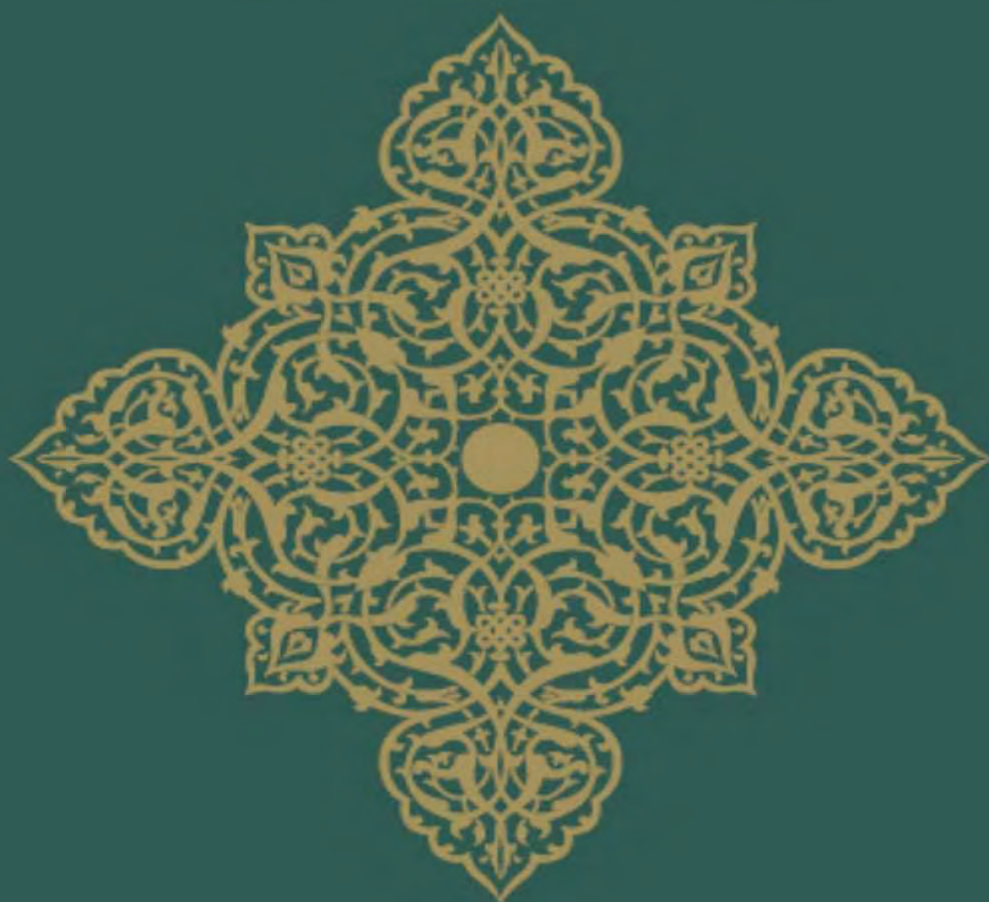


Al-Wasiyyah

The advice of the esteemed scholar

Muwaffaq Ad-Din
Ibn Qudama Al-Maqdisi



TRANSLATED BY AISHA BEWLEY

Al-Waṣiyya

The Advice of the Esteemed Scholar

MUWAFFAQ AD-DĪN IBN QUDĀMA AL-
MAQDISĪ

I was hidden in a narrow cleft in the earth,
and was entrusted in a niche, above which was a stone cover.
The earth was heaped on me.
The firmest companion and those who were kind committed me to the
grave.
O Lord, be my close friend on the Day when I am alien,
For I believe what You revealed.

—*Ibn Qudāmah al-Maqdisī*

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Publisher's Preface

IN THE NAME OF Allāh, the All Merciful, the Most Merciful. All praise belongs to Allāh, Lord of the worlds, and peace and blessings upon the Master of the Messengers, Muḥammad, and all his family and Companions.

Turath Publishing is pleased to present for the first time in the English language the *Waṣiyyah* or heartfelt advice of the great Ḥanbalī scholar Muwaffaq ad-Dīn al-Maqdisī. The author is most famous for his 12 volume work on Ḥanbalī *fiqh*, the *Mughnī*, which remains one of the central reference works in the Ḥanbalī school. However, in the *Waṣiyyah* the author uncovers something of his profound spirituality. In this short book, readers will find powerful spiritual counsel that awakens the soul to the realities of the next world and imbues it with a deep sense of sincerity. We hope that it will be of benefit to those looking to enrich their spiritual practice and deepen their faith.

We would like to express our thanks and gratitude to Ustādhah Aisha Bewley for her unstinting work in translating this work, and the editorial team involved in the completion of this book: Abdassamad Clarke, Muftī Abdur-Rahman Mangera and Muhammad Ansa. May Allāh reward them with His good pleasure for all their work.

YAHYA BATHA

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Introduction

THIS IS THE ADVICE of the esteemed scholar, the shaykh, *imām*, and *mujtahid*, Muwaffaq ad-Dīn Abū Muḥammad ‘Abdullāh ibn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Qudāmah al-Maqdisī al-Jammā‘īlī then ad-Dimashqī al-Ḥanbalī. His advice is extraordinarily succinct, and revolves around the actions of the heart, in which sincerity settles, and by which *taqwā* becomes established.

If people wish to apply it, they will find great good in it and by it they can put that which is clearly crooked straight, hurry to right actions, avoid those things that render actions corrupt, be watchful of their behaviour in word and deed, reflect on the outcomes of their actions and be at peace with what Allāh loves and which pleases Him.

It is a treatise of instruction and faith of the first degree, and it is enough that it comes from the heart so that it pours into the heart. It is enough for you that it is advice from a scholar who combined knowledge with fear, knew the path of this world and the Next, travelled the path of asceticism, contentment and abstinence, and wrote books that are highly esteemed and that have been passed on for centuries, especially his book *al-Mughnī* which fully covers Ḥanbalī *fiqh*.

The position of *al-Waṣīyyah* necessitates that we provide some information about the author so that the physical and spiritual form of *al-Waṣīyyah* and its author be clear in one’s mind and soul. Otherwise, I would not have felt compelled to give his biography, since he is a famous scholar and his books are well known. The prefaces to his books almost never fail to give much information about him.

The author was born in Jammā‘īl, one of the villages around the city of Nablus, in 541 AH in a family known for knowledge and right action. He immigrated with his family to Damascus when he was ten. He memorised the Noble Qur’ān and he memorised the *Mukhtaṣar al-Khirqī* on *fiqh*, and he listened to *ḥadīth* from his father and others, and read aloud to great shaykhs.

