Love

By Hafiza Hira Hassan

Quotes on love from "The Forty Rules of Love" take Sufism into blockbuster territory. Its writer Elif Shafak expounds a populist rather than a scholarly Sufism, providing a vigorous and wonderfully touching introduction to Sufi thought.

Rule 1

How we see God is a direct reflection of how we see ourselves. If God brings to mind mostly fear and blame, it means there is too much fear and blame welled inside us. If we see God as full of love and compassion, so are we.

Rule 2

The path to the Truth is a labour of the heart, not of the head. Make your heart your primary guide! Not your mind. Meet, challenge and ultimately prevail over your nafs with your heart. Knowing your ego will lead you to the knowledge of God.

Rule 3

You can study God through everything and everyone in the universe, because God is not confined in a mosque, synagogue or church. But if you are still in need of knowing where exactly His abode is, there is only one place to look for him: in the heart of a true lover.

Rule 4

Intellect and Love are made of different materials. Intellect ties people in knots and risks nothing, but Love dissolves all tangles and risks everything. Intellect is always cautious and advises, 'Beware too much ecstasy', whereas Love says, 'Oh, never mind! Take the plunge!' Intellect does not easily break down, whereas Love can effortlessly reduce itself to rubble. But treasures are hidden among ruins. A broken heart hides treasures.

Rule 5

Most of problems of the world stem from linguistic mistakes and simple misunderstanding. Don't ever take words at face value. When you step into the zone of love, language, as we know it, becomes obsolete. That which can not be put into words can only be grasped through silence.



Believe you me, you really are what you eat!

By Farah Asad

"Two blessings which many people undermine are health and free time." (Hadith from Bukhari)

'People eat to live, I live to eat.' You must have heard that one a thousand times before. But I read an article some time ago, one line of which never left my head - "The pleasure of eating results in the pain of being fat." Ouch.
But proper health management isn't about either of these things. Whether you're enjoying life at its best by overeating, or you're enjoying life - although, can it really be called 'enjoyment'? - by starving yourself, neither of these two options fits under the "healthy lifestyle" tag.

Hazrat Ali RA said: "If you possess these things, you have all the blessings of the world: a grateful tongue, a heart that remembers Allah Ta' la, a strong body, and an earning in one's own country."
Good health doesn't just entail being slim. It means that one is able to do all the work that is required without getting fatigued. One who has good health can keep Allah Ta' la as well as other people happy.





You are what you eat. If we eat well, our health will reflect the same. Fruit and other healthy foods should be kept readily available at home. Foods that contain omega fatty 3 acids aid in fighting cancer, muscular degeneration, and heart disease. They also help with depression and anxiety. Examples of such foods include nuts, seeds, and fish like salmon.

Simultaneously, while keeping healthy food handy, limit the amount of unhealthy food in your diet. White sugar should be used in moderation. Studies show that sugar enhances the growth of tumors. Consuming too many carbohydrates (white bread, rice, and sadly, pasta) is also detrimental to health. We can replace some of it with whole wheat varieties of fruits and vegetables. Salt intake should be limited as it causes blood pressure to increase and degenerates calcium in the bones. Research shows that there is a correlation between fatty foods and aggressive behavior. Reading labels on food items and limiting the amount of processed food intake are also effective ways of maintaining a healthy diet.

The Call to Success

When a friend, a relative or an acquaintance invites us to their house or to a social gathering, we usually tend to respond in two ways: either we graciously accept their invitation or we politely refuse because we have other commitments. It also often happens that when we respond in the latter manner, we tend to feel bad while turning down an invitation.

Imagine a situation where your friend invites you over for lunch. You decline the invitation but he/she invites you again the next day. Clearly, the friend is interested in spending time with you because he/she must really like you. You decline again. The next day, your friend invites you once more for lunch. You will respond in either two ways: you will feel bad and finally accept the invite or you will turn it down once more. After having the invitation rejected the third time, the friend will stop inviting you because fortunately – or unfortunately – he/she will realize that you are not interested.

Hayya ala 'l-fala , Hayya ala 'l-fala !
Come to success, Come to success!

A call. An invite. A call that we have always heard, continue to hear, and will always hear five times a day till the Last Day. It is an invitation that we casually turn down without even feeling the slightest guilt. Yet, no matter how many times we reject this call, we will receive this invitation multiple times in the same day, till we cease to exist. The Caller, the Inviter, the Friend, the Lover, must really love us to never give up calling us to Him. But what kind of humans are we? Ignorant and rude, rejecting one call after another. How unlucky we are! This isn't an invitation to a petty social gathering or a lunch. It is the ultimate invitation to real success. While we spend our lives running after people whom we want to impress for a promotion, a salary raise, friendship or other personal gains, we have one Friend who wants us to attain the real success. It is the success that outweighs all other worldly successes. But in our foolishness, we simply reject the call; the call to the success that will save us from calamity and failure. We reject this invite from a Friend who will never fail us, never leave us and in fact, will give us more than we could ever ask for. We reject the invite to real success.

Alas! How unlucky we are!

Like Fish in Water

By Maham Jamal

It was raining heavily that night but she cared not. She crossed the barrier adjacent to the mosque, drenched from head to toe, not knowing exactly where she was headed. She just had to find it; that was all she knew. Yet she did not know where it could be bought, and that made her even more desperate in her search for it. She thought of all the places in her reach but ended up eliminating each of the options: it was not something she could buy from the Store; nor borrow from a wing mate; neither could she look it up on the internet in one of the Labs.

It was a state of the heart that had to be attained. Such a simple thing yet it seemed so distant. It was a yearning that stemmed from the void within her. It was something she had searched for many times before, yet failed every single time. It was inner peace that she was searching for.

Where to get it from? And how? Her heart sank for she was grieved seemingly beyond repair and as time passed by, she was getting worse, as if the void was deepening. Clutching her torso tight, tears camouflaged in the rain, she walked slowly. She found it hard to breathe. Imagining herself like a fish thrown out of the water, a prayer escaped her quivering lips, "Please God. Make it easy for me."

In the same moment her searching eyes fell upon the path to her right. But this night, there was something strange about this path, the lights gleaming on either sides of the pavement seemed like stars in the dark night, as if telling her, *"I know you are tired but come, this is the way." Without thinking further, she took the turn and moved towards what she now realized was the entrance to the building beyond. It was the same building with the tall pillars, the large dome on the top and the vast, entrancing French windows. The path led her to the door which she opened and disappeared through.

Later, she recalled this incident with a friend and simply smiled as she said, "Well, I found what I was looking for. I found water."

It comes in a hadith: "A believer in a mosque is like fish in water."

At the very heart of the LUMS campus is the exquisite and striking structure of the mosque. Apart from the fact that it is easily accessible to all on campus, it goes without saying that it is indeed one of the most well-built and beautiful mosques one might have come across. The façade alone seems to emanate positivity – one of the most tranquil places on campus yet vibrant in spirituality. Certainly, it is where one can lose oneself in the remembrance of Allah SWT.

"Verily, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find peace." (Al-Ra'd: 28)

Within the confines of the mosque, be it in the call of the mu'azzin to prayer, in salah with jama'at, in reciting and pondering over the Qur'an or in reciting a melodious naat; the heart and mind forget the worries of the world outside and the mo'min can truly breathe. Every worldly relationship carries with it some kind of insecurity, mistrust or fear of betrayal. But on entering the mosque, you know you have come to the One Being who will never betray you, will always keep your secrets, and Whom you can always lean on, Someone who will never let you fall and should you fall, He will always be there to catch you. That Someone will never let you down and the mosque being His house, holds a strange sense of security, confidence and certitude. Above all, it carries a warmth which fills that void within.

That is peace.

That is water.

*Note:
This quote is taken from the works of Maulana Jalalu'l-din Rumi

D-ANGER MANAGEMENT!

By Farah Asad

Anger. Everyone feels it. We all experience it. We all feel that unpleasantness that sets into our bodies, putting us into fight or flight mode. Blood pressure rockets sky-high, adrenaline rushes forth, blood fills the veins, and the face goes crimson.

Why do we feel angry? There are several general causes: pride, status, betrayal, avarice, hunger, sickness, intoxication, failure, lethargy, and even traffic jams, amongst others. You might be taken aback, but certain foods cause anger as well! Common foods such as chillies, coffee, tomato, artificial sugar and milk products may easily trigger anger levels - so watch what you eat! The good news is, on the flip side, protein-enriched foods such as fish, eggs, white meat, almonds, etc. help reduce anger. Moreover, multivitamins such vitamins B6, vitamin B9 and vitamin B12 reduce anger levels as much as by 37%.

Apart from the above-stated reasons we all have our own personal reasons that occasionally make our blood boil. Load-shedding for one, and locked computers in the lab (if you're me).

So how do we manage the red monster inside us? Take a look at some simple followable tips below - I call it the "Ten-R Solution."

1. Rate: Gauge your anger level on a scale of 1-10. After you have diagnosed the intensity of the problem, you're more likely to start working on it.

2. Record: Keep a diary and record your angry moments. Each day, analyze the situations: what made me angry? When was that actual point I just blew up? Track your anger and know exactly what made you angry. You will soon realize you're getting angry at miniscule things - this is simply a waste of what could be otherwise peaceful and happy moments!

3. Relocate: Change your environment. Sometimes our immediate surroundings are the cause for our irritation. Maybe someone we're not too fond of is lurking around, or there's just too much noise at PDC and it's starting to cause a subtle headache. Just get up and leave! If that's not possible, at least change your posture (yup, that helps!). If you're standing, then sit. If you're sitting, then lie down - that's direct advice from our beloved Nabi Kareem SAW!

4. Relax: As obvious as this sounds (though we don't actually do it), just take a deep breath and relax. Ensuring a healthy sleeping pattern is also a way to relax the body. If you've been up all night (and nighttime sleep is much more effective than sleeping all afternoon), you may feel short-tempered during the day. Just switch off your phone (Let go of WhatsApp for a few hours) and sleep early that night. If there's no time for that, simply cool down with a glass of cold water or - even better - with some thanda thanda wudhu!

5. Regular Exercise: Exercise is vital for emotional stability. It keeps you fresh and rejuvenated. It releases stress and keeps you happy! Our beloved Nabi Kareem SAW said that the believer's own self/body also has a right over him. This means that keeping ourselves healthy and energetic is also a part of making Allah Ta'ala happy - an added benefit (and a really good one).

6. Re-structure: Revert the situation into a pleasant one. Change the topic, or the change the way you think. Maybe the other person is justified in their actions. Our beloved Nabi Kareem SAW taught us to recite ta'awuz (seeking refuge from Shaytan). This is by far, the best technique to restructure!

7. React Calmly: Definitely easier said than done, but no harm in trying. Especially if the effort is worth it! So next time you're angry, or someone's angry with you - smile warmly, wait for fifteen minutes, and respond in a calm and collected manner. A hadith states: "The strong one is not the one who can wrestle, but it is the one who can control himself when he is angry." (Bukhari).

8. Release some humor: Never heard of this before? Well, research shows that always keeping a few jokes at bay for an emotionally rainy day could help ease the tension considerably.

9. Remain positive: No matter how bleak the sky looks, always try and extract the beauty out of it. You might just spot a rainbow in there! So avoid negativity and be willing to hear the other side of the story (and try believing it as well).

10. Reward: This is the number one reason to control one's anger! Ponder over the innumerable verses of the Qur'an, and the plentiful advice from our beloved Nabi Kareem SAW that talk about controlling anger, and the reward that comes with it! Allah Ta'ala says in the Qur'an: "Those who spend in Allah's cause in prosperity and in adversity, and repress anger, and who forgive men; verily, Allah loves the good-doers." (Surah Al-e-Imran: 133-134).

May Allah Ta'ala grant us all the ability to control our anger and utilize it in the best manner. Ameen.

DEEN 101:

The Freshman's Guide to Religion at LUMS

By Zaid Saeed Khan

The first few weeks are extremely significant in determining the trajectory of a student's life at LUMS. The advice you get, the friends you make and the courses you take, all leave a lasting impact on your LUMS experience. In the excitement and confusion surrounding the adjustment to a new chapter in your life, it is extremely important not to lose sight of what is most important: your faith. Based on my own experience and mistakes, and those of my friends and peers, I've compiled a list of DOs and DON'Ts to help you get through university life while making you closer to Allah SWT in the process.

