

With Allah

Ramadan 1445/April 2024
Letter No. 10, Amman, Jordan

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

In the Name of Allah Most Merciful and Compassionate: Praise to Allah Most High, invincible of might and everlasting of rule; and blessings and peace upon His beloved Prophet Muhammad, the axial and final messenger till the end of time.

To commence: There is nothing quite like finding someone who can really do something when one desperately needs help. Allah tells us in verses 2.156–57 of Surat al-Baqara:

الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمُ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ ﴿١٥٦﴾ أُولَئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوَاتٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُهْتَدُونَ

Those who say when any calamity strikes them,
‘Verily we are Allah’s, and to Him are we bound to return.’

Those, on them shall be endless tender blessings
from their Lord in light and help, and mighty mercy,
and those are the guided.

These verses follow a description of the trial of believers in the path of Allah with some little of fear, hunger, loss of life, and loss of wealth and crops—to whom He says: “And give great glad tidings to the patient.” So the opening phrase of the first verse above, *alladhina idha asabat-hum musibatun qalu* or “Those who say when any calamity strikes them,” is an attribute of theirs identifying and praising them. The words *idha asabat-hum musibatun* or “when any calamity strikes them” denote being hit by a misfortune of considerable impact, as in the Arabic sentence *Asabahu s-sahm(u)*, or “The arrow struck him.” So a *musiba* or ‘calamity’ is being struck by something in one’s life, a “blow of fate,” that really hurts. The *ta’ marbuta* or feminine ending of *musiba* or ‘calamity’ magnifies its pain, impact, and consequences, while the indefiniteness of the noun is to generalize it (ta’mim) to any such misfortune.

In the second phrase of this verse, in which Allah describes what the truly patient say, *Inna li Llahi wa inna ilayhi raji’un*, or “Verily we are Allah’s, and to Him are we bound to return,” His words *Inna li Llahi* or “Verily we are Allah’s” refer not only to those who have died, but also those of us who remain: we belong to Him, we are His slaves, and He does with us what He wills. It also entails that we may have to struggle against evils and odds in this world that are beyond our power to defeat, but if we do, and are seriously doing our utmost to *be on Allah’s side*, which in Arabic is also *li Llah(i)* or “for Allah,” then we shall have the everlasting triumph of doing our duty for Allah, to whom we return to be rewarded. In the next part of the phrase *wa inna ilayhi raji’un*, or “and to Him are we bound to return,” the *ism al-fa’il* or ‘active participle (name of the doer)’ *raji’un*, literally, “those returning,” is used to indicate *thubut* or ‘firmness, unquestionable truth, and especially here, inevitability.’ The active participle is also a superlative emphatic in expressing Allah’s power, since it is metaphorically used here as if *we* were the ones doing the returning on our own—that is, it is so effortlessly *easy* for Allah’s omnipotent power to raise us all from the dead and return us, that to Him, it is no more difficult than if we were doing it by *ourselves*, without requiring any effort or even attention from Him.

This mighty word of patience by those struck by calamities is not intended to be mere spoken words, but denotes the reflex of the believing heart, which is first to see what one has been created for, second to know that one is returning to one’s Lord, and third to realize that all of the tremendous blessings of Allah upon one—Islam, Iman, Ihsan, a life of meaning and purpose with an everlastingly happy end, and the blessings these things in turn entail—are exponentially *greater* than any particular blessing Allah has taken back by one’s *musiba* or ‘calamity,’ be it the loss of a loved one, reputation, wealth, crops, or anything else. When these realities are taken to heart, one’s loss becomes inconsiderable in comparison, as one surrenders to Allah’s infinitely wiser and sovereign choice—and in consequence receives His incomparable reward. Our mother Umm Salama heard the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) say, “No Muslim will be struck by a calamity, then say what Allah has commanded him to, *Inna li Llahi wa inna ilayhi raji’un* ‘Verily we are Allah’s, and to Him are we bound to return,’ [then say:] *Allahumma jurni fi musibati wa akhlif li khayran minha* ‘O Allah, reward me in my calamity, and repay me with better than it [took]’—save that Allah will repay him with better than it [took]” (*Muslim*, 2.631–32 (918). S). So this is a sunna to add when afflicted.

Then Allah says, *Ula’ika ‘alayhim salawatun min rabbihim wa rahma(tun)*, or “Those, on them shall be endless tender blessings from their Lord in light and help, and mighty mercy.” The first word *Ula’ika* or “Those” is called an *ism al-ishara al-ba’id* or ‘demonstrative pronoun (meaning words that point something out, like *this*, *that*, *these*, and *those*) for something far.’ We say *far* (ba’id) because like the word “those” in English, *ula’ika* in Arabic points out something that is *farther* away from the speaker than is meant by the word “these” (*ha’ula’i* in Arabic). The word *these* means “these right here,” while *those* means “those over there.” Why does Allah use the pronoun for something *far* when referring to the steadfastly patient just mentioned who say (and mean) the above words? Because this is how Quranic Arabic indicates people *far up* or “lofty in rank” (‘aliyy al-rutba) of great *nobleness* (sharaf) and good: that is, people “way up there” in meriting respect. Such demonstrative pronouns for something *far* are also sometimes used by Allah in *negative* contexts, for people “way down there” in evil, who deserve great contempt—which is not the context here. In this verse it means “those high, high ranking people in the sight of Allah.” Significantly, this verse is a nominal (noun) sentence, which is stronger than using a verbal

sentence, and denotes the power, magnitude, and categorical certainty of what Allah always and invariably blesses such people with. Also, just as a verbal sentence would specify the *time* in which something is to happen, the nominal sentence here denotes that Allah's blessings on them are *timeless*, and "on them" both now and forever and ever.