Then he travelled to Baghdad and stayed there for four years seeking knowledge from Shaykh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jilī, Ibn al-Jawzī, Ibn al-Mannī and others.

He was diligent in his studies until he became an *imām* in *fiqh* and *fatwā*, familiar with *ḥadīth* and other areas of knowledge, with a sufficient grasp of each field.

He had the first rank in the Umayyad Mosque for a long time and was the imām in the *miḥrāb* of the Ḥanbalīs there. He taught there and acted as imām to the people in the Muẓaffar Mosque.

Shaykh Ibn Taymiyah said, “No *faqīh* with greater knowledge than Muwaffaq ad-Dīn entered Syria after al-Awzā‘ī.”

Adh-Dhahabī described him as one of the oceans of knowledge and one of the most intelligent men in the world. He called him Shaykh al-Islām. Ibn Rajab said the same.

He was of medium height, with a bright, white face, wide brow, long beard and lean body. More significant than that is the forbearance, generosity, intelligence and modesty he possessed.

He was intelligent and had a good disposition. He was described as being courageous in advancing against the enemy and exchanging fire with them, and was wounded in his shoulder. He went on *jihād* under the leadership of the hero of Islam, Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn.

He did not delve into abstruse points of scholastic theology with theologians. He adhered primarily to narrated transmissions on the fundamental principles of the religion (*uṣūl*) and other subjects. He avoided using phrases that had not been transmitted, and commanded that one should affirm and adhere to what has been narrated about the attributes of Allāh in the Book and Sunnah, without anthropomorphism, qualification, representation, deviation, interpretation or invalidation.

He wrote about 50 books on the sciences of the Qur’ān, *ḥadīth*, *uṣūl ad-dīn*, *fiqh* and its *uṣūl*, virtues, abstinence, history and genealogy.

His legal books were widely disseminated and possess so much scholarly merit that the Sultan of the scholars, al-‘Izz ibn ‘Abd as-Salām, said, “I was not happy with a *fatwā* until I had a text from *al-Mughnī*.” His method in his other writings, however, was always connected to teaching, as we learn from his biography. He used knowledge for its basic purposes and directed people to the Divine, Who is the source of every good in the life of the teacher and the learner.

He wrote on different topics and in them concentrated on the rare area which has benefit. We see, for instance, that he collected the reports of the *Tābi‘ūn* in a book about the importance of repentance in Muslim society, as it is the beginning of the sound path and the key to those who have deviated going straight.

Among his splendid books is *Kitāb ar-riqqa wa ‘l-bukā’* which contains reports of the elite of the slaves of Allāh. He mentioned that he collected the material for this book in order to treat his self, bring tears to his eyes and to make his heart tender, and so that he would humble himself

before his Lord and cut off every connection or relationship which might come between him and Allāh, mighty is He and exalted.

Finally, he had a tender heart and mild character, was abstinent in life, much given to worship and striving, and he was intelligent and gifted with sound judgement.

Ibn an-Najjār said: "He was always silent, well behaved, abstinent, scrupulous, with light in his face and gravity and awe. A man would benefit by seeing him even before listening to his words."

Ibn al-Jawzī said about him, "He was very modest, averse to this world and worldly people, easy, gentle, humble, loving the poor, of good character, generous and magnanimous. Whoever saw him thought that he was like one of the Companions. It was as if light came from his face. He did a lot of worship and recited a seventh of the Qur'ān every day and night."

He has fine poetry which indicate his manner of *sulūk*. Part of it is:

After white hair will I dwell in a house other than the grave?

If I do so, then I am stupid.

My white hair tells me that I will soon die

and announces my death to me and speaks the truth.

It is as if my body was stretched on the bier.

Whoever is silent or wails will be burned.

When they are asked about me, they answer and lament,
and their tears flow down: "This is Muwaffaq."

I was hidden in a narrow cleft in the earth,

and was entrusted to a niche, above which was a stone cover.

The earth was heaped on me.

The firmest companion and those who were kind committed me to the grave.

O Lord, be my close friend on the Day when I am alien,

For I believe what You revealed.

He married a cousin and they had three boys and two girls. His three sons died before him and so his line ended.

He died on the Day of Fiṭr 620 AH and was buried at Mount Qāsiyūn, Damascus, accompanied at his funeral by a humble gathering.

One of those who eulogised him was Shaykh Ṣalāḥ ad- Dīn Abū 'Īsā Mūsā ibn Muḥammad al-Maqdisī in a long *qaṣidah* which says:

You were an obedient servant who did not turn away
from the door of my Lord, liberal in worship.

How many a night you spent awake and filled,
while Allāh was looking and the people were asleep!
Reading the Book of Allāh in the depth of darkness, reciting
like the Psalms of Dāwūd, the Prophet.
If there had been allowance to ransom you,
then the hearts would have been rent to ransom you.

The *Waṣiyyah* is well-known among scholars and is mentioned as one of his books. Those who mention it included adh-Dhahabī in *Siyar a‘lām an-nubalā’*.

Author’s Preface

PRAISE BELONGS to Allāh, Possessor of the Noble Face, Immense Bounty and timeless favour. May Allāh bless our master Muḥammad, the Seal of the Prophets, and all his family.

One of my righteous brothers asked me to write some advice for him, but I refused after realising that I do not enjoin on myself nor do what I ought to do!

Then it occurred to me that I ought to accede to his request, out of hope for the reward for satisfying the need of a brother Muslim and for his prayer for me, and for the reward for his acting by my advice, so that I would be among those who guide people to good when I myself am unable to do it—and by directing people to it I will be like one who actually does it. Actions are judged by intentions. My success is only by Allāh, I have put my trust in Him and to Him I return.

Section 1: Hastening to Act

I say, and Allāh is enough for us and an excellent guardian. The world is an opportunity so gain benefit from it. Know—may Allāh have mercy on you—that this world is the field whose harvest is the Next World, the market where it is gained, and the place where provision and profitable goods are obtained. In it the forerunners emerge, the God-fearing win, the true are successful, those who work reap profits and the falsifiers lose.

This abode is the place of the hopes of the people of the Garden and the people of the Fire.