The DOs:

1. Make friends with people who are better than you. This is vital. Your friends define who you are. The Prophet SAW said: "A man is on the religion of his friend". Having friends who are conscious of Allah SWT in their lives is the easiest way to get closer to Him yourself. Make sure you have at least some friends such that their mere presence reminds you of Allah SWT.

2. Seek advice. For any and every problem you're going through, chances are that your seniors have already gone through it. From kicking a bad habit and struggling with a certain sin, to being unable to get up for Fajr or having a lack of feeling in namaz, most of us have been there, done that. Ask those who have overcome it. Identify the pitfalls that they fell into and avoid them for your own self.

3. Connect to the masjid. Alhamdulillah we cannot be grateful enough for the wonderful masjid we have at LUMS. It offers a calm, peaceful retreat from the tensions and anxieties of LUMS life – an opportunity to truly feel that:
"Verily, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest" (Qur'an 13:28).

Make the most of it.

4. Ask the experts. If you want to know medical science's take on a certain matter, you don't believe every layman's opinion; you ask a doctor. Similarly, if you want to know what deen has to say, don't trust indirect sources. Ask the experts. People may come up with a thousand different criticisms and explanations of deen. To evaluate them fairly, give the experts of deen a chance to explain, rather than just accepting them on face value.

5. Ask your conscience. The Prophet SAW said: "Take a fatwa (legal opinion) from your spiritual heart. Moral goodness is whatever your spiritual heart feels ease at doing, and sin is whatever brings discomfort to the spiritual heart even if people counsel you otherwise."

6. Feel pride in your religion. If LUMS students can feel proud enough of their university to put its name on their cars, their Facebook profiles, and their hoodies, why can't you feel the same way about your deen? Your "molvi/ninja" exterior is nothing to be ashamed of. Embrace it. Allah SWT will love you all the more. And if people consider you strange, remember the Prophet's SAW hadith: "Islam began as something strange, and it will revert to being strange, so give glad tidings to the strangers."

7. Turn to Allah SWT when things are going wrong. Even if you're not able to obey Him when everything is fine, He still loves it if you turn to Him in your time of need. So loving is our Lord that He loves it even when you make dua for your worldly needs. Remember, He is *"closer (to you) than (your) jugular vein."* (Qur'an 50:16)

The DONTs:

1. Don't think you're better than others. Praying 5 times a day, wearing a hijab, or sporting a beard does not make you better than others. They may have a host of qualities that you don't, and you may have a lot of flaws they don't. The Prophet SAW said: "The one who has a seed's worth of vanity will not enter Jannah".

2. Don't cheat. Have some self-respect. It is infinitely more honorable to fail than to pass by cheating. Once a person explained it to me this way: if you copy in one quiz, that gets you a few more marks, that gets you a slightly better grade, that slightly improves your GPA, that gets you your first job, then your entire life earnings become tainted with haram. It's a heavy price to pay!

3. Don't be overconfident about the strength of your iman. It might feel very cool to be the only one in the group who doesn't give in to (insert social vice here), but don't think you're a rock. Your company has an effect on you whether you like it or not. Don't endanger your iman; it's the most precious thing you have.

4. Don't try to be a messiah. Did you ever think, "But if I don't hang out with them anymore, they'll lose the only link they have with deen"? This is a common concern for the sincere mo'min friend who wants to help his friends become better Muslims. But a crumbling rock can't bear the weight of a building. First fix yourself then help others. And even then, choose your methods wisely. Going to the nightclub with the intention of da'wah is not going to end well.

5. Don't get bogged down by the confusions. "Haath kidhar baandhnay hain?" "Ameen ooncha parhna hai?" "Konsa school of thought theek hai?" These are all valid questions, but what you don't know shouldn't stop you from practicing what you do. For instance, namaz is fardh. That is something you know for a fact. So just pray, however you want, and make dua to Allah SWT to show you the right way. If you are sincere, He will guide you. *"And (as for) those who strive hard for Us, We will most certainly guide them in Our ways."* (Qur'an 29:69)

6. Don't make studies an excuse. The 10 minutes it takes walking to the masjid and back isn't what's going to shoot down your grade. The hours you spend watching serials and lazing around in front of PDC are. You can have both deen AND dunya . You just need to cut out on the wasted time.

7. Don't do relative grading. "At least I pray Jumu'ah, half the students don't even do that", "At least I take a dupatta, most girls dress much less modestly". Stop kidding yourself. You're responsible for you, not anyone else. What everyone around you is doing is irrelevant to what you'll be asked about on the Day of Judgment.

8. Don't try to understand deen just through logic. Feel it with your heart. You cannot logically prove that Islam is correct. The way to get conviction is through servitude. Allah SWT says in the Qur'an, *"Worship your Lord until you achieve yaqeen (the ultimate certainty)"* (15:99).

9. Don't blame Islam for what Muslims do. "He has such a big beard yet he still lies!" "She prays 5 times a day yet I still saw her cheating!" Muslims have flaws; Islam doesn't. If you want to know what type of a person Islam aims to produce, look at the Prophet SAW. Don't think that everyone who "looks" religious is a perfect representative of Islam.

10. Don't think you're beyond hope. Infact, make that NEVER. Allah SWT is more Merciful than you can imagine. He says in the Qur'an: *"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."* (39:53)

No matter how far from the right path you are, He has still left a door open: Tawbah. Just turn back. No matter what you've done before, if you turn to Him sincerely, there's no way He won't accept you.

***The author would be most pleased to offer support or advice to any LUMS student about any aspect of deen at LUMS. He can be contacted directly at zaidsaeedkhan@gmail.com**

A Mystical Poem: *Bang-e-Dara*
Allamah Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938)
Selections by Meher Gull

ترے عشق کی انتہا چاہتا ہوں مری سادگی دیکھ کیا چاہتا ہوں

Extremity of your love is what I desire
Look at my simplicity, what little I desire

Someone asked Iqbal a question: "How can you ask for the completion of ishq from Allah? You have said quite a strange thing," and Iqbal replied, "Have not you read the second line of this verse? Look at my simplicity (foolishness), what little I desire."

ستم ہو کہ ہو وعدۂ بے حجابی کوئی بات صبر آزما چاہتا ہوں

Let the cruelty of the promise of unveiling take place
Something testing my perseverance I desire

یہ جنّت مبارک رہے زاہدوں کو کہ میں آپ کا سامنا چاہتا ہوں

May the pious be happy with this Paradise
Only to see Your countenance I desire

The same feelings have been expressed by one of the most famous Muslim mystics of the 8th century, Rabi'ah al-Basri RAH. She prayed: "O Allah! If I worship You from the fear of Hell, burn me in Hell; and if I worship You in the hope of Paradise, exclude me from Paradise. But if I worship You for Your Own sake, do not deny to me Your everlasting Beauty."

ذرا سا تو دل ہوں مگر شوخ اتنا وہی لن ترانی سُنا چاہتا ہوں

Though I am but a tiny little heart, I am so bold
To hear the same *"lan tarani"* I desire

It is mentioned in Surah Al-A'raf [7:143] about the Prophet Musa AS that he had sought to see Allah SWT and said: "My Lord, show me [Yourself] that I may look at You" and [Allah] said *lan tarani* [you cannot see me]. And then Allah SWT asked him to look at the mountain; if it would remain in place, then he will see Him. But when the noor of Allah SWT appeared on the mountain, He rendered it level and Prophet Musa AS fell unconscious.

Iqbal says that although I cannot see You, my tiny little heart is longing for the same reply – "You cannot see me": *lan tarani.*

کوئی دَم کا مہماں ہوں اے اہلِ محفل چراغِ سحَر ہوں، بُجھا چاہتا ہوں

O assembly's companions! I exist only for a few moments
I am the dawn's lamp, I am about to be extinguished

بھری بزم میں رازکی بات کہہ دی

بڑا بے ادب ہوں، سزا چاہتا ہوں

I have unveiled the secret in the full gathering
I am very insolent, punishment I desire



Color your Plate

Research shows that including foods of diverse colors ensures a balance of nutrients for a healthy body!

Green - brocolli, spinach, kale, celery, bok choy, cucumber, dark leafy greens, zucchini and peppers.

Red - apples, red peppers, raspberries, strawberries, tomatoes.

Purple/Blue - blueberries, eggplant, grapes.

Meal Times

When too hungry, it's easy to make bad food decisions (like finishing that whole family bag of potato chips in one sitting). Therefore, schedule your meals at reasonable times. Fruits and salads should be consumed first.

Avoid overeating! It's as simple as that! One aspect of a healthy diet is to eat the right types of food, and another is to eat the right amount of food. Overeating causes lethargy and a plethora of diseases. One should stop eating once the hunger has subsided even if there is room for a little more. Nabi Kareem SAW advised us to leave 1/3 of the stomach empty of food. Most of our calorie intake should be in the daytime (preferably with a good breakfast) and a light meal should be taken in the evening.



The Benefits of Fasting

Most of the energy derived from food is used to digest that same food. Over time, toxins build up in the body. It's not possible for the body to rid itself of the toxins unless eating is stopped for a while. Medical doctors have researched the benefits of fasting in order to help the body flush out impurities. Moreover, the energy that would have been used in digestion can be used to carry out other functions such as repairing muscle tissues and strengthening the immune system. Inflammation of the body also decreases when one is fasting. Some non-Muslim doctors fast for 40 days a year for the health benefits. The 5:2 diet is currently gaining popularity - fasting 2 days a week, and eating healthy for the remaining 5 days. And if we look into the life of our Nabi Kareem SAW, we'll see that he used to fast 2 days a week (Mondays and Thursdays). If we fast any of these two days, we can gain the reward of following the Sunnah as well!

Exercise

Idleness causes many health issues. Because life is much easier these days compared to the past - which means we are getting less and less of natural exercise - we have to make sure we get ample exercise to maintain vitality. Exercises such as jump-rope and pilates should be done regularly (at least three times a week). There are even some Sunnah sports such as swimming (nothing better than a dip in the pool in the Lahore heat!), archery, and horse-riding. Not only would one be staying fit (and having fun!), they'd also be gaining the pleasure of Allah Ta' la by copying His beloved Nabi Kareem SAW!

May Allah Ta' la grant us all the physical and spiritual strength and make us beloved to Him!

Kinda-Sorta Love?

By Najia Navaid

Allah SWT says in the Qur'an Kareem:

"And those who have faith, are [extremely] intense in their love for Allah." *(2:165)*

This is no ordinary love. This is not a lukewarm, kinda-sorta form of love. This is an overwhelming, overpowering love. The kind of love that the Sahabah Karam and Nabi Kareem SAW had for Allah SWT. Love for the Creator, the Lord, the Rabb Al-Alameen. And this is declared to be an attribute of *all* believers, ourselves included.

Unfortunately, however, every single one of us falls short on this criterion. Do we really have the kind of intense love for Allah SWT that He wants us to have? Do we really think that we are true lovers and slaves of that Allah SWT Who loved us intensely even before we were aware of Him, and even before we had been created? And do we really think that we fit this definition of 'those who have faith'?

True lovers of Allah SWT get a warm, fuzzy feeling inside their hearts whenever they think of Him. As if there are little bits of secret, sparkly glitter floating around in their hearts at the mere remembrance of Allah SWT in an otherwise mundane life, like the shiny confetti in a snowglobe. Like a chocolate that melts on the tongue, spreading warmth to the tips of their fingers and toes.

We belong to Allah SWT, and what better life to live than one for His sake and for His pleasure? The lover does not abstain from sin out of fear of Jahannum, or do good deeds in hopes of Jannah - no, the true lover has surpassed these stages and is now on an even higher level of what we call *'bandagi'* in Urdu. He does everything solely seeking the pleasure of Allah SWT and to make Him happy. May we also taste that sweetness of *iman* when no dessert is sweeter than the remembrance of Allah SWT, and no poison is more bitter than being distant from Him!

Sometimes, when you love something so much, you wish you had a small piece of it that you could carry around in your pocket. Like a letter from a beloved. Or a souvenir from an almost magical summer trip. The Prophet SAW said in a *hadith*: "The heart of a believer is the house of God." *Ishq e ilahi* - love for Allah SWT. Yearn for it. Pray for it. Feel it. You will be carrying around something infinitely more precious in the pocket of your heart.

