

With Allah

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Letter No. 5, Amman, Jordan

Dear Believers: as-Salamu 'alaykum wa rahmatu Llahi wa barakatuh.

In the Name of Allah Most Merciful and Compassionate: All praise be to Allah Most High, and blessings and peace upon His beloved Prophet Muhammad, a mercy to all worlds of beings.

To commence: The way to win in this world and the next is to be with Allah by following the light He has shown us in the Quran and the example of His messenger (Allah bless him and give him peace). He says in verse 2.262 of Surat al-Baqara:

الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ لَا يُتْبِعُونَ مَا أَنْفَقُوا مَنًّا وَلَا أَذًى لَّهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ
وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

Those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah,
never again after to remind those given of it, or offend them,
they shall have their wage with their Lord,
and they need never be feared for,
nor shall they grieve.

This verse comes right after the Quran's mentioning the mighty reward for spending one's wealth in Allah's path, be it for charity to the poor, or jihad, or other expenditures, whether obligatory or recommended, a reward multiplied whole times over if Allah accepts it. So He mentions here the things that spoil or nullify this reward, so one can avoid them. This is why He says *Alladhina yunfiquna amwalahum* "Those who spend their wealth," reminding people that it is their *own* wealth, so they should take good care with it not to just throw it away on something meaningless to Allah by reminding recipients of it or browbeating them about it later—as if to say, "It's your wealth, so don't squander it in this world and the next." The words *fi sabili Llah* "in the way of Allah," which in some contexts refer exclusively to jihad, refer instead here, according to most *ulema* of *tafsir* or 'scholars of the meaning of the Quran,' to *all* expenditures upon others that are obligatory or recommended, for the sins mentioned in the second line above do not concern those battling in the path of Allah.

The next word in the above verse, *thumma*, is a conjunctive adverb with the sense here of, as Arab grammarians say, *tarakhi zamani li l-dawam* or 'disparity in time to express perpetuity,' so has been rendered "never again after"; which, as a *conjunctive* adverb, conjoins the preceding verb *yunfiquna* or 'spend' with the phrase *la yutbi'una ma anfaqu mannan wa la adhan*, meaning literally, "never again after to follow what they have spent by reminding those given of it, or offending them." These two haram things, *mann* and *adha*, are both verbal nouns—denoting the action regardless of the time it takes place, for the context is *ever* afterward. The first of these sins, *mann* (pronounced MENN), means, as Abu Su'ud says, *An yata'adda 'ala man ahsana ilayhi bi ihsanihi wa yurihi annahu awjaba 'alayhi haqqan*, or "to consider a favor, kindness, or present one has given someone like a debt due back from him, and make him feel like it is an obligation he now owes one." The second of them, discussed below, *adha* (pr. EH-thuh), or 'offending' is more general, and actually includes *mann* within it. The sin of *mann*, reminding others of kindnesses one has done them, is only mentioned by Allah separately, and first, because it is so common among mankind, and particularly needs to be warned against. Many religious people don't even know it is haram. It includes not only mentioning money spent, but all kinds of goodness done to all kinds of people.

When the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) says in a hadith, "Allah is helping the servant as long as the servant is helping his brother" (*Sahih Muslim*, 4.2074 (2699). S), the premise is that the servant is helping his brother for *Allah*, not merely to gain money, renown, or this-worldly gratitude. To the extent that the intention is for Allah, one has a reward for such help, while other competing motives decrease the reward to the extent that they enter into it. But when there is *mann* afterwards, reminding someone of what one did, for some worldly purpose, it not only nullifies the reward of one's previous good deed to them, but one bears the *new* sin of having committed *mann*, until one sincerely repents from it.

Allah says in verse 2.264 of Surat al-Baqara, "O you who believe, do not nullify all your charity by reminding those given of it, and offending them," which is especially important in heated discussions between man and wife, parents and kids, or others. Why? Because when people "have words" with each other, Allah is generally completely forgotten, and the Devil is fanning the flames on both sides to reach deeper into the bag, with the likes of "I've worked my whole life to give you all you have, and you talk to me like this?" or other belligerence—in a single instant nullifying the reward of years of helping the other person. It is so instinctive and so wrong that Allah gives a special warning against it, and gives those who avoid it a special and vast reward. None but Allah may remind of blessings, for He is the *Mannan*, their true generous Giver.

The second sin, *adha* or 'offending' recipients of one's goodness, includes remarks of all kinds that annoy them, such as asking "What did you do with the zakat I gave you last year?" or "You're always in need, and I'm the one who has to pay." It includes such things as telling other people of the recipient's kin or anyone else he would be embarrassed to have know about it, that he is being financially helped, or any other remark that diminishes his standing in their eyes. There is a

tremendous *hurma* or ‘inviolability’ in the sight of Allah for not only reputations, but even the feelings of others, rich or poor.