Allāh, exalted is He, says about the people of the Fire, *“They will shout in it, ‘Our Lord, take us out and we will act rightly, differently from the way we used to act.’”* (35:37)

He, exalted is He, says, *“If only you could see when they are standing before the Fire and saying, ‘If only we could be sent back again, we would not deny the signs of our Lord and we would be among the believers.’”* (6:27)

It is related that Ibn Mas‘ūd said, “The souls of the martyrs are like green birds which go about in Paradise wherever they wish and then return to lamps hanging from the Throne. When they are like that, Your Lord will look at them and say, ‘My slaves, ask Me for what you wish,’ and they will answer, ‘Our Lord, we ask you to return our souls to our bodies and then to return us to the world to be killed again.’ When He sees that they do not ask for anything else but that, they are left.”^[1]

Know, my brother—may Allāh have mercy on you— that Allāh, exalted is He, knows that they will ask that and yet they will not be returned to this world. Rather, so that they become desirous of it He wants to inform the believers in this world that in the Garden their wish will be to be killed in His cause.

Ibrāhīm at-Taymī^[2] said, “I imagined myself in the Garden eating from its fruit, embracing its virgins and enjoying its bliss, and then I asked myself, ‘My self, what do you desire?’ It replied, ‘I want to return to the world to do more of the deeds by which I obtained this.’ Then I imagined myself in Hell burning with its fire, gulping down its hot water and eating its bitter fruit. I asked myself, ‘What do you desire?’ It answered, ‘To return to the world and perform actions by which I can deliver myself from this.’ So I told myself, “My self, you have what you wish, so act!”^[3]

One of the early Muslims dug a grave for himself and whenever he flagged in worship he would go into the grave and stretch himself out in its niche and say, “My self, suppose that you had died and gone into your grave: what would you hope for?” It said, “To return to this world and perform right actions in it.” He told it, “You have obtained your hope! Rise and perform right actions!”

Know—may Allāh have mercy on you—that in the graves people wish that they could say a single glorification of Allāh to increase their good actions or to repent of some of their bad actions or perform a single *rak‘ah* to elevate their degree.

We were told that a man performed two *rak‘ahs* beside a grave and then, leaning against it, fell asleep. In a dream he saw the person in the grave who said to him, “Leave me! By Allāh, you have injured me by these two *rak‘ahs* which you prayed. I would prefer to have them more than to have the world and what it contains. You act and do not know and we know and do not act, so take advantage of your precious life and guard its invaluable moments. May Allāh have mercy on you.”

Know that the extent of your life is defined, and your breaths are limited. Every breath shortens it. The whole of one’s life is brief and what remains of it is short. Every part of it is a priceless precious gem that cannot be replaced. By means of actions in this brief life there will be unending eternity in bliss or in painful punishment.

If you were to compare this life to unending eternity, you would know that every breath is equal to more than a trillion years in bliss beyond number, or the opposite of that. Something like this is priceless.

So do not squander the gems of your precious life doing nothing, and do not waste them without achieving recompense. Strive to take no breath except in an act of obedience or an act by which you draw near to Him. It would sadden you to lose one of the gems of this world after possessing it. Indeed, if you were to lose a dinar, it would trouble you, yet you waste your hours and minutes without grieving for your life that is passing by without recompense!

A Metaphor Illustrating This World and Its People

It occurred to me that the best and most appropriate metaphor for this world is that of the people on a ship who are driven by the wind to an

island in the ocean in which there are mines of all sorts of gems: rubies, emeralds, chrysolite, coral and pearls, and more, down to carnelian and wormwood. After that there are smooth rocks, and worthless stones. There are also rivers and gardens, and on the island there is the king's guarded estate, which contains his treasures, and slave girls and young slaves. It has borders and is surrounded by a wall.

The people of the ship land on the island and are told, "You can stay here for a day and night, so take advantage of your short time and take as much as you can of these abundant gems."

1. Those who possess firm resolve hasten to take some of those gems and carry them to their stores in the ship. They are serious and work hard. When they are tired, they remember the value and great worth of those gems and their lack of time on that island and their imminent departure, which will prevent them from taking any more provision. And so they refuse to rest and forgo it, instead devoting themselves to effort and striving hard. When they feel sleepy, they call that to mind, and the pleasure of sleep and slumber leaves them, remembering that "in the morning people praise the travel in the night."

2. Others take some of the gems and rest in periods of rest and sleep at times of sleep.

3. Another group do not approach the gems at all and prefer to sleep, rest, and amuse themselves as follows:

(a) Some of these people turn to building homes, castles and houses.

(b) Some turn to collecting smooth stones, seashells, other stones, and potsherds.

(c) Some people turn to games and trifles and occupy themselves with amusements and listening to diverting stories, saying, "A bit of gold dust in the hand is better than a promised pearl."

This third group approach the king's estate and go around it but do not find a door for it, so they open a crack in the estate and they burst into it. They open the treasures of the king, break its doors and loot it and divert themselves with the king's slavegirls and slaves and say, "We have no house but this house." They remain like this until their period of residence ends and the time of departure is announced and they are summoned to move quickly.

The first group who obtained the gems travel and are delighted with their goods and do not regret the stay except that they wish they could have stayed longer.

The second group are very distressed because they failed to seek goods and were negligent, and so they now lack provision. They are leaving what would profit them and travel in a state of loss.

As for the third group, they are more terrified and suffer a greater calamity. They are told, "We will not leave you until you are made to carry what you have taken from the king's treasures on your necks and your backs." So they travel in this manner until they reach the city of the greatest king and a call rings out across the city that some people who were in the jewel mines have come. The people of the city meet them and the king and his armies meet them and they ask them to alight and they are told, "Present your goods to the king."

The goods of the people who collected the gems are presented and the king praises them and says. "You are my elite and the people who sit with me and the people whom I love. You will have what you desire of my generosity." He makes them kings and they can do what they wish. If they ask, they are given. If they intercede, their intercession is granted. If they desire something, it happens. They are told, "Take what you wish and judge as you wish." They take castles, houses, houris, gardens, towns, and villages. They ride ships, and slaves and armies go in front of them and around them. They become kings who alight in the presence of the King and sit with him and look at him. They visit him and intercede with him about whomever they wish. If they ask him for something, he gives it to them. If they do not ask, he gives to them first.

The second group are asked, "Where are your goods?" and they reply, "We do not have goods!" They are told, "Woe to you! Were you not in the jewel mines? Were you not in the same place with those who have become kings?" They answer, "Yes, but we preferred diversions and sleep." Some of them will say, "We were busy building houses and dwellings." Others will say, "We were busy collecting smooth stones and potsherds."

They will be told, "Destruction to you! Did you not know how short your stay would be and how precious the gems you have are? Did you not know that that is not an enduring abode nor a place for sleep? Did people not wake you up? Did people not admonish you?" They will reply, "Yes, by Allāh. We knew but we ignored it. We were told to wake up, but we slept on, and we heard and turned a deaf ear." They will be told, "Destruction to you till the end of time."