Finding the Core

By Arwa Khalil

This is a story of the man who has changed lives. The man whose personality continues to inspire people even today, nine hundred and four years after his death. The man whose work has helped many come out of the darkness of ignorance to the light of sacred knowledge. The man most aptly known as the Proof of Islam.

Long, long ago, at a place in Baghdad known as the Nezamiyeh Madrassa, the principal dressed up as a common man to see how the students at his Madrassa were doing. Someone had told him that his enormous effort in building and running the Madrassa was not bearing fruit. Students who came, only came with the intention of increasing in worldly benefit. The principal-a scholar, later to become the Sultan of the Seljuk Empire and founder of the "Nezamiyehs" Madrassas in cities throughout the Persian Empire-Nizam Ul Mulk, wanted to see if this was true, and if it were, then he would have to close down the institute as it had lost its purpose when it did not serve the noble aim of guiding students to the Divine with sacred knowledge.

He came across many students and enquired about their aim in acquiring ilm, or sacred knowledge, and they all replied that their fathers were either great muftis, or khatibs, and the children wanted to follow their fathers' footsteps and gain the same advantages and fame. Nizam Ul Mulk was utterly disheartened, and decided to close down the Madrassa.

As Nizam Ul Mulk was about to exit the Madrassa, he noticed a young boy deeply involved in studying his books with a lamp at his side. Nizam Ul Mulk decided to take one last chance and ask him. He said 'Salam', and the young boy replied without even looking at him. This surprised the Nizam, and he asked the young boy: "Oh young boy! Do you know who you are talking to?" The young boy replied: "I don't come here to talk to you." Nizam Ul Mulk asked, "Then why do you come here?" The boy replied: "I want to please Allah SWT and I don't know how to. But the knowledge of how to do so is present in these books and I am here to acquire this sacred knowledge. Now will you kindly do me a favour? Please don't waste my time asking questions."

Nizam Ul Mulk was so delighted to hear the young student's reply, that he decided to keep the Madrassa running.

This young boy grew up to be Imam al-Ghazali RAH.

Imam Ghazali RAH is that lighthouse, that sparkling gem, that shining star, whose light illuminates all its surroundings. He is one of the most incredibly amazing, and greatest scholars in the Islamic intellectual and spiritual tradition. His life story is tremendously inspiring, and there are many events that occurred in his lifetime that we can greatly learn from.

Imam Ghazali RAH was a great scholar during his time. He was so highly respected, in fact, that when he became the Imam, religious leader of his time, he was just around 35 years old. At a very young age, he was granted a very high position in society by Allah SWT, and he became a very well-known scholar and trained numerous students in spirituality and sacred knowledge.

One of the characteristics that was present in him was that he was extremely honest with himself. This honesty was present in a very special degree in Imam Ghazali RAH. As he was proceeding in his life, with this high status in society, one of the things he realized was that there was a lack in his connection with Allah SWT. Imagine such a high-ranking person, considered by people to be the religious leader and elite of their time, consulted by people over theological matters, gifted by Allah SWT with so much fame and honour in society, is suddenly thinking at the back of his mind that there is something missing in his relationship with Allah SWT.

Therefore, he decided that he would try to study every single type of discipline until he could prove that they would help him achieve his goal - of getting nearer to Allah SWT - or to find that it was false and move on to the next. What he was really looking for, is what he termed as "the core" or "the heart" of Islam.

Henceforth, he studied philosophy, metaphysics, and many other disciplines. Then he started looking at aspects within Deen, and each time, he came to the conclusion that he had not yet achieved the "core." Finally, he decided that one of the sciences he needed to study was the science of Tasawwuf (more popularly known as Sufism). He decided to study Tasawwuf to see if he found the "core."

Now, the problem he faced when he came to studying Tasawwuf was that this science had little or no books. Everything else he wanted to study, he found their books; metaphysics, philosophy, theology. He learned each of these inside-out, until he had entirely either proved or disproved each and found what its benefit was. However, with Tasawwuf, this was

not a science of books. This was a science of experience, something one actually had to practice. In his own words:
"It became clear to me, however, that what is most distinctive of mysticism is something which cannot be apprehended by study, but only by immediate experience, ("dhawq" - literally, "tasting") by ecstasy, and a moral change. What a difference there is between knowing the definition of health and satiety...and being healthy and satisfied!"
He knew that the mystics were "men who had real experiences, not men of words."

But how was he going to find that experience?

"It was clear to me that I had no hope of the bliss of the world to come save through a God-fearing life and withdrawal of myself from vain desire. It was clear to me too that the key to all this was to sever the attachment of the heart to worldly things by leaving the mansion of deception and returning to that of eternity, and to advance towards God most High with all earnestness. It was also clear that this was only to be achieved by turning away from wealth and position and fleeing away from all time-consuming entanglements."

He knew he had to leave everything, would have to isolate himself and go out alone for a certain period of time, spend that time in the remembrance of Allah SWT, under the guidance of a spiritual teacher. In his mind, he knew he had to do it. But he faced another dilemma. Every day he addressed himself and said: How can I do it? I am the religious leader of this community, upon whom everyone relies, how can I leave this post empty? So he says that every day he battled with the same notion. He "put one foot forward and drew the other back".

This continued for six months. However, in Rajab 488 A.H (July 1099 A.D), the "matter became one of compulsion." One day he woke up, and found that his tongue had dried up and due to that he was unable to lecture. He describes how his tongue "would not utter a single word." He became really upset after that, and he realized that he was unable to even swallow food. He felt so weak that even the doctors gave up on him and declared his case to be "ailment of the heart" and that "the only method of treatment is that the anxiety which has come over the heart should be allayed." Thereafter, Imam Ghazali RAH decided to leave home in search of the study of Tasawwuf.

Therefore, he went to Damascus and began to study the science of Tasawwuf, spending time in the constant remembrance of Allah SWT. Tasawwuf was where he found the reality of Deen, the "core" of Deen. And much of what he wrote afterwards is about the experience he found.

What was this core?

It was worshipping Allah SWT as if he could see Him. It was the sweetness of iman. It was the transformation of acts of worship into acts of love. And it was the acquisition of a heart that was filled to the brim and overflowing with love for Allah SWT.
One of the greatest achievements of Imam Ghazali RAH is that after finding the core, he wanted to bring it back in the mainstream scholarship and preserve it. He wrote from his heart, what his heart had experienced. And this is why his work melts the heart because it was addressed by the heart and to the heart.

What amazes us about the life of Imam Ghazali RAH is the several lessons it has for us:

1. Honesty with the Self

Imagine a man of that caliber, that achievement, at the young age of 37, when he made that decision to search for the Truth. He's the Imam of his community but still reflecting on his connection with Allah SWT. Most people of that position would be thinking of what others would think.
We always have to be focusing on where we stand with Allah SWT. That's a question no one can ask us. We can only ask ourselves. Imam Ghazali RAH was the greatest scholar of his time, yet these questions were on his mind. Always ask yourself this question, this is part of sincerity.

2. Method of Arriving at the Truth

He studied everything in depth, he went step by step until he came to a conclusion on a particular discipline. That's extremely crucial. If you aim to succeed in life, you need to make a decision. Am I going to keep this in my life, or out of my life? If you make the decision that you will bring it in your life for the sake of Allah SWT, then know that proficiency is mandatory. Just like when you take up a profession, you represent that profession as a whole. People trust you as a representative of that field. So in everything you do, there should be proficiency in your aim to represent that act. When it came to studying a particular science, Imam Ghazali RAH was so proficient, that he wrote books on those very disciplines, even the ones he deemed false, later taught by those who

chose to represent that science. What does that mean?

It means that there are many different paths in Deen to Allah SWT (Qur'an, ilm, remembrance of Allah SWT, etc.). When you pick one at a time, make sure you apply yourself fully to it, try to gain every fruit that's possible from that path. In the Deen, there are many paths, but once you find the Path, what is required is consistency so the goal can be achieved. When Imam Ghazali RAH found the Path, he went into its depth completely, and eventually found the Core of Deen.

3. Sincerity

Even though he was the Imam of his time, when he came to the path of mysticism, people became confused about him. When he passed away, people began to burn his books. However, look at the sincerity of this man! He focused on Allah SWT with sincerity and Allah SWT accepted his work and retained his work up till this day, despite the people trying to destroy his works. His work is now being read by millions. Today, almost everyone has heard his name or read his books. (The one book that everyone should really read is Munqidh Min Al-Dalal, Deliverance from Error, in which he describes his journey, how he found the core of Deen, and this is the book that still continues to change lives.)

4. You Reap what you Sow

What you put in is what you get out. Look at the enormous amount of effort Imam Ghazali RAH put in and look at the man he became. The fruit you reap depends on the sort of seeds you plant.

5. Imam Ghazali RAH as a Role Model:

a) As a student - notice the sincerity, dedication and effort in the story we mentioned at the beginning about Imam Ghazali's RAH life as a student. If we put in the same ikhlas, talab and effort... one can only imagine what might happen!

b) As a teacher - as a teacher, Imam Ghazali RAH had a purely religious intention. After finding the core of Deen, he reviewed his niyyah of teaching. He did everything for the sake of Allah SWT. Look at the status, honor and number of students Allah SWT gifted him with!

c) As a seeker of the pleasure of Allah SWT - his ikhlas, his being so true to himself about his relationship with Allah SWT, his effort, his focus, his commitment, his books, his constant remembrance of Allah SWT. Seeker or the Besought?

d) As a friend - in a hadith, the Prophet SAW advised regarding the sort of friend one should have in Deen, and one of the characteristics he mentioned was: "Those people whom when they are seen, remind you of Allah SWT." We can't see him today but his words are a reflection of him, and his connection with Allah SWT. We have his legacy in the form of his books and those people who studied his books with the same sincerity he wrote them with.

e) As a scholar - And we find it strange how Imam Ghazali RAH is known as Hujjat Ul Islam -the Proof of Islam. One who, when you consult, and whose books you read, you will be guided towards Islam, and you find the Core too. And it is true that Imam Ghazali's RAH intense ma'arifah, enlightening knowledge of Allah SWT, the strength of his connection with Allah SWT and his deep tafaqquh, understanding in Deen, cannot be described with justice in a few lines.

Imam Ghazali RAH was a man of a higher purpose, and he showed that people with purpose do not waste time either. This is why he was able to achieve so much at such a young age. And Imam Ghazali's RAH life shows a perfect balance. He gave himself fully, completely, entirely to Deen, and the world came running after him.

Who wouldn't want to be like him?

f) As a manifestation of the following verse of the Qur'an: "Those who strive in Us, We shall surely guide them to Our paths." - Surah Ankabut. Imam Ghazali RAH strove for Allah SWT, and Allah SWT guided him to His paths.

May Allah SWT grant us the tawfiq of being consistent in our deeds, sincere in our assessment of relationship with Him, sincere in our Deen, honest to ourselves and others, and may He make us amongst those people who strive in Him, and may He guide us to His path.

Ameen.

Dua – A Blank Cheque

By Humera Kaleem

For many of us, a dua is a quick, rote-learnt sentence we mutter in Arabic after praying, or something we get more 'pious' people to do for us. Or it is something we only think about doing when we feel like nothing else could go wrong – as a last resort. And yet dua is one of the most elevated forms of worship that you can partake in everyday. A dua is your time to talk to your Lord. When you raise your hands, you enter into a special conversation with Allah SWT.