Then He says, '*alayhim salawatun min rabbihim wa rahma(tun)*, or "on them shall be endless tender blessings from their Lord in light and help, and mighty mercy." First, in this '*alayhim* or "on them" the word '*ala* (on) is a *harf al-isti'la'* or 'preposition of ascendant power over,' meaning "upon them" as if they are completely overspread and covered by the blessings—more telling and emphatic than if Allah had merely used the prepositional *lahum* or "for them." Too, He has made the word *salawatun* or "blessings" plural to tell us, as Alusi notes, that they are both *many* on the one hand, and of all different *kinds* on the other—while the indefiniteness of the word (*salawatun*) magnifies and amplifies both meanings. Raghīb al-Asfahani defines it as Allah's prayers, blessings, and lauding them with praise and glory, while Biqa'i says, "Allah's 'blessing' (*salat*) upon His servants means His turning to and drawing near to them (*iqbaluhu* '*alayhim*) with consolation, liking, attachment, and affection (*bi* '*atfihi*), to bring them out of darkness (*dhulma*) to an exalted station of light (*rif'ati nur*)." The words *min rabbihim* or "from their Lord" indicate the benevolent, kindly, nurturing, and helping nature of these blessings implied by the word *Rabb* or "Lord," which is often used in such contexts in the Quran, but here also underscores His personal and particular concern (*'inaya*) for the patient. He then adds *wa rahma(tun)* or "and mighty mercy" to His *salawatun* or 'multifaceted blessings' to indicate that everything they have been given by His blessings will turn into a mighty outcome of mercy forever. The indefinite of mercy (*rahma(tun)*) serves, ulema note, "to exalt the magnificence and greatness (*tafkhim wa ta'dhim*)" of its consequences for people who say these words. As Imam Abul Hasan al-Shadhili said, "The miracle from Allah in real contentment (*rida*) will detach you from the calamity till the Day you meet Him."

Allah then says, *wa ula'ika hum al-muhtadun(a)*, or "and those are the guided." The verse would have been meaningful in Arabic by just using *wa* or "and" alone here instead of repeating the word *ula'ika*, but Allah has chosen *al-idhhar fi mawdi' al-idmar*, or 'plainly mentioning something that would have been equally well understood if left unmentioned,' because this *second* mention, here, reaffirms with powerful resounding effect their high, signal rank from among all mankind in His sight, as mentioned above at the first instance of *ula'ika*. The words *hum al-muhtadun(a)*, or "are the guided," are found nowhere else in the Quran, and I have used "*the guided*" to translate this phrase, because the word *hum* before *al-muhtadun(a)* signifies *hasr* or 'exclusivity,' and literally means that no one else is guided but these, in a hyperbole of emphasis upon patience as the crowning attribute of those with true faith in Allah. So this final sentence affirms the previous sentence, and tells *why* they deserve such tremendous blessings and light and help from Allah, making this *du'a* and this understanding of being with Allah one of the mightiest assets a believer can have on his side.

Question of the Month (in sum): I require clarification on what is occurring in Palestine. The media and politics portray one side of what is occurring in Gaza, and my consciousness and intellect tell me something different.

Answer: In 1982 Resolution 3743 was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly "affirming the legitimacy of the struggle of a people for independence, territorial integrity, national unity, and liberation from colonial and foreign domination and occupation by all available means including armed struggle." The struggle of good against evil has taken place many times in this area and the lands around it for ages and ages past, and it has always been between the followers of the prophet of the time on the one hand, and the *ahzab* or 'leagued forces of *kufr* and misguidance' against them. Those of good are typically blessed with less resources and influence, but greater faith in Allah, courage, and resolve. By the wisdom of Allah, they don't always win in every age, but sometimes lose and are destroyed, though in either case Allah rewards them forever and takes *shuhada'* or 'witnesses' from them. A *shaheed* is someone whose heroic death bears *witness* to all men of his preferring what is with Allah and the next world to life itself, and a powerful testimony it is. The *ahzab* are typically greater in influence, money, and numbers, and commit shocking crimes that none but those who believe they will never be punished commit. They typically league with their likes, so no one may gainsay what they do. Allah cares nothing for such people, and the only reason He lets them exist is to reward and take *shuhada'* from the believers, to teach other believers something about Iman and *din*, but also as a test to all, to manifest who will make *du'a* for the side of good, and help them in every way they can. Letter No. 6 this last December mentions the gifting of rewards for one's spiritual works to their cause, and how this has helped in the past. Changes have swept the world since this began. Social media, including people living in Gaza taking pictures with their telephones of what is really happening there, and internet alternative news platforms carrying these—many of them put up by Jews of conscience and integrity who cannot stand what is being done, or what is being said to cover it up—have appalled and sickened the entire world with the wide deliberate butcheries of unarmed men, women, and children with bullets and bombs and starvation, and caused a massive avalanche of distrust for the major news media giants, whose owners are of the *ahzab* and pulling for them by fair means and foul. In Sha Allah, more changes are coming, for as Shakespeare says in his *Merchant of Venice*, "Truth will out." And Allah well knows His purpose in every last thing.

Till next letter, Allah willing, greetings of peace and felicity to everyone; was-Salamu 'alaykum wa rahmatu Llahi wa barakatuh.