They bite their hands in regret and weep copiously for their negligence. Then they remain sorrowful and confused and stand wanting to be given some charity by some of those who have become

kings such as their intercession or their saying a word to the king on their behalf.

The third group come bearing their burdens on their backs, full of despair and in a state of confusion and befuddlement. Their feet trip, regret overcomes them and they are full of pain. They are disgraced before the communities, and the king puts them far from his house and expels them from his presence and commands that they be taken to prison. So they are dragged to it and are certain of punishment and blame: *“Even if thy are steadfast, the Fire will still be their residence! If they ask for favour, no favour will be given.” (41:24)*

Look—may Allāh have mercy on you—at the disparity between the two stations and the difference between the two groups in their steadfastness during that brief period in which they resided on that island! This is similar to the example of this world and those who obey Allāh in it, and those who pass through it with neglect and wastage.

Strive—may Allāh have mercy on you—to be part of the first group who fill the time with acts of obedience and do not waste a minute.

Make your heart reflect on the blessings of Allāh for which you should be thankful, on your wrongdoing so that you ask forgiveness for it, on your neglect so that you repent, on the creations of Allāh and His wisdom so that you recognise His immensity and wisdom, on what is before you so that you seek to prepare for it, or on the judgement respecting something you need to learn.

Moisten your tongue constantly with remembrance of Allāh, supplication to Him, asking for His forgiveness, reciting the Qur’ān, reading or teaching knowledge, commanding what is right and forbidding what is wrong, or in putting things right between people.

Occupy your limbs with acts of obedience—and let the most important of them be performing the obligatory prayers in their times in the most complete form—and then in what will be of benefit to people. The best of that is what will be beneficial for their *dīn*, like teaching people *dīn* and guiding them to the Straight Path.

Section 2: Things Which Invalidate Good Deeds

BE ON GUARD against that which will invalidate your good deeds lest your deeds become corrupted and your effort disappointed and you fail to acquire the wage of those who act; and be on guard against the sluggishness of idle people in case you lose this world and the Next.

Showing-Off

This includes showing-off and acting in order to be praised by people. It is *shirk*.

It is related that Allāh, exalted is He, said, “If someone does an action in which he associates someone else with Me, it is for the one he associates and I am free of it.”^[4]

It can happen that the show-off does not obtain what he intends and is completely disappointed.

We related that a man used to show off in his actions. When he passed by people, they said, “This man is a show-off.” One day he said to himself, “By Allāh, I have not gained anything. If only I had made my actions for Allāh!”

He quickly changed his intention, and then when he passed by them after that, they said, “This is a righteous man.”^[5]

Conceit

Conceit is another trait that undermines one’s actions.

It is related that the actions of someone who uses them for gain do not go beyond his head.

It is related that Allāh, exalted is He, revealed to Mūsā, “Mūsā, tell the conceited people who do actions, ‘You have loss,’ and tell the repentant wrongdoers: ‘Good news.’”

One of them said, "I prefer to spend the night asleep and wake up regretting it than to stand the night in prayer and then wake up conceited."^[6]

Contempt for a Muslim

Do not disparage a Muslim nor think that you are better than him. This might invalidate your actions.

We were told that ʿĪsā went out in his travels with his disciple and they passed a fort where a bandit was located. When he saw them, he said to himself. "This is ʿĪsā, the prophet of Allāh and this is his disciple. Who are you, O wretch! A bandit who robs people on the road and causes alarm on the pathway and kills people whom Allāh has made unlawful!" He went down to them full of regret and repentant.

When he wanted to walk with them, he said to himself, "I am not worthy to walk with them, but I will walk behind them as a humble wrongdoer."

He walked behind them and the disciple turned and saw him walking behind them, he recognised him and said to himself, "Who is this dog to walk behind us?"

Allāh, exalted is He, knew what was inside them and so Allāh revealed to ʿĪsā: "Tell the disciple and the thief to start their actions anew. As for the thief, I have forgiven him because of his repentance and self-deprecation. As for the disciple, I have annulled his actions because of his disdain for the repentant thief."

One of the prophets of the tribe of Israel said to his people, "Bring me the best of you." They brought a man to him and the prophet said to him, "Bring me the worst of them!" He came back and said, "I cannot find anyone worse than me!" He said, "They spoke the truth. You are the best of them!"

Opposing the Sunnah

Included in this is opposing the Sunnah, whether in word, action or belief. The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ is the guide and director to the Straight

Path. Allāh, exalted is He, says, *“You are guiding to a Straight Path.”* (42:52) Whoever opposes the guide and takes another path is misguided. He should follow the Sunnah and go where it goes and stop where it stops.

Do not exceed the Sunnah by going to extremes in your dīn, like those with chronic misgivings about purity and prayer, who increase the prescribed washing and use excessive amounts of water, deeming impure that which the Prophet ﷺ used and deemed pure, praying at the time when prayer is forbidden, and fasting when it is forbidden.

Abū Sulaymān ad-Dārānī^[4] said, “When you want to do an action which you think is an act of obedience, investigate if it is part of the Sunnah. If it is not, then leave it.” Or however it was he said it. When your ego calls you to an act of disobedience, remind it of its evil consequences.

Section 3: Vigilance and Fear

KNOW THAT Allāh, exalted is He, looks at you and is aware of you. Tell yourself: “If one of my community’s right-acting men were to see me, I would be ashamed before him, so how can I not be ashamed before my Lord who is blessed and exalted? Furthermore, I am not safe that He will hasten my punishment and remove His veil that conceals [my wrongdoing]!”

Know that you can only disobey Him by means of His blessing. How many blessings are there in your hand, which He has given you, and yet you stretch it out to disobey Him? How many blessings are there in your eye with which you look at what is forbidden for you, and in your tongue with which you say what is not lawful for you to say!

The one who is thankful for His blessings does not use them to help in disobeying Him.

One of them used to say, “O Allāh, I seek Your forgiveness for a wrong action which my body was strong enough to commit by means of the health You gave me, which my hands were able to obtain by the virtue of Your blessing, in which I was delighted by Your ample provision, and in which I am veiled from people by Your veil. Your forbearance and patience emboldened me to do it, and in it I have put my trust in the generosity of Your pardon.”

If the only blessing you had from Him in your disobedience was His veiling you from other people that would be enough. If people were aware of you, you would be disgraced.

We were told that a man came to Ibrāhīm ibn Adham^{ra} and said, “Abū Ishāq, I cannot refrain from acts of disobedience. Tell me something by which I can help myself!” He answered, “Yes. I tell you that there are five qualities which if you have them, disobedience will not harm you!”

He said, “Go on.”