Personalize it. Talk. Praise. Ask. Beg. Allah SWT is listening. Allah SWT says in the Qur'an:

"And when My servants ask thee (O Prophet) about Me, then verily I am near, I answer the prayer (dua) of the supplicant when he beseeches unto Me. So let them hear My call, and believe in Me, so that they may be led aright." (Surah Baqarah: 186)

And in yet another place in the Qur'an, Allah SWT gives hope to the sinners:

"Say: O My servants who have transgressed against their souls; despair not of the Mercy of Allah; For Allah forgives all sins; for He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful." (Surah Zumar: 53)

To make sure that our prayers have maximum effect, here are a few etiquettes of dua which should be followed:

1. Praise Allah SWT as He deserves to be praised before you call upon Him.

Fadalah ibn 'Ubayd RA said: Whilst the Messenger of Allah SAW was sitting, a man came in and prayed and said, "O Allah, forgive me, and have mercy on me." The Messenger of Allah SAW said, "You have been too hasty, O worshipper. When you have prayed and are sitting, praise Allah as He deserves to be praised, and send blessings upon me, then call upon Him." Then another man prayed after that, and he praised Allah and sent blessings upon the Prophet SAW. The Prophet SAW said: "O worshipper, ask and you will be answered." (Tirmidhi, 2765)

2. Ask frequently.
A person should ask his Lord for whatever he wants of the good things in this world and the Hereafter, and he should beseech Allah in dua, and not seek a hasty response, because the Prophet SAW said: "The slave will receive a response so long as his dua does not involve sin or severing of family ties, and so long as he is not hasty." It was said, "What does being hasty mean?" He said: "When he says, 'I made dua and I made dua, and I have not seen any response', and he gets frustrated and stops making dua" (Bukhari, 6340). It is essential to have complete faith in Allah SWT and to know that He is Capable of all things, and Knowledgeable of all things too.

3. Be firm in dua, because the Prophet SAW said: "No one of you should say, 'O Allah, forgive me if You wish, O Allah, have mercy on me if You wish'; he should be firm in his asking, for Allah cannot be compelled" (Bukhari, 6339; Muslim, 2679). So directly ask: 'O Allah SWT, forgive me, and O Allah SWT, have mercy on me for you are the Most Forgiving, Most Merciful.' There is no hesitation in asking your Lord to shower you with mercy and maghfirah.

4. Call on Allah SWT with His Beautiful Names. If you are asking for Mercy, then call Him by His name Al-Rahman (The Most Merciful), if you are asking for forgiveness call Him by His name Al-Ghaffar (The Forgiving). Allah says in the Qur'an:

"Say: 'Call upon Allah, or call upon Rahman: By whatever name you call upon Him, (it is well): For to Him belong the Most Beautiful Names.'"
(Surah Isra' : 110)

5. Send durud on the Messenger of Allah SAW before dua.
Allah SWT loves no creation more than He loves His beloved Messenger SAW. Once 'Umar bin Khattab RA said to his nation: "The supplication (dua) is stopped between the heaven and the earth and nothing of it ascends, till you invoke blessing on your Prophet SAW." (Tirmidhi, Bab Al-Salah, 486)
Dua is something mentioned time and again in the Qur'an. Our Lord wants us to supplicate to Him and to depend only on Him for help. This does not mean that one should not make the necessary effort required to get the grade, win the race, or get the job. But effort must be supplemented by dua.

Dua is like a blank cheque that Allah SWT has already signed and handed to us; all we need to do now is write in the amount. So make the most out of this blank cheque that Allah SWT has given to all those who believe with certainty that Allah is Capable of All things.

Mirror, Mirror, On the Wall...

By Najia Navaid

Imagine if there was a mirror that, instead of showing us our physical appearance, showed us the state of our hearts. There would be no lipstick-traced smiles, no kohl-rimmed eyes, no glossy hair. Instead, we would see the dark, ugly reality of our spirituality.

How many of us would glance at the mirror as often as we do now? How many of us would be brave enough to look into the scarred and disfigured state of our souls? And just how many of us would be confident that our souls would be as beautiful as our faces, if not more?

Every single one of us is made up of two components: a body, and a soul. While we focus everyday on our bodies - eating well, sleeping well, dressing well - we often tend to forget that we have a soul as well, and that it's been dangerously malnourished.

We don't realize that just as important as it is for our bodies to get good rest, exercise, and essential nutrients, it is as important for our souls to be released from sin, to exercise constraint over temptations, and to be given the essential vitamins - *dhikr* of Allah SWT, prayer, honesty, kindness, modesty, *taqwa*.

Instead, our soul has always been given a backstage. Long-forgotten, forever trying to claw its way to the surface of our consciousness, always the underdog. And yet, it is our bodies that will crumble to dust and wither away, and it is the soul that will last till eternity. But just how well have we equipped it for that journey?

Pearls from the Ahl Al-Bayt: The Companion Ibn Abbas RA & his Pursuit of Knowledge

By Ibrahim Arif

"Whenever I saw Abdullah ibn Abbas, I would say that here is the most handsome of men. When he spoke, I would say: He is the most eloquent of men. And whenever he held a conversation, I would say: He is the most knowledgeable of men." (Masruq bin Al-Ajda)

Ibn Abbas RA is one of the most well-known scholars of the Ummah. He is of the Ahl Al-Bayt (the household of the Prophet SAW), his father Abbas bin Abdul Muttalib being the Prophet's SAW uncle.

He was a muhaddith and a mufassir – an expert in the matter of Exegesis of the Qur'an and Hadith. Regarding his knowledge on the Exegesis of the Qur'an, another scholar from amongst the companions said about Ibn Abbas RA: "He is noted for his knowledge of the occasions when various verses of the Qur'an were revealed." Scholars throughout the centuries have attributed various titles to him including "Hibr Ul Ummah" (Most Learned Man of the Ummah) and "Bahr Ul Ulum"(Ocean of Knowledge). Although Ibn Abbas RA was only 13 when the Prophet SAW had passed away, it is said that in the shu'ra (advisory council) of Madinah during the time of Hadrat 'Umar RA, 'Umar RA would make Hadrat Ibn Abbas RA sit alongside him when deciding matters of great importance in the midst of companions who were veterans of Badr and Uhud i.e. the highest ranking companions. Some would object at a "boy" sitting in the Advisory Council of such senior companions but Umar would argue on his behalf due to his knowledge and would never disregard what Ibn Abbas RA had to say. To silence such objections, once 'Umar RA called him in the gathering of those people, and asked them:

"What do you say about the interpretation (exegesis) of the statement of Allah SWT;

إِذَا جَاءَ نَصْرُ اللَّهِ وَالْفَتْحُ ۝١ وَرَأَيْتَ النَّاسَ يَدْخُلُونَ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ أَفْوَاجًا ۝٢
فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَاسْتَغْفِرْهُ ۚ إِنَّهُ كَانَ تَوَّابًا ۝٣

When the victory of Allah has come and the conquest, And you see the people entering into the religion of Allah in multitudes, Then exalt [Him] with praise of your Lord and ask forgiveness of Him. Indeed, He is ever Accepting of repentance? (Surah Nasr)

Some of them replied with the literal meaning: "We are ordered to praise God and ask for His forgiveness, when God's help and conquest comes to us." Others kept quiet and did not say anything. Then 'Umar RA asked Ibn Abbas RA the same question: "Do you say the same, O Ibn Abbas?" He replied, "No, in fact that is the sign of the death of Prophet Muhammad SAW, which God informed him of."

What he meant was that when the help of Allah SWT comes and the conquest of Makkah (which is the sign of the Prophet's death) has happened, he should celebrate the praises of Allah SWT and ask for His forgiveness, and Allah SWT is the One who accepts the repentance and forgives. On that, 'Umar RA said: "I do not know anything about it other than what Ibn Abbas has said."

In his later years, his house had become a university in Madinah. Whenever people would come to Madinah for learning, their destination would be the house of Abdullah Ibn Abbas RA and often the alleyway to his house would be jam-packed too. At his brother's house (Fadhl Ibn Abbas) they would be served with food after which at his house they would learn knowledge. The brothers were known for their hospitality and generosity. As he had mastered several disciplines, he would hold classes for different subjects every day: a day for tafseer, a day for fiqh (jurisprudence), a day for history and so on. In the following words one of his companions describes a typical scene at his house:

"I saw people converging on the roads leading to his house until there was hardly any room in front of his house. I went in and told him about the crowds of people at his door and he said: 'Get me water for wudhu.' He performed wudhu and, seating himself, said: 'Go out and say to them: Whoever wants to ask about the Qur'an and its letters (tajweed/pronunciation), let him enter.' This I did, and people entered until the house was filled. Whatever he was asked, Abdullah was able to elucidate and even provide additional information to what was asked. Then (to his students) he said: 'Make way for your brothers.' Then to me he said: 'Go out and say: Who wants to ask about the Qur'an and its interpretation (tafseer/commentary of the Qur'an), let him enter'. Again the house was filled and Abdullah elucidated and provided more information than what was requested."

In praise of Ibn Abbas RA, the poet of the Prophet, Hasan bin Thabit RA is said to have written the following verses:

"When Ibn Abbas shows you his face, you will see virtue and grace in every gathering,
And when (he) speaks, he leaves nothing for another to speak,
You have been created as an ally of affection and benevolence,
And an orator without being incompetent nor inefficient."

But what concerns us is the journey of this noble person to the epitome of scholarship and the traits without which that could not have been possible. In his own words:
"After the death of the Prophet SAW, I said to an Ansari friend, 'The Prophet SAW is no longer with us. But a large number of the companions are still amongst us. Let us go to them and get knowledge of the Islamic practices.' He said. 'Who is going to approach you for learning a regulation in the presence of these eminent Companions?' I was not discouraged. I kept up my quest for knowledge and approached every person who was supposed to have heard something from the Prophet SAW. I managed to gather substantial information from the Ansar. If, on my visit to an eminent companion, I found him asleep, I spread my shawl at the gate and sat waiting. Sometimes my face and body would get covered with dust, but I kept sitting till they woke and I was able to contact them. Some of them said: 'Abdullah you are the cousin of the Prophet SAW; you could have sent for us. Why did you take the trouble of coming to our places?' I said to them: 'I must come to you, for I am a student and you are my teachers.' Some people for whom I had waited said: 'Since when have you been waiting for us?' I informed them that I had been sitting there for a long time. They said: 'What a pity! You could have awakened us from our sleep.' I said: 'I did not like to disturb you for my own sake.' I thus carried on my pursuits, till there came a time when people began to flock to me for learning. My Ansari friend realized this at that time and remarked: 'This boy has surely proved himself more sensible than us.'"

The first and foremost thing is to have the will to do what one wants to do, to strive, and to put in the effort in order to succeed. A person of his lineage could have easily lived the life of a prince in Madinah, but then today we might not have known him for the muhaddith he is. Once his teacher and a great companion, scribe of the divine revelation, Zayd bin Thabit RA mounted his horse and Abdullah Ibn Abbas held the reins like a servant. Zayd felt embarrassed and he said, "Do not do that, O son of the Prophet's uncle," to which Abdullah RA replied, "This is how we were taught to respect the people of knowledge." To which Zayd RA said: "Stretch out your hand." And when he did, Zayd RA kissed it,

and said, "This is how we have been taught to respect the Ahl Al-Bayt (People of the Prophet's SAW House). It all the more shows Abdullah's RA devotion to knowledge and his respect for his teachers.

In the words of another mufassir, Ibn Kathir, "Knowledge and easy living cannot go hand in hand," and it was only the years of toil, of hard work, of going from teacher to teacher, of waiting on their doorsteps, that lead Ibn Abbas RA to be the person we know him to be. A similar example can be seen of the muhaddith, Abdullah bin Mubarak whose thirst for hadith took him to 4000 different teachers, all of them living in different parts of the Islamic world, and that at a time when traveling was tough and testing. As the Arabic proverb goes:

مَنْ طَلَبَ الْعُلٰى سَهِرَ اللَّيَالِيْ

"A person in thirst for excellence works nights for it."

In the words of Hadrat Imam Shafi'i RAH, "A student who learns half-heartedly and ungratefully, can never succeed. A student who is humble and hard-living often reaches his goal."

Imam Ghazali RAH said, "Whenever I have felt the pain of hunger, another door of knowledge has opened on me."

Another lesson to be learnt is that of performing the "khidmah" or service of elders, whether they be parents, teachers or fellow companions – something that seems far-fetched in today's world. It is perhaps their prayers and their continuous advice that take one far. For Abdullah Ibn Abbas RA, this blessed elder was none other than the Prophet SAW.

