

With Allah

Dhul Qa'da 1445/June 2024
Letter No. 12, 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, the invincible Bestower of limitless favor on mankind in this world and forever; and blessings and peace on the Greatest of Mankind, His Final Messenger Muhammad, unfollowed by any other.

To commence: Of the very best things to have at hand in one's hour of need is what one has laid up for it ahead of time when everything was still in easy reach. Allah tells us in verse 42.20 of Surat al-Shura:

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ حَرْثَ الْآخِرَةِ نَزِدْ لَهُ فِي حَرْثِهِ ۖ وَمَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ حَرْثَ الدُّنْيَا نُؤْتِهِ مِنْهَا وَمَا لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنْ نَصِيبٍ

Whoever strives hard for the yield of the next world,
We shall increase for him in his tillage;
And whoever strives hard but for the yield of this world,
We shall give him somewhat of it,
but he shall have no share in the next.

In the first line, *Man kana yuridu hartha l-akhira(ti)* or “Whoever strives hard for the yield of the next world,” Allah uses the verb *yuridu*, which literally means ‘wants,’ but carries with it the distinct sense of ‘striving with might and main to get it,’ as in another verse in Surat al-Hajj, 22.22, about the denizens of the hellfire struggling desperately to get out of the raging blaze: “Every time they *try to leave it* (aradu an yakhruju minha) for utter woe, they are put back into it.” So here as well, *yuridu* indicates strong desire coupled with strong effort. The words *Man kana yuridu* or “Whoever strives hard”—as usual in Arabic when *kana* (literally ‘was’) precedes a verb in the *mudari’* or ‘imperfect tense’ like *yuridu*—mean “Whoever *always and habitually* strives hard,” signifying that it’s his whole concern, night and day, and he wouldn’t do otherwise, because that’s the way he is, his real nature, and his whole point in life. Significantly, the word *murid* in the spiritual path is the active participle (name of the doer) of this verb, because of the single-mindedness the path demands. As Sidi ‘Ali al-Jamal said: “The true spiritual (al-faqr al-sadiq) is he whose enemy can never manage to reach him to do him harm. This is his mark: that he never has anything to do with other than his Beloved, and his being engaged with his Beloved keeps his enemy from him, for the Beloved is never to be found together with the enemy.”

As for Allah’s words *hartha l-akhira(ti)* or “the yield of the next world,” in its origin, *harth* means to prepare land to sow and raise a crop, by *plowing* it, in a word, *tillage*, but the ulema of the Quran say this is not meant here, but rather a *second* meaning for *harth* denoting the *crop* actually harvested, which is why I have translated it as “yield,” to be plainer, though *tillage* is also sometimes used in English, like *harth* in Arabic, to mean this yield. What Allah means by it is the fruits of one’s spiritual labors. He uses the word *harth* here to emphasize that fruits proceed from hardship, toil, and effort, in both agriculture and spirituality.

Then Allah says, *nazid lahu fi harthih(i)* or “We shall increase for him in his tillage.” The ulema have mentioned three interpretive possibilities for this increase: (1) that instead of merely giving a single good deed’s reward (hasana) for each work one does, Allah will give ten times that, or seven hundred times that, or that much compounded many times over—this being the position of the scholarly majority; (2) that Allah will give such a person in this world greater *tawfiq* or ‘God-given success’ in good works through illuminating his heart, purifying the *hal* or ‘way he is,’ guiding his inmost being (sirr), increasing the penetration of his spiritual insight (nufudh al-basira), and giving him means in this world to expand the quality, quantity, and scope of his good works; or (3) give him *both* of these two things, which is the position of Biqa’i, Ibn Kathir, and Habannaka. So Biqa’i says “We shall increase for him in his tillage” means “We shall aid him by illuminating his heart, purifying the way he is, guiding his inmost being, and increase each good deed exponentially from ten times to an infinity of times beyond number, limit, or end.” Notice as well that Allah says *nazid lahu* or “We shall increase for him” in which the first letter of the verb is *nun* (the letter N), which is the marker for *We*, the pronoun Allah has chosen for Himself here, which is termed *nun al-adhama* or ‘the “We” of incomparable greatness,’ signifying the incommensurable magnitude of the reward Allah wants to give such a person, as well as His infinite and invincible power to accomplish this. Finally, the word *lahu* or “for him” means for his advantage and sake. Such people benefit from both worlds. Sahl ibn ‘Abdullah al-Tustari was to say, “The tillage of this world is through by being fully contented (al-qina’a), while the tillage of the next is through being fully well-pleased (al-rida).”

Then in contrast, Allah says *Wa man kana yuridu hartha d-dunya nu’tihi minha wa ma lahu fi l-akhirati min nasib(in)* or “And whoever strives hard but for the yield of this world, We shall give him somewhat of it, but he shall have no share in the next.” Note that Allah gives both kinds of people their provision and livelihood (rizq) in this world, but the second of them, who wants only the *dunya* or “this world,” gets only that. Our words on the first line above of this verse, *Man kana yuridu* or “Whoever strives hard,” as signifying someone who always and habitually strives for something, night and day, because that is the entire focus of his life and whole point of his existence, apply here to the seeker of this world as well. The words *hartha d-dunya* or “the yield of this world” mean the worldly attainments, riches, and desires sought. What does

Allah do for him? He says *nu'tihi minha* or “We shall give him somewhat of it” meaning “what We have destined for him, not what he wanted of it”—for the *min* (lit. ‘of’) here is *min al-tab'idiyya* or ‘the partitive of’ that denotes a mere part or bit of something. Here the “We” again underscores Allah’s omnipotent power, which no one can gainsay by giving the person anything more than Allah does. Nor is there any *lahu* or “for him” in this sentence, because the pittance he gets of this world will be *against* him, since he has missed his one chance by going full tilt for the life of this world, and losing everything that matters forever.