He said, “When you want to disobey Allāh, do not consume His provision.” He said, “Abū Ishāq, how could I find something to eat when everything in the earth is Allāh’s provision?” He asked, “Is it proper to eat His provision and then disobey Him?”

He answered, “No. What is the second?”

He said, “If you want to disobey Him, do not live in His land.” He replied, “This is harder than the first! Since the heavens and the earth and what are between them and what is in them are His, where will I

live?" He said, "Is it proper to eat His provision and live in His land and then disobey Him?"

"No," he answered, "So what is the third?"

He said, "When you want to disobey Him, look for a place in which He will not see you and then disobey Him there." He replied, "Abū Ishāq! How can I do that when there is no place in the heavens or the earth, the mountains and seas that is not obvious to Him? He sees what is in the depths of the seas and under the levels of mountains!" He said, "Is it proper to eat his provision and dwell in His land and openly show Him disobedience?"

"No," he replied, "And what is the fourth?"

He said, "When the Angel of Death comes to you to take your soul, say, 'Give me a delay so that I can repent?'" He answered, "He will not accept it from me." He said, "When you disobey Him and are not safe from sudden death, and no deferral will be accepted from you so that you die without repentance, then what will your situation be?"

He stated, "Tell me the fifth."

He said, "When the Zabāniyah come to you to take you to the Fire, do not go with them." He replied, "They will not leave me." He said, "If you are unable to defend yourself against them and do not abandon disobedience, so how can you hope for deliverance?" He said, "It is enough for me."

He clung to Ibrāhīm's company and worshipped Allāh until he died.

If you are tested by acts of disobedience towards Allāh, then hasten to repent, ask for His forgiveness and express your regret. Weep for your errors for you do not know how many of them you have.

Someone said, "Do not look at the smallness of the error. Rather look at the One you disobeyed!"^[9]

One of the governors of 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz complained to him and he wrote back to him, "My brother, remember that the people of the Fire will be sleepless in the Fire for all eternity. Beware that the one who will take you away from the presence of Allāh will do so to the Fire so that it is the last command and cuts off hope."

When the man read the letter, he travelled through the towns until he came before 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz who asked him, "What has brought you here?" He replied, "I have resigned my heart because of your letter, and I will not work as a governor for you nor for anyone after you!"

Responsibility and Consequences

Know, my brother, that the danger is great and the matter is immense. We are faced with a task that could not be undertaken by the lofty mountains, the wide earth, the high heaven or the vast seas. We have taken on a business that would be difficult for the bearers of the heavens, the earth and the mountains: *“The earth and the mountains refused to take it on and shrank from it. Man took it on. He is indeed wrongdoing and ignorant.”* (33:72)

The Fire whose punishment has no like was created for us. Allāh, exalted is He, has promised to fill it with us and the jinn. He, exalted is He, says: *“I shall fill up Hellfire with the jinn and human beings.”* (32:13)

What is the state of someone who has the fire burn his entire body and then whenever his skin is burned off, it is replaced with new skin and he is dragged through hot water? Its heat reaches his body and face and it is poured over the top of his head and melts what is in his belly and his skin is stripped from him, and then he is roasted in the Fire, which burns his body, skin and face. There is no end to its punishment and no rest, nor is there any hope for deliverance from it. Allāh, exalted is He, says, *“The evildoers will remain timelessly, for ever, in the punishment of Hell. It will not be eased for them. They will be crushed there by despair. We have not wronged them; it is they who were the wrongdoers. They will call out, ‘Mālik,’ let your Lord put an end to us!’ He will say, ‘You will stay the way you are.’”* (43:74–77)

They will not be shown mercy when they weep nor excused when they complain nor answered when they call nor be given favour when they ask for it. Allāh, exalted is He, says, *“Even if they are steadfast, the Fire will still be their residence! If they ask for favour, no favour will be given.”* (41:24)

It is related that ‘Umar passed by a heap of sand and said, “The poor people of the Fire! If they knew that after remaining in Hellfire for the amount of grains in this heap of sand they would be taken out of it, they would have a period to which they could look forward in anticipation, but there is no end to their punishment.”

Someone in this condition should not feel safe from being one of its people, and should not cease weeping nor settle in it [disobedience]. So, my brother, beware! Do not feel safe while you remain exposed to this danger!

Someone wept a lot and he was asked about that and said, “By Allāh, if my Lord promises to imprison me in a bath-house, it would be my right to weep ceaselessly, how about when He has warned me that He will imprison me in the Fire if I disobey Him?”

Yazīd ar-Raqāshī^(a) used to weep a lot. When he entered his house, he wept. When he went out, he wept. When he entered the mosque he wept. When his brothers sat with him, he wept.

His son said to him, “Father, why are you weeping? By Allāh, you couldn’t have wept more even if the Fire had been created for you alone.”

He wept and said, “May your mother be bereaved, my son! Was the Fire created for anyone except me and my brothers among human beings and jinn? Have you not recited, my son: *‘Company of jinn and men, if you are able to pierce through the confines of the heavens and the earth, pierce through them. You will not pierce through them except with a clear authority’* (55:33)? Have you not recited: *‘He will pursue you with a piercing flame and fiery smoke, and you will not be helped’* (55:35)? Have you not recited: *‘When heaven is split apart and goes red like dregs of oil. So which of your Lord’s blessings do you both then deny? That Day no man or jinn will be asked about his sin. So which of your Lord’s blessings do you both then deny? The evildoers will be recognised by their mark and seized by their forelocks and their feet. So which of your Lord’s blessings do you both then deny? This is Hell which the evildoers deny. They will go back and forth between fire and scalding water?’*” (55:37–44)

He stood and went about the house weeping and shouting until he fainted.

The mother of the boy said, “My son, why did you want to do this to your father?”

He replied, “By Allāh, I only wanted to assuage his fear! I did not want to increase it so that he would kill himself!”^(a)

Know, my brother, that that which they feared also applies to us, rather we are more deserving of it than them, so what do we have that makes us feel safe, while they do not?

Excellent Actions

Know—may Allāh have mercy on you—that good character is the weightiest of all the things that are put in the balance and it makes its possessor reach the level of someone who fasts and prays at night.

If someone maintains ties of kinship, Allāh maintains tie with him, and if someone cuts them off, Allāh cuts him off.

The best of actions is performing the prayers at their times.

Next is solicitous concern for one's parents well-being.

Then next comes jihād in the way of Allāh.

The firmest handhold of faith is love for the sake of Allāh and hatred for the sake of Allāh.

Steadfastness in relation to faith is like the head is in relation to the body.