He used to run small errands for the Prophet SAW and served him day and night, for example, carrying his miswak and water for ablution. We have often seen that when elders are pleased, they make a supplication from the heart that Allah SWT accepts. In the case of Ibn Abbas RA, once greatly pleased by a certain act of servitude of his, the Prophet SAW made this supplication: *"O Allah, bless this boy with great knowledge, and increase him in wisdom and intellect."*

And at another time he made this supplication *"Allah, give him understanding of religion, and teach him to discern its meanings."* These small services earned him companionship of the Prophet SAW on his journeys and it was during one of his journeys that the Prophet SAW gave him invaluable advice that went on to become part of Imam Nawawi's RAH forty ahadith collection. Understanding of that advice is a clear prerequisite for achieving heights of piety and godliness. Ibn Abbas RA himself reports this incident:

"One day I was the pillion rider of the Prophet SAW (on his camel), when he said, 'Young man, let me

teach you some words. Be mindful of Allah, and He will protect you. Be mindful of Allah, and you shall find Him at your side. If you want to ask a favor, ask only from Allah. If you need help, seek it from Allah. Know that if the whole world were to gather together in order to help you, they would not be able to help you except if Allah had written so. And if the whole world were to gather together in order to harm you, they would not harm you except if Allah had written so. The pens have been lifted, and the pages are dry."
This advice was to have a lasting effect on Ibn Abbas RA and led him to the epitome of tawakkul (trust) and piety.
Furthermore, not only was Abdullah Ibn Abb s RA a muhaddith, but a mujahid as well. He took part in different battles in his lifetime. He commanded a wing of Hadrat Ali's RA forces during the battles of Jamal and Siffeen. His intimate knowledge of the Qur'an and the seerah alongside his remarkable powers of argumentation and persuasion proved quite vital in bringing thousands of deserters back to Hadrat Ali's RA forces.

To conclude, have a look at the admonishment he made to group of people who were arguing in the Holy Mosque and which somewhat defines his personality.

Wahab Ibn Munabbah says:

"Abdullah Ibn Abbas RA had lost his eyesight in his old age. I once led him to the Masjid Haram, where he heard a group of people exchanging hot words among themselves. He asked me to lead him to them. He greeted them with 'Assalamu Alaykum.' They requested him to sit down, but he refused and said: 'May I tell you about people whom Allah holds in high esteem? These are those whom His fear has driven to absolute silence, even though they are neither helpless nor dumb. Rather, they are possessors of eloquence and have power to speak and the sense to understand. But constant glorification of Allah's name has so overpowered their wits that their hearts are over-awed and their lips sealed. When they get established in this state, they hasten towards righteousness and are quick in doing good works. Whither have you people deviated from this course?' After this admonition, I never saw an assembly of even two persons in the Haram."

May Allah SWT have mercy on our pious predecessors.



عمل سے زندگی بنتی ہے جنّت بھی، جہنّم بھی
یہ خاکی اپنی فطرت میں نہ نوری ہے نہ ناری ہے

اذان تو ہوتی ہے اب مگر نہیں کوئی مؤذن بلال سا
سر بسجدہ تو ہیں مؤمن مگر نہیں کوئی زہرا کے لال سا

کیوں منّتیں مانگتا ہے اوروں کے دربار سے اقبال
وہ کون سا کام ہے جو ہوتا نہیں تیرے پروردگار سے

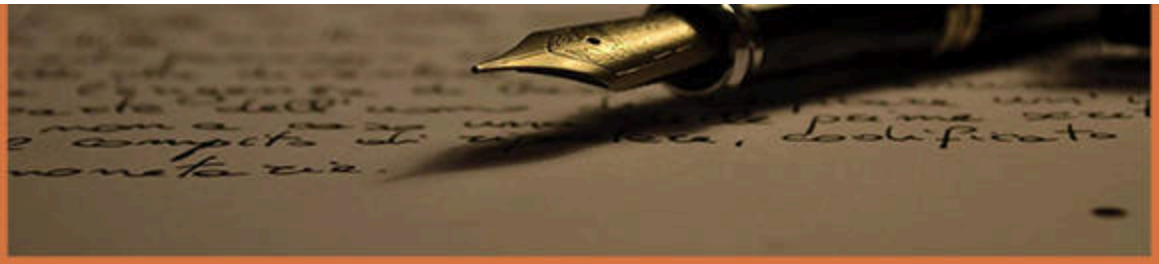
بتوں سے تجھ کو امیدیں، خدا سے نومیدی
مجھے بتا تو سہی اور کافری کیا ہے

عشق قاتل سے بھی، مقتول سے ہمدردی بھی
یہ بتا کس سے محبّت کی جزا مانگے گا؟
سجدہ خالق کو بھی، ابلیس سے یارانہ بھی
حشر میں کس سے عقیدت کا صلہ مانگے گا؟

پرواز ہے دونوں کی اسی ایک فضا میں
کرگس کا جہاں اور ہے، شاہیں کا جہاں اور
الفاظ و معانی میں تفاوت نہیں لیکن
ملّا کی اذاں اور، مجاہد کی اذاں اور

صبح کو باغ میں شبنم پڑتی ہے فقط اس لیے
کہ پتّا پتّا کرے تیرا ذکر باوضو ہو کر

مٹ جائے گناہوں کا تصوّر ہی جہاں سے اقبال
اگر ہو جائے یقیں کہ خدا دیکھ رہا ہے



داغِ سجود اگر تیری پیشانی پر ہو ا تو کیا
کوئی ایسا سجدہ بھی کر کہ زمیں پر نشاں رہے

نہ تھی جب اپنے حال کی خبر
دیکھتے رہے لوگوں کے عیب وہنر
پھر جب پڑی اپنے ہی گناہوں پر نظر
تو نگاہ میں کوئی اور بر ا نہ رہا

کون یہ کہتا ہے خدا نظر نہیں آتا
ایک وہی نظر آتا ہے جب کچھ نظر نہیں آتا

قلب میں سوز نہیں روح میں احساس نہیں
کچھ بھی پیغامِ محمدﷺ کا تمہیں پاس نہیں

خردمندوں سے کیا پوچھوں کہ میری ابتدا کیا ہے
کہ میں اس فکر میں رہتا ہوں میری انتہا کیا ہے

سجدوں کے عوض فردوس ملے، یہ بات مجھے منظور نہیں
بے لوث عبادت کرتا ہوں، بندہ ہوں تیرا مزدور نہیں

چھوڑ دے تسبیح کو گن گن کے پڑھنا اقبال
اس سے کیا حساب جو بے حساب دیتا ہے

میں روز گناہ کرتا ہوں
وہ چھپاتا ہے اپنی رحمت سے
میں مجبور اپنی عادت سے
وہ مشہور اپنی رحمت سے

کوئی اندازہ کر سکتا ہے اس کے زورِ بازو کا
نگاہِ مردِ مؤمن سے بدل جاتی ہیں تقدیریں

The Real Gold - Youth

By Najia Navaid

Sayyidina Rasulullah SAW said that the Day of Judgement will last 50,000 days for some people - it will be so long, so hot, so much will they sweat, so much will they be scared, that the Qur'an says:

يَوْمَ يَفِرُّ الْمَرْءُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ

'...the Day when one will flee from his brother'
[80:34]

...best friends will run away from each other, mothers will run away from their children, fathers will run away from their children, brother will run away from brother, sister will run away from brother. Everyone will be waiting - and even if they know they have sins, and even if they think they will go to Jahannam, still the waiting will become so difficult for them, that they will pray: "Ya Allah, just make my hisab happen now; just send me to Jahannam - I can't take the waiting anymore."

On a day like that, there will be some young people who won't be sweating. They won't be trembling, they won't be worrying. Instead, they will be sitting in the cool shade of the arsh of Allah SWT, and in the mercy of Allah SWT.

Who will be those young people? They will be those people who decided to give their youth to Allah SWT and to the deen of Islam. That person who gives their teens and twenties to Allah SWT, Allah SWT will give them the shade of His arsh on the Day of Judgment. That person whose Day of Judgment begins with the shade of the arsh of Allah SWT, that person will end up in Jannatul Firdaws. That person whose day begins in the shade of the arsh of Allah SWT, that person will become the sahabi of Nabi Kareem SAW in Jannatul Firdaws.

But a vast majority of people are beyond their twenties; they don't have that choice anymore. Whatever they did with their youth, they did with it. Some of them gave their whole life to university, then they gave their whole life to business, some gave their whole life to shopping, some gave their whole life to medicine. And that's not necessarily a bad thing, but alongside, did they do anything that they could present in front of Allah

on the Day of Judgment? Maybe some of them realized and wished that 'If I could go back and become young again, in my teens and twenties, maybe I would lead a different life'. However, none of us can go back, but we *can* move forward.

So how *do* you give yourself to Allah SWT? There are a few guidelines on how to do that.

Choose Your Friends Carefully

The first, most important, guideline that scholars give is that you have to choose your friends carefully. Here are some very simple rules about how to choose your friends, and who to choose as your friend.

1. Rule number one – You should always try to make friends, try to *be* friends, with those people who are trying to be friends with Allah SWT.
2. Rule number two – Do *not* try to be friends with those people who are *not* trying to be friends with Allah SWT.
3. Rule number three – Try very hard *not* to be friends with those people who, unfortunately, are trying very hard *not* to be friends with Allah SWT.

What does it mean to try and be a friend of Allah SWT? In this world, when we want to be friends with someone, what do we do? We try to listen to them, we try to be the way they want us to be, we try to figure out what they like, and we try to do what they like – why? Because we are trying to be friends with them. And those people who are trying to be friends with Allah SWT, they obey Allah SWT, they try to figure out what Allah SWT likes, they try to figure out what makes Allah SWT happy, and they try to mould themselves accordingly.

Then there are some people who are not trying to be friends with Allah SWT - they are not trying to pray their salah, are not trying to speak the truth, who are not trying to stay away from sin – so you should also *not* consciously make an effort to be their friend because they are *not* consciously making an effort to be friends with Allah SWT.

And then there are some people - it's not that they are not trying, they *are* trying - but the problem is that they're trying to do other things: they're trying out smoking, they may try out drugs, they may try out drinking, they may try out girls, they want to try anything and everything in the world except for Allah's SWT friendship - and they work hard trying those

things; they try to do it secretly, they may even try to get you to do it, they may try to attract you to it. So you also have to try then - to try hard not to be their friend, because they're trying very hard not to be the friends of Allah SWT.

And the only way you will succeed in this is if you yourself begin and you yourself try to be the friend of Allah SWT.

Don't Do Anything Alone that You Would be Embarrassed to Do In Front of Anyone Else

The second guideline is that as you grow up in an environment like the one you are in now, you will be tested with some desires and temptations – this is natural. When you're tested with these desires, again you have to remember Allah SWT. Our pious elders have given us an ingeniously simple thumb rule to keep ourselves in check: Don't do anything when you are alone that you would be embarrassed to do in front of anyone else – it's just that simple. Don't do anything alone that you would be embarrassed to do in front of anyone else, and don't look at anything alone that you will be embarrassed to look at in front of anyone else, because there is always someone else watching you - that someone else is called Allah SWT.

Keep Yourself Busy

The third rule – you should keep yourself busy. We're not saying you have to study and pray all the time; you can study and pray as much as you can, and when you don't feel you can anymore, and you want to relax and have fun, make sure you keep yourself busy with halal ways of doing fun before Shaytan and the nafs get you busy in haram ways of doing fun.

Have it planned beforehand. Don't sit with a group of friends and say, "Well, what should we do tonight?" If you don't have any idea what you're doing tonight, then believe me, Shaytan and the nafs have lots of ideas of what you could do tonight.

Be a Person Who Reads

The fourth rule: You have to be a person who reads. Don't let all your fun come from the screen. That's dangerous! You should imagine that the screen is like a snake. Sometimes, it's very nice and glittering and soft to

touch, and you'll enjoy it and be safe; but sometimes it will come and bite you with a venomous poison. Don't give up on books for that one screen, whether it's your laptop, or your iPad, or even the cell phone screen.

It would be wonderful if it was a book of deen, but it could also be a book of history, or a book of sports. Try to spend some time with books. Books will save your iman, because books will save you from the screen. The screen will sooner or later try to steal your iman; it's like a vacuum that sucks something out of you and you're staring at it! And sooner or later it's going to turn itself on, it's going to try to suck the iman out of your heart, one way or another, and you wouldn't even realize it.