Allah finishes the verse with *wa ma lahu fi l-akhirati min nasib(in)* or “but he shall have no share in the next”; of which the first *wa* is termed by Arab grammarians *waw al-hal* or ‘the conjunctive *and* of adverbial circumstance’—meaning here that while “We shall give him somewhat of it,” as just mentioned, “the real circumstance [which he doesn’t realize] is that he shall have no share in the next.” Though I often translate this ‘circumstantial *waw*’ with the word ‘while,’ I have used ‘but’ for it here to underscore Allah’s own emphatic contrast between what such a person expects, and what he actually gets. Note too that of the syntactic or ‘word-order’ emphatics in this phrase is Allah putting the *jarr wa l-majrur* or ‘preposition-plus-object’ *fi l-akhirati* or “in the next [world]” *before* the phrase’s last words *min nasib* or “no share,” while ordinarily it could have been left the other way around, as it usually is in English—while Allah instead puts *fi l-akhirati* or “in the next [world]” *first* to emphasize that world’s primary and everlasting tremendousness and significance, in comparison to the ever-vanishing returns of this one. Also notice in the final *min nasib(in)* or “no share,” the first word *min*, literally ‘of,’ is what grammarians term *min za'ida* or ‘the extra of’ that adds extra diminution to already negligible quantities, so as to say: “no share in the slightest, whatsoever, at all,” so worldlings can appreciate just how short they have sold themselves by seeing the bait but never the hook. Being with Allah for all time, here and hereafter, relieves the heart of a great many of the unnecessary worries of this world. As Ibn Khubayq said, “Never sorrow except over what will harm you Tomorrow, and never rejoice except over what will make you overjoyed Tomorrow.”

Question of the Month: I sustained a head injury which I think has caused me to be mentally ill. I am not in the tariqa but would like to know if there is any benefit from it for someone like me.

Answer: The Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) said, “Allah has not created any malady, except that He has created for it a cure” (*Bukhari*, 7.158 (5678). S). Many injuries may be treated by increasing the blood flow to the area so that the body can fix itself. An exercise called “alternate nostril breathing” expands brain vasculature (blood vessels), helping the brain, mental health, stress and anxiety, and respiratory health. To do it, wash the hands, relax, with back straight, whether sitting or standing, then put your hands on your head and say, *Allahumma Rabba n-nas(i), Mudh-hiba l-basi shfi Anta sh-Shafi, la shafiya illa Ant(a), shifa'an la yughadiru saqama(n)* or “O Allah Lord of Men, who alone does away with harm: heal, You are the only Healer, there is no healer but You, a healing that will never leave any illness” (*Bukhari*, 7.171 (5742). S). Then lift up your right hand, palm toward your face, with thumb and index finger up, and the other three fingers to the palm. The left hand can rest at your side or on your thigh. You’ll be putting the thumb over the right nostril to block it sometimes while leaving the left nostril open; and at other times you’ll use the index finger to block the left nostril while leaving the right nostril free. Here’s how to do it: block off the left nostril with the index finger while inhaling fully through the right nostril. Then hold the breath in for about the same time that you took to inhale. Then block off the right nostril with the thumb, and exhale through the now open left nostril for about *double* the time it took to inhale. Then after a moment, fully inhale through the open left nostril the same length of the previous inhale (while the right nostril remains blocked), then *hold* the breath again for the length of the inhale, then block the left nostril with the index finger while taking the thumb off the right nostril, and breathe out through the right nostril again *double* the inhale time. Then leaving the left nostril blocked, inhale fully through the right the same inhale time, hold it *in* for about the same inhale time, then block off the right nostril with the thumb and letting the left nostril free, then breathe out through the left nostril double the inhale time—and keep following this pattern. Do this for three to five minutes a day for a while, then up to fifteen minutes, then extend it to thirty minutes. In a Czech study in 1993, using an EEG to measure brain activity, this exercise balanced both hemispheres of the brain within ten minutes. Three to five minutes a day is enough for people without injuries, and it noticeably calms and improves the function of the mind.

As for taking the tariqa, the only people who cannot benefit from it are those who think they are smart. Whoever has a sense of the insuperable perfection, knowledge, and power of Allah knows better than to pride themselves in what they know or have or can do, and will hold fast to Him alone with whatever servitude, worship, and love they can manage towards Him. These are who benefit from the days of their life, which only increase and uplift them. The days of others but mock them, lessen them, and finally abandon them with nothing to show for it all. Sheikh ‘Abd al-Rahman used to tell us the tariqa was “a passage from committing sins to repentance from sins, from love of this world to indifference to this world, from low character to the most noble of character, and from the physical and spiritual world (‘alam al-mulk wa l-malakut) to the world of Indomitable Supremacy (‘alam al-Jabarut).” While great oaks from little acorns grow.

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