The bedrock of the entire business is supplication. The entire affair is in the hand of Allāh. He guides whomever He wishes and makes him act. He misguides whomever He wishes and disappoints him. You must desire the One in Whose hand is the command and entrust the business to Him.

Humble Supplication

Your supplication should be made with humility and submission, weakness and humble entreaty. Someone said, "I know when I will be answered by my Lord, mighty and exalted is He! It is when my heart is fearful, my skin trembles, my eyes weep and supplication is made easy for me."

Umm ad-Dardā' ^[12] asked Shahr ibn Ḥawshab, ^[13] "Are you trembling?"

"Yes," he answered.

She said, "Then make supplication when that happens.

Supplication is answered when you are like that."

Abū 'l-Jald ^[14] said, "Allāh revealed to Mūsā, 'Mūsā, when you remember me, remember Me while your limbs are shaking. When you call on Me, speak from your heart. When you stand before Me, then stand as someone insignificant and humble stands and censure your self—it deserves censure. When you speak intimately with Me, do so with a fearful heart and a truthful tongue.'"

Entrust Your business to Allāh, exalted is He, and throw yourself down before Him. Acquaint your heart with the fact that it will not win

anything but the provision and good that Allāh has written for you, even if you were to strive with all that is in the heavens and earth. What you dislike will not reach you unless Allāh has written it for you, even if those who are in the heaven and the earth were to gather against you, for what hits you is not going to miss you, and what misses you is not going to hit you.

Know that someone who is clinging to a plank in the sea is not more in need of Allāh, exalted is He, and His kindness than someone who is in his home and among his people and property. The means of subsistence that he enjoys are in the hand of Allāh just as the means for the rescue of this drowning person are also in His hand.

If you realise this in your heart, then rely on Allāh, exalted is He, like the drowning person who does not know of any other means of rescue than Allāh, exalted is He.

You must be scrupulous and avoid doubtful things. Whoever falls into doubtful things is about to fall into the *ḥarām*. Whoever grazes around the sanctuary is about to fall into it.

You must be up in the night, and be alone with your Lord in it, seek your needs from Him, make humble entreaty to Him and lower yourself before Him. It is related that a man said, "I went to Bishr and he asked, 'What has brought you?' I answered, 'A question.' He asked, 'What is it?' He replied, 'A man owes many debts but has no means of paying them.' He said, 'You must have the depths of the night.' I went to Abū 'Abdullāh Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and asked him the same question. He answered, 'You must have the depths of the night.'"

He said, "They both directed me to it."

When you ask Allāh, ask Him being certain that He is aware of you, looking at you, listening to your supplication. Know that He is close to you and able to answer you. Nothing is too great for Him.

When you ask Him for something, ask Him to make the choice in it because you do not know what will be in it for you. If Allāh, exalted is He, wishes, He will give you your desire and choose for you in that, so that He unites the two matters for you.

If the answer does not come quickly to you, do not despair of the answer, and do not tire of asking. It is related that one of them said, "Allāh will choose for a slave in need who entreats Him a great deal."

Know that when Allāh, exalted is He, looks at you and knows that you have made Him your support and refuge and singled Him out rather than His creation for fulfilling your needs, He will give you the best of what you ask for and honour you with more than you desire.

If He hastens the answer to you, He both grants your need and gives you the best of this world and the Next. If He does not answer you quickly, then He will give you that which is better than it in replacement for it. You will have good in both cases.

Intimate Conversation With Him

Refresh yourself through your intimate conversation with Him and enjoy His worship. It is related that Abū Sulaymān ad-Dārānī visited Aḥmad ibn Abī 'l-Ḥuwārī^(۱۵) while weeping. He asked, "What makes you weep?" He answered, "Aḥmad, why should I not weep? If you had seen those who stand in prayer at night when they go to their prayer niches and stand on their feet, speaking intimately with their Lord to ransom themselves, their tears falling down to their feet and rolling down their cheeks! The Majestic looks at them and calls out, "Jibrīl, by My eye! Who is this who enjoys My speech and refreshes himself with intimate conversation with Me? Why do you not call among them, Jibrīl: 'What is this anxiety which I see in you? Have you been told that a lover tortures his lovers? How can it be beautiful for Me to refuse people when at night they have stood for Me, entreating Me. By my Might, I will assign their rewards so that when they come to me I remove the veil from My face so that I can look at them and they at Me.'"

It is related that Maṣṣūr ibn 'Ammār^(۱۶) said: "I heard someone worshipping in the night speaking intimately with his Lord saying,

By Your might and majesty! in disobeying You I did not mean to oppose you nor to expose myself to Your wrath nor am I ignorant of Your punishment nor am I exposing myself to Your punishment nor ignorant of Your seeing me, but my self made things seem attractive to me, my misfortune helped it and Your veil concealing me deluded me, so I disobeyed You in my ignorance and I opposed You by my own effort. Now who will deliver me from Your punishment? Whose rope will I hold to if You sever Your rope from me? How evil it will be to stand before You tomorrow when those whose burdens are light are told to pass and those whose burdens are heavy are told to get down! Will I pass on with those who are light or descend with those who are weighed down, my Master?

Woe to me! Whenever my days lengthen, I increase in wrongdoing! Woe to me! Whenever my age augments, my misfortune becomes greater! How much should I repent? How often should I return? My youth! My youth!"

It is related that a man said, "I climbed one of the mountains of Syria and there was a worshipper there who was weeping strongly and wailing. I heard him say, 'Do You see whether my weeping is useful to me in Your presence, my Master, and will deliver my neck from Your wrath? Do you see Yourself undoing my blundering into Your fire or will You punish my old age with Your punishment? Will You censure me in front of all the people because of my laxness in what is due to You? Woe! Lest my veil be drawn aside! Woe for the shame of my face! Woe for tomorrow when my body is thrown into the Fire!'"

He said, "Then he wept so strongly that he made me forget what was before that.

"A man called to him, 'Show us to the road, may Allāh have mercy on you!'

"He wept and then said, 'How can you and I be firm on it? How can you and I remain straight on it!'

"Then he said, 'O Allāh, guide their confusion and my confusion, and do not make me or them stumble!'"

It is related from al-Ḥasan ibn Ja'far that his father said, "I prayed the ʿĪd in al-Jabbānah and then went aside to an area. There was an old woman with her hands raised who was saying. 'People have left but I do not feel my heart in despair, O Master of charity! I have withdrawn and would that I knew what You have provided for me! Lord, have mercy on my weakness and age! I have left with my hopes in You, so do not disappoint my good opinion!'

"She was weeping." He stated, "I have not benefited from anything in my day!"