Do Something Great – Use Your Iman

The fifth rule is: Use your youth to do something great. Imam Shafi'i RAH issued fatwas at the age of sixteen, Muhammad bin Qasim RAH conquered the entire territory of India at the age of sixteen, and today's sixteen year olds can barely even keep their room clean. The potential has degenerated steadily over time and created a huge gap in making something out of yourself while you're still young. So you have to try to get greatness - do something great, write something great, read something great. You should be searching for the opportunity. This is what you call 'to aspire'.

Now here's the secret: you already have something great inside you – it's called your iman. Allah SWT has given you something great, something tremendous. But the problem is that we are not using it. So take an example: If somebody has a really fast sports car, and instead, they only choose to drive it at 5 km/hour, you will get worried. You would say 'What's the matter with you? You are driving like my grandmother would drive! Give me the keys, I will show you how to drive. Let me sit behind the wheel I will show you what the sports car can do!' In the same way, you have the racecar of iman inside your heart and you are driving it like your grandmother would drive. Why don't you start driving your iman like a young man would drive? Why don't you drive your iman like a Formula One racecar champion would drive? You will be amazed at what you can do.

So search for the greatness; it's inside of you. Reach for the greatness. You can do much, much more than what the society expects from you. You have iman, the nur of iman, the power of iman. Push your iman, and prepare to be amazed.

Qur'an Al-Kareem: A Love Letter

By Farah Asad

The lover is lost in the words of their beloved, the lover is lost in the story of their beloved. The Qur'an Al-Kareem is a love story. It is a love letter from the Rabb Al-Alameen to humankind.

There are two tarteebs (orderings) of the Qur'an. One is the way the Qur'an is arranged right now: the way we read it, from Surah Fatihah to Surah Nas. And then there is another order which was the asbab-e-nuzool, the occasion of revelation. For example, the first verse that was revealed was verse number one of Surah Al-Alaq.

On what basis did Allah Ta'ala ask Rasulullah SAW to rearrange these verses? Many scholars have tried to answer this question and there's almost no definitive answer. Now, some scholars say that there was some secret between Allah Taala and Rasulullah SAW; Allah Ta'ala inspired Sayyidina Rasulullah SAW to rearrange the verses, not on the basis of their sequence and order of historical revelation, but in another order, the one that we read today. Why? So that it would become a love story. Actually they were scattered pearls and Sayyidina Rasulullah SAW put them on a string and he strung the strings perfectly, as Allah Ta'ala guided him, to make it all one flowing Qur'an.

This is what we can call the "other side of the story." Read the Qur'an thinking of it as a love story between you and Allah SWT! Or listen to the recitation of the Qur'an of a person who feels this love letter! You'll feel that the Qur'an is flowing as seamlessly as the waves that lap against the shore.

The lovers of Allah SWT love the Qur'an. When we love someone, do we not love to hear them speak as well? The Qur'an is the Speech of Allah! Reading the Qur'an with love has the power to erase fatigue and tiredness and can cause the heart to swell up in the love for the Creator. How many of us today have the symptoms of a dead heart? Even when we are fresh and awake, we try to recite the Qur'an and we don't feel it! We don't enjoy the beauty, we don't enjoy the flow, and we don't get the feelings. So then we stop reciting it. We may have the words of the Qur'an, but we don't have any feelings.

All of you may have heard the story of Layla and Majnun. So it is written in one of the books as a parable that somebody saw Majnun in a dream. And they asked him what became of him after his death. Majnun told them that Allah Ta'ala said that on the Day of Judgment, I am going to present you as a standard of love! Look at the intense love this one had for Layla, a human! Why could you not have such intense love for Me, Allah? It is only to say that our love for Allah Ta'ala should be even more intense. And one can always start off by first reading the love story in the form of Qur'an Kareem - again and again - with more and more feeling.

May Allah SWT make us people of the Qur'an in the truest sense.



"Read the Qur'an thinking of it as a love story between you and Allah SWT!"

Tawbah
The Silver Lining

By Abdul Qadeer Khan

In the time of Musa AS, there was a man who would not stay steadfast on his repentance. So Allah SWT descended revelation upon Musa AS, saying: "Tell this man not to break his tawbah (repentance). If he returns back to his sins, then I will give him punishment. And I would not accept his repentance again."

Musa AS delivered this message to that man. The man was patient for a few days but committed the sin again thereafter. Allah SWT again descended a revelation upon Musa AS saying: "Tell him that I am upset with him."

Musa AS delivered this message to the man. That person left for the desert and proclaimed: "O Allah, what message have You sent through Musa AS? Have the treasures of Your forgiveness exhausted? O my Lord, which of my sins is greater than Your mercy? How can You not forgive me when You are 'the Most Gracious and 'the Most Merciful'? O my Lord, if you deprive people of Your mercy, then which door shall Your servants knock? Give me punishment if Your mercy has diminished. O Allah, put the punishments of the sins of all the other people also on me and forgive them; I will act as a fidya (compensation) on behalf of everyone."

Allah SWT revealed to Musa AS stating: "Tell him: After this dua (supplication) of yours, I will forgive all your sins even if your sins fill the space between the heavens and the earth. You have understood the true essence of My forbearance and mercy."

How magnanimous is the mercy of our Lord! We sin as if He sees nothing, and yet He forgives as if He saw nothing.

Sunnah Treasure Trove
The Siwak

By Muhammad Ahsan

Siwak means cleaning one's mouth with a miswak or a tool used for this purpose, which in most cases is a stick or a twig. Siwak is a method of cleaning one's teeth while simultaneously attaining the pleasure of our Maker.

There is a hadith narrated by Sayyidina Aisha RA of our beloved Prophet SAW to have said: "Siwak cleanses the mouth and is pleasing to the Lord."

Because of the utmost importance of siwak from pre-recorded history of Islamic knowledge from pious scholars, many scholars consider siwak to be obligatory. There is another hadith narrated by Imam Al-Bukhari in which the Holy Prophet SAW said: "Were it not for the fact that I did not want to make things hard on my Ummah, I would have commanded them to use siwak at every time of prayer." And in another narration, the Prophet SAW is reported to have said, "At every instance of making ablution."

The companions of the Prophet SAW would keep the miswak on their ears even at the time of journey.

There are also many medicinal benefits in regard to using siwak that have been highlighted to us by scholars and researchers, such as it being a purifier to one's mouth, battling away many types of oral bacteria, offensive odors and numerous other diseases. Moreover, its natural fibers and minerals help to protect one's teeth better than the artificial fibers of a conventional toothbrush.

Abu Darda (may Allah SWT be pleased with him) states that: "Make miswak a must. Do not be headless as there are twenty four benefits in miswak, the greatest benefit is that Allah SWT becomes pleased, there is an increase in wealth, it freshens the breath, it strengthens the gums, it relieves headaches, it relieves toothache and due to the light from the face and teeth, the angels shake hands."

The wisdom underlying the usage of the miswak after rising from sleep is that during sleep, bad vapors rise from the stomach towards the mouth.

This leads to a bad smell in the mouth in addition to a change in the sense of taste. Using the miswak removes unhealthy smell and rectifies the change which occurred in the taste.

Imam Shafi'i RAH said, "Cleansing the teeth increases wisdom."

Following are a few mustahibb (preferred) mannerisms of using this Sunnah tool:

-The miswak should neither be too hard nor too soft.
-It should be from trees such as the Zaytoon, Peelu or Neem and not from a fragrant tree.
-If the finger is to be used instead of the miswak, then the upper and lower jaws on the right side are cleaned with the thumb and the left side is cleaned similarly with the index finger.
-Put it upright when not in use.
-The miswak should ideally be no thicker than the little finger and no longer than a hand span.
-Use the right hand to perform the miswak.
-Clean at least three times.
-Do not perform in an up/down motion but use it from right to left as there is a chance of damaging the gums otherwise.
-To perform miswak in wudhu is an emphasized Sunnah.
-Miswak is Sunnah for ablution and not for Salah.
-Use the miswak from one end and not both.
-The one who uses the miswak gets five rewards for each tooth.
-It is permissible to use miswak whilst fasting. However, it is not permissible to use a flavoured miswak.

Certain times when the usage of miswak is Sunnah:

1. On Friday.
2. For the recitation of the Holy Qur'an.
3. For the recitation of Hadith.
4. When the mouth emits bad odor.
5. For teaching or learning the virtues of Islam.
6. For making remembrance of Allah SWT.
7. Before entering any good gathering.
8. When experiencing pangs of hunger or thirst.
9. After the time of Suhoor.
10. Before meals.
11. Before and after a journey.
12. Before and after sleeping.

May Allah SWT give us the ability to practice this beautiful Sunnah with sincerity. Ameen.

Shukr

by Madiha Kaleem

As part of a course, we were required to visit a mental hospital and take down the history of patients there. One of the patients we interviewed was desperate and distressed. Her problem: she could not control her thoughts or her tongue. She kept repeating how she wanted to be able to govern her brain like normal people. This interview left a huge impact on me. It got me thinking; how many of us have actually ever thought about how lucky we are to be able to initiate and terminate our own thoughts? Have we ever thanked God for giving us the ability to master our tongues? I left the hospital feeling a bit sad but with an overpowering feeling of gratitude - shukr.

Shukr literally means to be thankful and is an expression of gratitude. Although seemingly inconsequential, shukr has a lot of importance in Islam. It is mentioned several times in the Qur'an, elevating this simple act to an act of worship. In Surah Baqarah, verse 52, Allah SWT says: "Then We forgave you after that so perhaps you would be grateful." And in 'Al e `Imran, verse 144: "...God will reward the thankful." Allah SWT praises the prophets Ibrahim AS and Nuh AS for their qualities of gratitude: "(Ibrahim AS was) thankful for His bounties." [16:121] and "Assuredly, he (Nuh) was a grateful servant" [17:3].

These verses demonstrate how much Allah SWT esteems a thankful servant. So the next question arises:

How can we be more grateful?

It is in human nature to only realize the importance of something only after it has been snatched away from us. Before this excursion, I would complain about not being as smart as the people around me; however, after my experience, I realized how petty I was being. Only by seeing people deprived of a blessing did I realize that I had been bestowed a blessing in the first place! It is mentioned in a Sahih Bukhari and Muslim hadith, on the authority of Abu Hurayra RA who said: "The Prophet SAW said: 'Look upon one who is below you in status. In this way you will not look down upon the grace of that God bestowed upon you.'"

Therefore we must do our very best to keep ourselves surrounded by examples that keep us humble.

For example, visit the sick, listen to other people's problems, talk to the elderly - whatever it is that would make you realize how fortunate *you* are!

Something that can motivate people like me is that being grateful can actually lead to an increase in your blessings. Allah SWT Who created us and thus knows us in and out, says in Surah Ibrahim, verse 7: "...If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favor]; but if you deny, indeed, My punishment is severe."

When we receive a gift from someone, we are especially nice to that person, we listen to them, try to repay their kindness in some other manner. But how does one show gratefulness to the Lord who created us, fed us, gave us a family and the inexhaustible list of His presents goes on and on?

There are several ways to do shukr. The most well known is the verbal acknowledgment of shukr, done by simply saying 'Alhamdulillah' or 'All Praise belongs to God'. The Prophet Muhammad SAW used to pray all night till his feet were swollen. One night Sayyidina Aisha RA asked him: "Why do you pray so much when you know that Allah has forgiven you?" To this the Prophet SAW replied: "Then shall I not be a servant grateful to God?"

Another way to show our gratitude to Allah SWT is by making good use of His favors upon us and not using those favors to commit sins against the entity Who bestowed them upon us. A person, who recognizes the grace of Allah SWT, does not complain about what he may not have. Instead a grateful person is a patient person. A thankful person says 'Alhamdulillah' even when something is taken away from them to thank Allah SWT for giving them an opportunity, albeit for a short while, to experience the blessing.

Allah SWT says in the Qur'an: "And if you would count the favors of Allah, never could you be able to count them. Truly, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful." [16:18]

If we think about it, do we really have an excuse not to be grateful? Therefore, let us strive to engage in more shukr from today onwards.

Excerpts from the poems of
Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi

Collected by Maham Jamal

Think of the big moves you have already made,
From a single cell to a human being.