Then Allah says *lahum ajruhum ‘inda Rabbihim* “they shall have their wage with their Lord,” as if it is the *consequence* of fulfilling the previously-mentioned *condition* (su’al al-shart) of *spending their wealth in the way of Allah* mentioned in the first line of the verse above. But notice here that Allah drops the *fa’* or letter F before *lahum*, such a *fa’* being the normal marker of the *consequence* of a conditional sentence (jawab al-shart). That is, we would normally (as in other similar verses in the same sura) expect the first word here to be not *lahum*, as it is, but rather *falahum*, indicating that this phrase, “they shall have their wage with their Lord,” is the deserved reward and consequence of spending in the path of Allah. This omission of the *fa’* by Allah is intentional. Biqa’i says, “He did not link this [part of the verse to the previous lines] with the *fa’* [of being a consequence], in order to show that the ‘reward’ is a pure gift from Allah in the first place—to emphasize by this its incomparable magnitude, and the insuperable greatness of its lofty standing—inasmuch as He didn’t make it a mere effect or consequence of their spending.” That is, the nobility of the souls who give, help, sacrifice, and work in the path of Allah is met with nothing less than the absolute nobility of Allah in lavishing on them blessings of indescribable magnitude in this world and the next, quite beyond all their efforts and expectations, and enduring forever—not mere wages for work.

The phrase *‘inda Rabbihim* “with their Lord” means “faithfully repositing and under the keeping of their Lord, never to be lost or perish, but only exponentially increased.” The latter point, infinite increase and enhancement of their reward forever, scholars say, is also meant here by the word *Rabb*, which connotes *tarbiya* or ‘ever raising or increasing to a higher perfection.’ Too, the distribution of the name *Rabb* or ‘Lord’ in the Quran (other than rare instances of irony against disbelievers) is in contexts emphasizing the goodness, kindness, generosity, caring, merciful, nurturing, solicitous, helpful, and gentle way of Allah in dealing with the believers, those He loves—as opposed to the name *Allah*, which evokes His might, terror, invincible power, and unescapable justice against those who defy and disobey and set Him at odds, used, as the ulema note, *tarbiyatan li l-mahaba*, or ‘to evoke awe and dread.’ So *‘inda Rabbihim* “with their Lord” here reminds mankind that *Huwa al-Mun’imu ‘alayhim* or ‘He alone is the Lavisher of Blessings upon them.’

Then He says, *wa la khawfun ‘alayhim, wa la hum yahzanun(a)*, “and they need never be feared for, nor shall they grieve.” The phrase *wa la khawfun ‘alayhim* is misunderstood by many to mean ‘they never fear.’ Imam Alusi points out that this verb (with its preposition) is not used in that sense in Arabic, as when we take the sentence *khafa ‘ala fulan*, which means “He feared for So-and-so,” or “He was afraid something would happen to So-and-so.” For to say the truth, even the greatest of mankind have experienced fear, among them the prophet Ibrahim, when his guests wouldn’t touch the food he served them (suggesting a threatening intent in ancient Semitic culture, in which one would never kill someone whose hospitality one had accepted), and he was gripped with fear until they told him they were Allah’s angels. So in this phrase *wa la khawfun ‘alayhim* actually means *la yakhafu ‘alayhim kha’ifun*, or “no possible fearer has anything to fear for them,” or to translate it more simply, “and they need never be feared for.” And this is a *jumla ismiyya* or ‘nominal (noun) sentence,’ which is stronger, more positive, energetic, powerful, decisive, and final in Arabic than a verbal sentence, and denotes here that *la yanaluhum ayyu makruh*, or ‘nothing hateful will beset them,’ which Abu Su’ud says is in this world and the next—though dire trials may well befall them in this world, from which they will only benefit.

The final phrase *wa la hum yahzanun* or “nor shall they grieve” is a *jumla fi’liyya* or ‘verbal sentence,’ and means that *sayanaluna kulla matloob*, or ‘they shall attain everything they ever sought’; but also, the nature of grief is that it *yatajaddadu* or ‘appears in life, then leaves, then reappears over something else.’ Allah is saying here that the nonappearance of grief over something they have missed will become a permanent (thabit) feature for them, never to change, because they’ll have everything, every happiness, forever. Significantly, the word *hum* or ‘they’ in the phrase *wa la hum yahzanun* or “nor shall they grieve” could have presumably been omitted in Arabic for brevity, but Allah has kept it here for special emphasis: “nor shall *they* grieve”—meaning: “There are *others* who certainly *shall* grieve—so don’t be like them.” May Allah give us all tremendous *tawfiq* through His mighty Book.

Question of the Month: How important is it for a believer to become a learned scholar of Islam to improve themselves spiritually, and is there a minimum of Islamic knowledge that one needs to have to continue to grow spiritually as a Muslim?

Answer: Ibrahim al-Khawwas, one of the ulema of Ihsan, used to say, *al-‘Alimu man ya‘malu bi ‘ilmih wa in qall*, or “The ‘scholar’ is someone who acts upon what he knows, even if it is not that much.” The fiqh book *Reliance of the Traveller* probably represents a decent minimum. A Muslim’s knowledge must also entail knowing when one *doesn’t* know, and asking an *‘alim* who has both Sacred Learning (‘ilm) and *taqwa* (fear of Allah). Such a scholar also needs wide life experience, having worked jobs in the real world, and not just read and taught books. He must not slander others. He must respect Islamic scholarly tradition, have absorbed the state of the ulema by long study with them, not be an empty legalist who repeats the words he has memorized, but doesn’t understand and love the spirit, heart, state, life, mind, and soul of the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace), and grasp the *ruh* or ‘true spirit and sense’ of the rulings of the Quran.

All of which is sufficient till next month, Allah willing; with greetings of peace and felicity to everyone; was-Salamu ‘alaykum wa rahmatu Llahi wa barakatuh.