Sufyān said that he heard a Bedouin saying at ʿArafah:

My God, who is more entitled to slips and falling short than me since I have been created weak? And who is more entitled to pardon me than You since You knew me before and Your command encompasses me?

My God, I did not do good until You gave me permission to do so and I didn't do wrong until You decreed it for me. I obeyed You by Your blessing and the favour is Yours, and I disobeyed You by Your knowledge and the proof is Yours!

I ask You by the obligation of Your proof, the ending of my proof, my need of You and Your lack of need of me, pardon me and show mercy to Me!

My God, You are kind to those who are kind to Your friends and the closest of them with sufficiency to those who rely on You. You witness them in their secrets and are aware of their inner consciences. O Allāh, my secret is disclosed to You and I am eager for You. When

sins alienate me, remembering You delights me. When worries burn me, I seek refuge in You, knowing that the reins are in Your hands and they issue from Your decree and determination

One of them said,

O Allāh, my asking You for forgiveness while I continuing in wrongdoing is blameworthy. My stopping asking forgiveness when Your mercy is vast is due to my lack of power. How often You show love to me by Your blessing when You have no need of me! How often I make myself hateful to You by acts of disobedience when I am in need of You! My God, would you punish us with the Fire when You made Your oneness (tawḥīd) dwell in our hearts? I do not think that You would do it. If You do it, it will be with the people we often opposed for Your sake.

Better than this is what is related that the Prophet ﷺ said when he returned from Ṭā'if, and Thaḳīf had denied him and rejected him, He said:

O Allāh, I complain to You of the weakness of my strength, my lack of devices and my lowliness before people. O Allāh, You are the Lord of the victimised and You are the Most Merciful of the merciful. You are my Lord. To whom will You entrust me? To one who will abuse me or an enemy to whom You have given power over my affair? If you are not angry with me, I do not care, but Your defence is more expansive for me. I seek refuge with Your Noble Face, which illuminates the darkness and which puts in order the business of this world and the Next World, lest Your displeasure alight on me or Your anger descend on me. You have favour until You are satisfied, and there is no strength or power except by You.”^[17]

Seeking Something You Need

If you need something from Allāh, exalted is He, and want to seek it from Him, do *wuḍū'* and do it well, perform two *rak'ahs*, and praise Allāh, mighty and majestic is He, bless the Prophet ﷺ and then say:

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ رَبِّ لِلَّهِ الْحَمْدُ مَا لَمْ يَحْمَدْهُ أَحَدٌ عَظِيمًا أَلْعَرْشِينَ رَبِّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِينَ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

There is no god but Allāh, the Ever-Forbearing, the Generous. Glory be to Allāh, the Lord of the immense Throne. Praise belongs to Allāh, the Lord of the worlds.

لَا هَدْبٌ مِّنْكَ لِي مِنْ وَالسَّلَامِ فَبِرَّكَ لِي مِنْ وَالْعِيْمَةِ بِعِيْمَتِكَ وَعِزَّتِكَ مِنْ جِوَابِ لِمَنْ لَكَ لِي لَمْ
 لِرَاحِيْنِ أَرْحَمِيْنَ وَالْمَرْحُومِيْنَ إِلَيْكَ رِضَالِكَ هِيَ حَاجَةٌ وَلِفَارِحِيْنَ إِلَيْكَ مُمْرًا وَلِغَارِيْنَ إِلَيْكَ فَيَتَلَاغَى لِي

O Allāh, I ask You for what obliges Your mercy and the firm resolution [to obtain] Your forgiveness, the obtainment of every act of piety and safety from every wrongdoing. O Allāh, do not leave me any wrong action but that You forgive it nor any care but that You relieve it nor any need that is pleasing to You but that You settle it, O Most Merciful of the merciful.

لِي سِبْطِي لَمْ تَلَوْجَ لِي مِنْ حَمْدِهَا لَمْ تَلَوْجَ لِي مِنْ قَبِيْلِي وَمِنْ حَمْدِ بِيْتِي وَإِلَيْكَ الْإِسْتِغَاثَةُ لِي مِنْ لَدُنْكَ لِي
 حَاجِيْنَ بِعِيْمَتِكَ وَإِلَيْكَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ

O Allāh, I ask You and turn to You by Your Prophet Muḥammadﷺ, the Prophet of mercy. O Muḥammad, I turn by you to My Lord and your Lord, mighty and majestic is He, for Him to settle my need for me.” Then he should mention what he needs.^[18]

It is related that the early Muslims used to seek to have their needs fulfilled by praying two *rak'ahs* and then saying:

O Allāh, I seek opening by You and success by You. I turn to You by Your Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. O Allāh, make the difficulty in my business easy for me, ease my hardship for me, make smooth for me more good than I hope for and avert from me more evil than I fear.

The *Istikhāra* Prayer

If you want something, then ask Allāh, exalted is He, to choose the best in it. Pray two *rak'ahs* apart from the obligatory prayer and then say:

قُلْ دُونََ وَوَلْتَقَدْ دُونََ لَكَ، الْعَظِيمِ لَمْ تَلَوْجَ لِي مِنْ وَالسَّلَامِ فَبِرَّكَ لِي مِنْ وَالْعِيْمَةِ بِعِيْمَتِكَ وَعِزَّتِكَ مِنْ جِوَابِ لِمَنْ لَكَ لِي لَمْ
 وَهِيَ أَيُّهَا وَيُنْفِي عَنِّي عَمْرًا الْأَمْرَ لِمَا أَرْتَابُ لَمْ تَلَوْجَ لِي مِنْ وَالسَّلَامِ فَبِرَّكَ لِي مِنْ وَالْعِيْمَةِ بِعِيْمَتِكَ وَعِزَّتِكَ مِنْ جِوَابِ لِمَنْ لَكَ لِي لَمْ
 لَكَ لَمْ تَلَوْجَ لِي مِنْ وَالسَّلَامِ فَبِرَّكَ لِي مِنْ وَالْعِيْمَةِ بِعِيْمَتِكَ وَعِزَّتِكَ مِنْ جِوَابِ لِمَنْ لَكَ لِي لَمْ تَلَوْجَ لِي مِنْ وَالْعِيْمَةِ بِعِيْمَتِكَ
 ، عَمْرًا وَوَلْتَقَدْ دُونََ لَكَ، الْعَظِيمِ لَمْ تَلَوْجَ لِي مِنْ وَالسَّلَامِ فَبِرَّكَ لِي مِنْ وَالْعِيْمَةِ بِعِيْمَتِكَ وَعِزَّتِكَ مِنْ جِوَابِ لِمَنْ لَكَ لِي لَمْ
 بِي رِضْوَانِي وَتَسْتَعِينِي لَكَ أَنْ تَجْعَلَ لِي مِنْ رِزْقِي وَوَلْتَقَدْ دُونََ لَكَ، الْعَظِيمِ لَمْ تَلَوْجَ لِي مِنْ وَالسَّلَامِ فَبِرَّكَ لِي مِنْ وَالْعِيْمَةِ بِعِيْمَتِكَ وَعِزَّتِكَ مِنْ جِوَابِ لِمَنْ لَكَ لِي لَمْ