-Keep Moving

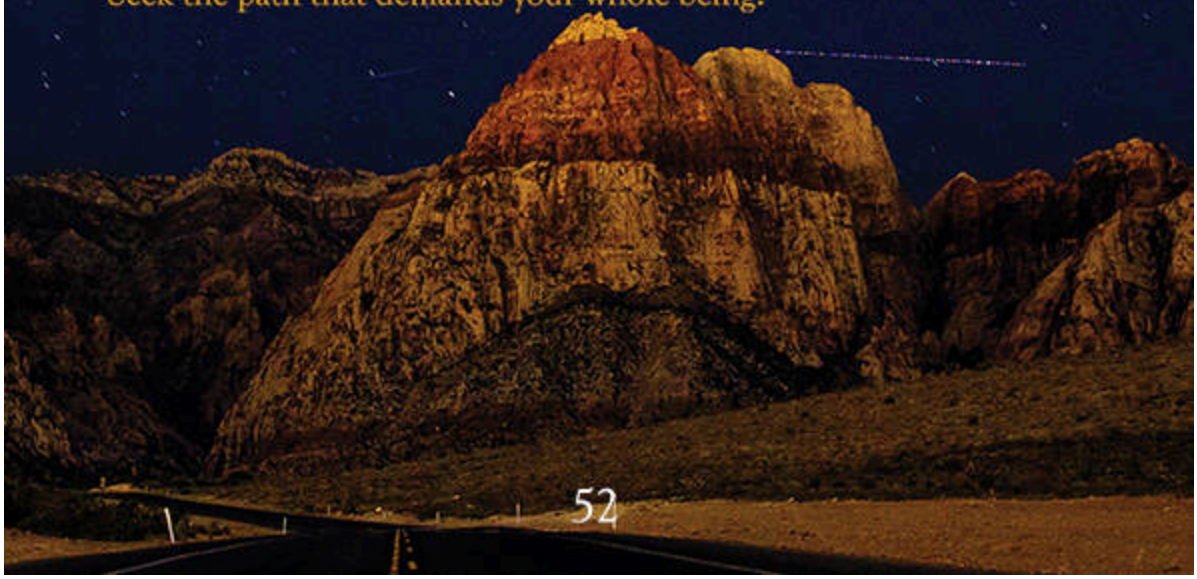
Do not look for justice here,
In the jungle where your animal soul
Gives you bad advice

-Leaving

The soul has been given its own ears to hear things,
that the mind does not understand

-We Are The Sun

Seek the wisdom that will untie your knot,
Seek the path that demands your whole being.



Do not ruin this chance with politeness and easy promise,
The help we call for is here,
the invitation to join with great souls

– BLADE

Each Candle moment there is a new moth,
Some people when they hear
How the mind goes crazy in love, close down.
Their hearts contract.

There is a confusion in surrender
That the intellect so hates it devises a key made of fire
to destroy the lock, the door and the whole house.

But love's madness has gone before,
And there is nothing left, no rooms, no door, no lock,
Just this airy falling asylum of friends
That we call Shams

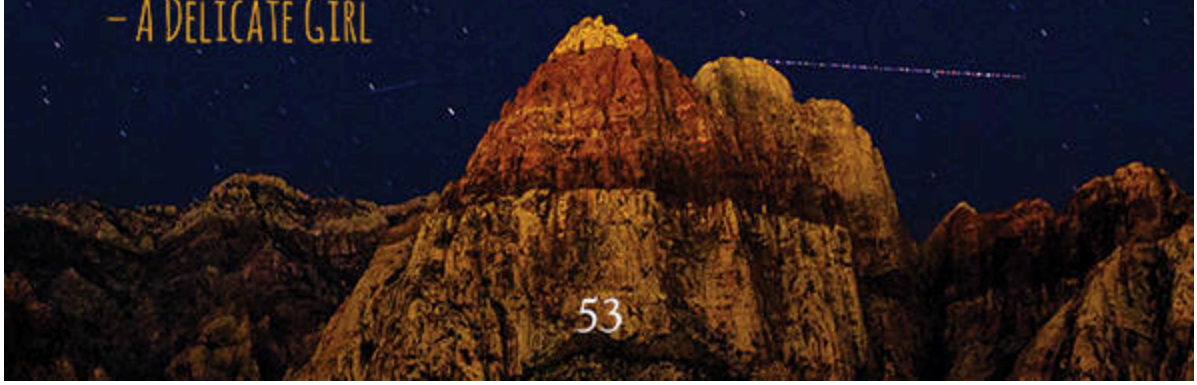
– ASYLUM

The terrible grief of being human,
let us drink it all, but with a difference.

We sit with Junnaiyd and Bestami,
The moon rising here cannot be covered with cloud.

There are no deaths for lovers.
Who is the self? A delicate girl that flows out
when we draw the sword of selfless action

– A DELICATE GIRL



There is a candle in your heart ready to be kindled
There is a void in your soul ready to be filled.

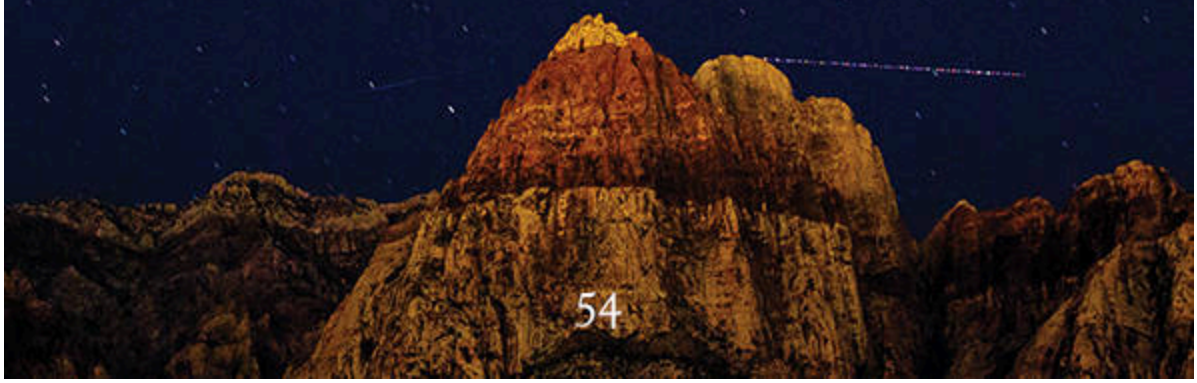
You feel it, don't you?

You feel the separation
from the Beloved.
Invite Him to fill you up,
Embrace the fire.

Remind those who tell you otherwise that
Love
Comes to you of its own accord,
And the yearning for it
Cannot be learned in any school.

Source: Rumi: The Big Red Book, Translations and Commentary by Coleman Barks

Note: The titles of the poems have not been originally given by the poet himself. These are an improvisation by the translator so as to thematically divide the poems in order to ease understanding.



The Arrow that does not Miss its Target

By Farah Asad

The first thing anyone should know about making dua to Allah SWT is: it will be accepted. Yup. Allah Ta'ala grants it all! He just does it in different ways.

1) Exactly the way you ask for it. So if you prayed for an A in your Calculus final, an A in your Calculus final is what you're going to get.

2) Gives you some other good instead which He in His infinite mercy selected for you. It may be something better than what you asked for, or it may be that He removes some harmful activity from us...and we will never know. We believe *bil ghayb* - without seeing. Think of it in this way: you prayed for an A in Psychology, but you ended up with a B. What you don't know is that Allah SWT actually saved you from getting a D in your Physics exam because of your dua. Isn't that better?

3) He doesn't grant it in this world, but He will grant it on the Day of Judgment. When everything has been weighed on that day, then Allah SWT will grant rewards for the duas He didn't accept in this world. Man will say on that day, 'I wish none of my duas were granted in the world. I wish they had all been accepted in the Hereafter'.

Rasulullah SAW said: 'Dua is the essence of worship, it's the marrow, it's the core, the crux of worship' – Every act of worship is a plea to Allah SWT. Make dua after every act of worship! You have an opportunity.

Even when a person's shoelace snaps, Rasulullah SAW says you should make dua then, because any hardship for a believer is an opportunity. SubhanAllah – become a person of dua. Make it your passion. Make it your habit. Make it a part of your attributes. Let yourself linger in dua. Lose yourself in dua.
And the believer's main dua should be *Allahuma inni as'aluka minka iyyaka, ya Allah: "O Allah, I ask You of You."* Look inside your heart, you will feel instantly that you got what you wanted.

May Allah SWT make us people of dua!

My Sunnah Duas

Collected by Maham Jamal

١. When waking up

(١)

الحَمْدُ لِلّهِ الذي أحْيانا بَعْدَ ما أماتَنا وَإليه النُّشور.

Alhamdu lillahil-lathee ahyana baAAda ma amatana wa-ilayhin-nushoor.

'All praise is for Allah who gave us life after having taken it from us and unto Him is the resurrection .'

(٢)

The Prophet ﷺ said : 'Whoever awakes at night and then says :

لا إلهَ إلا اللهُ وَحْدَهُ لا شَريكَ له، لهُ المُلْكُ ولهُ الحَمد، وهوَ على كلّ شيءٍ قدير، سُبْحانَ اللهِ، والحمْدُ لله ، ولا إلهَ إلا اللهُ واللهُ أكبَر، وَلا حَولَ وَلا قوّةَ إلا باللهِ العليّ العظيم.

La ilaha illal-lahu wahdahu la shareeka lah, lahul-mulku walahul-hamd, wahuwa AAala kulli shay-in qadeer, subhanal-lah, walhamdu lillah, wala ilaha illal-lah wallahu akbar, wala hawla wala quwwata illa billahil-AAaliyyil AAa *th*eem.

'None has the right to be worshipped except Allah, alone without associate, to Him belongs sovereignty and praise and He is over all things wholly capable. How perfect Allah is, and all praise is for Allah, and none has the right to be worshipped except Allah, Allah is the greatest and there is no power nor might except with Allah, The Most High, The Supreme .

...and then supplicates:

رَبِّ اغفِرْ لي.

Rabbigh-fir lee

'O my Lord forgive me .'

...will be forgiven'

Al-Waleed said, "or he ﷺ said:

'and then asks, he will be answered.If he then performs ablution and prays, his prayer will be accepted'."

(٣)

الحمدُ للهِ الذي عافاني في جَسَدي وَرَدّ عَليّ روحي وَأذِنَ لي بِذِكْره .

Alhamdu lillahil-lathee AAafanee fee jasadee waradda AAalayya roohee wa-athina lee bithikrih.

'All praise is for Allah who restored to me my health and returned my soul and has allowed me to remember Him .'

(٤)

﴿ إنّ في خَلْق السّمَوَاتِ وَالأرْض واخْتِلافِ اللّيلِ والنّهار لآياتٍ لأُولي الألباب ...﴾

٢. Supplication when wearing a garment
(٥)

الحمدُ للهِ الذي كَساني هذا (الثوب) ورَزَقنيه مِنْ غَيْرِ حَولٍ مِنّي وَلا قوّة .

Alhamdu lillahil-lathee kasanee hatha (aththawb) warazaqaneehi min ghayri hawlin minnee wal a quwwah.

'All Praise is for All ah who has clothed me with this garment and provided it for me, with no power nor might from myself .'

٣. Supplication said when wearing a new garment
(٦)

اللّهُمَّ لكَ الحَمْدُ أنْتَ كَسَوْتَنيهِ، أسْألكَ مِنْ خَيرِهِ وَخَيْرِ مَا صُنِعَ لَه، وَأعوذُ بِكَ مِنْ شَرِّهِ وَشَرِّ ما صُنِعَ لَهُ.

Allahumma lakal -hamdu anta kasawtaneeh, as -aluka min khayrihi wakhayri m a suniAAa lah, wa -aAAoo thu bika min sharrihi washarri m a suniAAa lah.

'O Allah, for You is all praise, Y ou have clothed me with it (i.e. the garment), I ask You for the good of it and the good for which it was made, and I seek refuge with You from the evil of it and the evil for which it was made .'

٤. Supplication said to someone wearing a new garment
(٧)

تُبْلي وَيُخْلِفُ اللهُ تَعَالى .

Tublee wayukhliful -lahu taAA ala.

'May you wear it out and All ah تعالى replace it (with another).' The intended meaning: A supplication for long life . "

(٨)

إلبَس جَديداً وَعِشْ حَميداً وَمُتْ شهيداً

Ilbas jadeedan w aAAish hameedan wamut shaheedan .

'Wear anew, live commendably and die a *shaheed*.'

shaheed:One who dies fighting the kuff ar in order to make the word of All ah superior or in defense of Isl am. It also has other meanings found in the Sunnah such as : the one who dies defending his life, wealth or family; the woman who passes away due to childbirth; one who drowns ...etc.

٥. Before undressing
(٩)

بِسْمِ الله .

Bismil-lah

'In the name of All ah.'

٦. Before entering the toilet
(١٠)

(بِسْمِ الله) اللّهُمَّ إنّي أعوذُ بِكَ مِنَ الخُبْثِ وَالخَبائِث .

(Bismil-lah) allahumma innee aAAoo thu bika minal -khubthi wal -khaba-ith

'(In the name of All ah). O Allah, I take refuge with you from all evil and evil -doers.'

٧. After leaving the toilet
(١١)

غُفْرانَك .

Ghufranak

'I ask You (Allah) for forgiveness .'

٨. When starting ablution
(١٢)

بِسْمِ اللهِ .

Bismil-lah
'In the name of All ah.'

٩. Upon completing the ablution
(١٣)

أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لا إِلـهَ إِلاَّ اللهُ وَحْدَهُ لا شَرِيكَ لـهُ وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسولـه.

Ashhadu an l a ilaha illal-lahu wahdahu la shareeka lah, wa -ashhadu anna Muhammadan AAabduhu warasooluh .
'I bear witness that none has the right to be worshipped except All ah, alone without partner, and I bear witness that Mu hammad is His slave and Messenger .'

(١٤)

اللّهُمَّ اجْعَلنـي مِنَ التَّوّابينَ وَاجْعَلْني مِنَ المتَطَهّرين.

Allahummaj -AAalnee minat -tawwabeena wajAAalnee minal -mutatahhireen.
'O Allah, make me of those who return to You often in repentance and make me of those who remain clean and pure .'

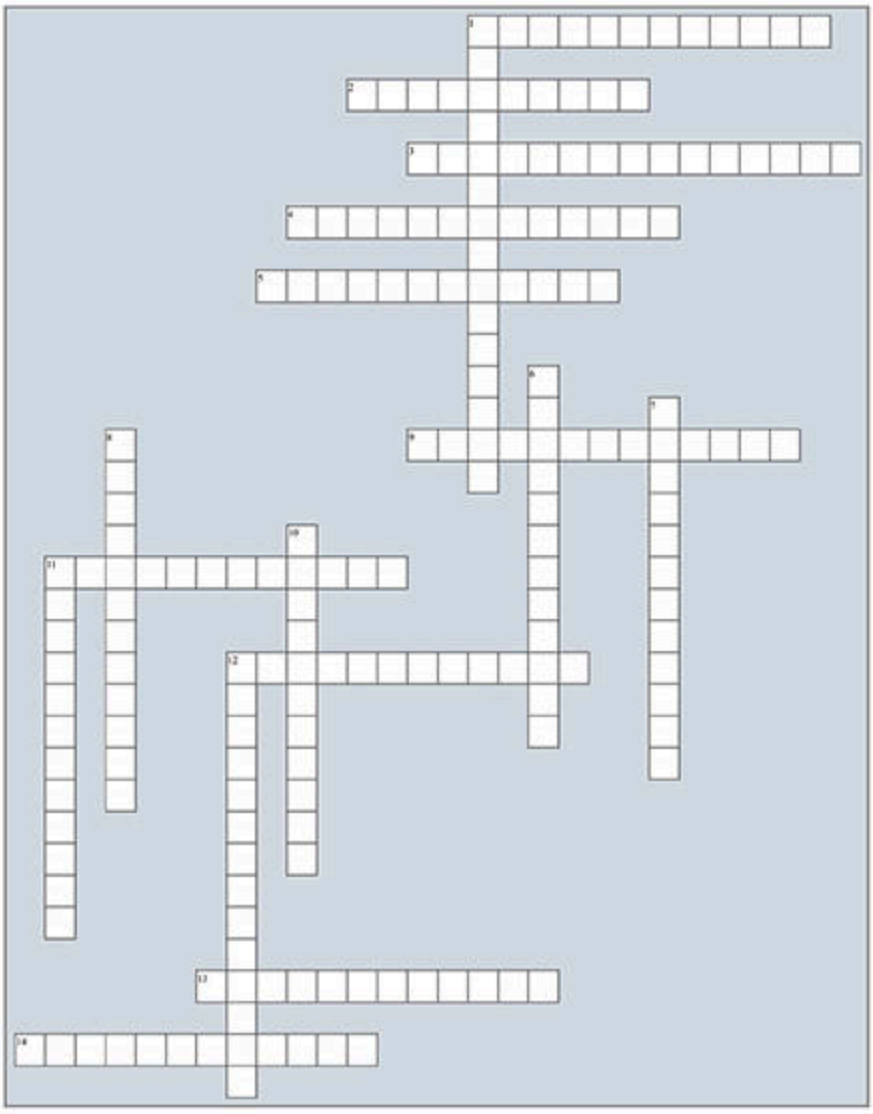
(١٥)

سُبْحانَكَ اللّهُمَّ وَبِحَمدِك أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لا إِلهَ إِلاَّ أَنتَ أَستَغفِرُكَ وَأَتوبُ إِلَيك .

Subhanakal-lahumma wabi hamdika ashhadu an l a ilaha illa anta astaghfiruka wa -atoobu ilayk .
'How perfect You are O All ah, and I praise You, I bear witness that none has the right to be worshipped except You, I seek Your forgiveness and turn in repentance to You.'

May Allah SWT Bless us with the recitation of these duas, and may He also let us experience the barakah of reciting these duas. Ameen.

Various names of the Day of Judgement



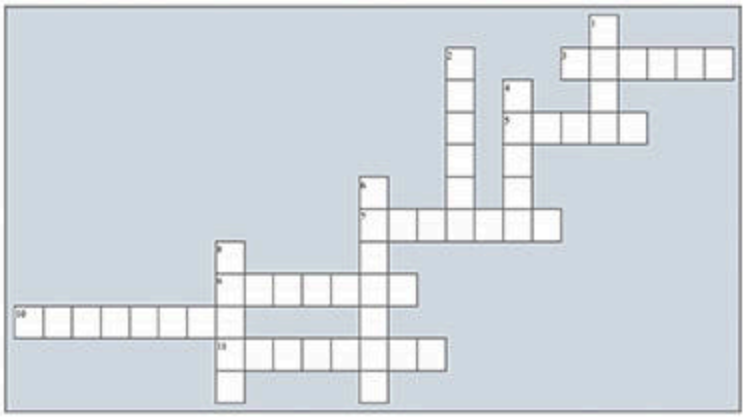
Across

1. The Mighty, Great Day, verse 6:15
2. The Day of Sorting out, verse 37.021
3. The Day of Testimony, verse 11:103
4. The Known Day, verse 56:50
5. The Day of Distress, verse 74.009
9. The Day of Distress, verse 19:39
11. The Day of Mutual Meeting, verse 40:15
12. The Day of Account, verse 038.016
13. The Day of Assembly, verse 42:7
14. The Grievous Day 11:26

Down

1. The Day of mutual loss and gain (among you), verse 064.009
6. The Day of Resurrection, raised up again, verse 30:56
7. The Last Day. verse 2:8
8. The Day of Disaster, Barren Day, verse 22:55
10. The Day of Judgement. Verse 1:3
11. The Day of Decision, verse 032.029
12. The Day of Resurrection. verse 2:85

General Quiz on Islam

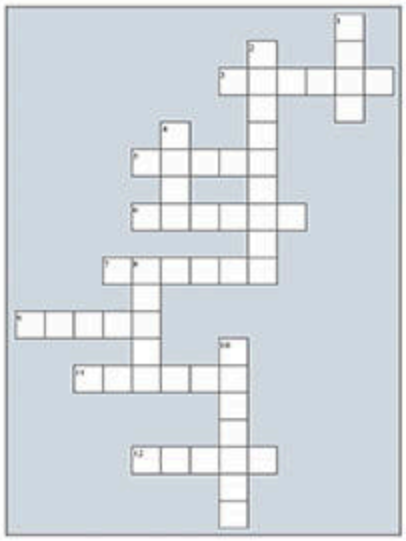


Across

3. Surah that does not begin with Bismillah
5. The unforgiveable sin according to Islam
7. Name of the Surah which contains Bismillah inside its text
9. A grandson of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.a.w.)
10. Name of the first Islamic month
11. First Caliph

Down

1. According to a hadeeth, Prophet Muhammad (s.a.a.w.) valued the 2 rakaat sunnah of this prayer more than the whole world.
2. He (r.a.) married two daughters of the Prophet (s.a.a.w.) in succession.
4. Religion of Moses (a.s.) according to the Holy Quran
6. A daughter of the Prophet (s.a.a.w.)
8. Second name of the Prophet (s.a.a.w.) mentioned in the Holy Quran



Across

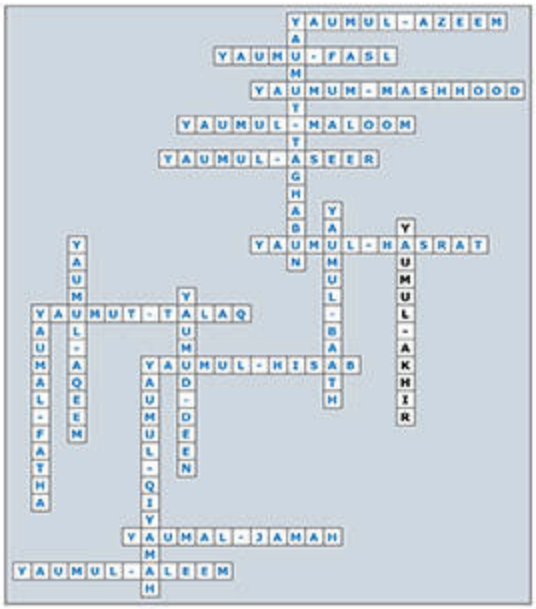
3. According to Surah Luqman, this animal has the worst sound or voice.
5. Daughter of Umar (r.a.) who was a wife of the Prophet (s.a.a.w.)
6. The best language to gain knowledge
7. Very very rich person who was swallowed by earth with his wealth, according to the Holy Quran.
9. The Prophet (a.s.) who has to spend a short time in a very very dark place until he prayed. (Arabic name)
11. Islamic Term for worship and obedience of Allah T'ala.
12. Religion of all prophets of Allah.

Down

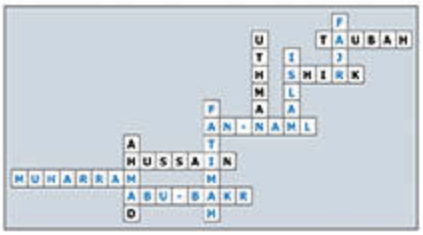
1. The Way of Life
2. According to a Hadith, a person takes up the religion of ?
4. One of the two prayers when angels change shift
8. The most learned woman of Islam ever.
10. King who was punished and drowned

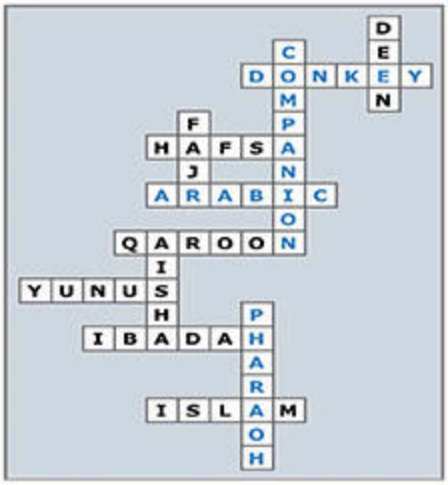
Answers

Various names of the Day of Judgement



General Quiz on Islam





"How strange is man that when he is afraid of something, he runs away from it. But when he is afraid of Allah SWT, he gets closer to Him."

Hadhrat Ali Ibn Abi Talib RA



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