O Allāh, I ask You to choose the best by Your knowledge and I ask You to decree by Your power and I ask You for some of Your immense bounty for You have power and I do not, You know and I do not and You are the Knower of the unseen worlds. O Allāh, if You know that this matter^[19] is good for me in my *dīn* and my livelihood and the end of my affair,—or he said, “in its immediate [consequences] and its final term,”—“ then decree it for me and make it easy for me and then bless me in it. If You know that this matter¹⁹ is bad for me in my *dīn* and my livelihood and the end of my affair,—or he said, “in its immediate [consequences] and its final term,”—then avert it from me and avert me from it and decree something better for me wherever it may lie and make me content with it.

And you name your need.

The *Awliyā'* of Allāh

So your concern in this world should be drawing near to Your Noble Lord, seeking His immense bounty and striving to be included among His friends whom He loves and who love Him and with whom He is pleased and who are pleased with Him, those whom He has chosen for Himself and honoured by His friendship and made stop at His door and made busy with Him, and attached their hearts to His love and occupied their tongues with His mention and their limbs with obeying Him. They do not turn to what of this world or anything else that is other than Him.

We were told that when death came to Mu‘ādh ibn Jabal, he fainted and then recovered and said, “You have choked me. By Your might and Your majesty, You know that my heart loves You!” Then he said, “Look and see if it is morning.” Someone did that and he was told, “Yes.” He said, “O Allāh, I seek refuge with You from the night whose morning leads to the Fire!”

Then he said, “Welcome to death, a rare visitor, a beloved who comes in loss. O Allāh, You know that I did not love remaining in this world in order to cultivate trees or to make rivers run—rather I loved thirst at midday, standing at night in the winter and the press of scholars on knees in circles of *dhikr*.”

Al-Ḥārith ibn ‘Umayrah^[20] wept and he asked him, “Why are you weeping?”

He said, “By Allāh, I do not weep for the kinship between you and me, nor for any worldly thing which I used to get from you, but I have obtained knowledge from you and I fear that it will be cut off.”

He said, “Do not weep. Whoever wants knowledge it will come to him as it came to Ibrāhīm the Friend of the All-Merciful, and there is no real knowledge or faith today.”

In the Depth of the Night

Know—may Allāh have mercy on you—that this world is a market in which the good trade, it is the racetrack of the elect noble ones and the field of *taqwā* for the Day of Abiding and the place of obtaining provision for a journey which is not like other journeys.

So set out—may Allāh have mercy on You—before the possibility of setting out early ends and take advantage of your breaths which are of immense value. Shed tears for your past negligence. A single teardrop out of fear of Allāh, exalted is He, extinguishes oceans of the Fire.^[21]

Be awake before dawn, when the All-Compeller descends, and remember in your heart the statement of the Almighty, the Forgiver: “Is there anyone who asks so that I can give to Him? Is there anyone who calls so that I can answer him? Is there anyone who asks forgiveness so that I can forgive him?”^[22] Say:

Yes, O Lord. I am the needy supplicant. I am the weak and needy one (*faqīr*). I am broken and humble. I am the hopeful supplicant. I am the wrongdoer who asks forgiveness. I am the one who affirms and confesses. O master of charity! Here I am! Show mercy to my weakness and old age! Show mercy to my poverty, need, lack and destitution!”

O Possessor of abundant good! O Constantly Kind! Do not disappoint my good opinion of You! Do not deprive me of the vastness of Your kindness! Do not drive me away from Your door. Do not remove me from among Your lovers. I ask You for some of Your immense bounty. You said, and Your words are true: ‘Ask Allāh for His bounty.’ (4:32)

My God, You would not command me to ask You unless You wanted to give to me! You would not lead me to You unless You wanted to guide me! You would not command me to supplicate You unless You wanted to answer me!

I ask You by Your bounty to make me one of those whom You have blessed, of the prophets, the true, the martyrs and the right-acting. And make me among those whom You

love and who love You, *'Humble to the believers, fierce to the unbelievers,'* (5:54) and among the imāms who are guided by Your command.

Provide us with good deeds, performance of the prayer and payment of *zakāh*. Make us among those who worship You and among those who hasten to good deeds and call on You longingly and fearfully. Make us among those who are humble towards You and those who obey You and obey Your Messenger, who fear You and are God-fearing, and make us among the successful.

My Lord, keep me thankful for the blessing You have bestowed on me and on my parents and keep me acting rightly, pleasing You, and admit me, by Your mercy among Your slaves who are righteous. (27:19)

Make my descendants righteous. I have turned in repentance to You and I am truly one of the Muslims. (46:15)

My Lord, You make the right-acting right, show preference to the true, make the forerunners come first, guide the guided, and bring near those who are brought near and are gracious to them. Then You make them firm, give to them and praise them. Were it not for You, they would not have reached You. Were it not for Your goodness, they would not have been successful with You.

I ask You by Your Noble face, Your timeless favour and Your immense bounty to be gracious to us as You were to them, put us right with what You put them right, bestow on us as You bestowed on them, give to us as You gave to them, and be generous to us as You were generous to them.

O Lord! You summon us to Your abode, the Abode of Peace, so guide us to the Straight Path so that we respond to Your call. We can only answer You if You guide us and we can only reach Your call by virtue of Your concern!

My God! You include everyone in Your call but single out whomever You wish by Your guidance. Place us among Your elite and bestow success on us in answering You and admit us among the people of Your friendship!

O Lord! You command us to do what we cannot do except by You. You forbid us from doing what we cannot abandon except by success from You. You make us desire what we cannot obtain except by Your favour and You caution us against what we are not safe from except by Your generosity and nobility.

O Allāh, give us success in obeying Your command and avoiding Your censure and give us what You made us desire, and make us avoid what You caution us against.

O Allāh, You ask of us from ourselves what we can only do by You. O Allāh, take for us from it what pleases You of it.

O Allāh, You have taken us by our hearts and forelocks and You do not give us power over any of it. When You do that with them, then You be their guardian. Guide us to the straight path!

Abū ‘Abdullāh an-Nibbājī said, “I heard a voice in the night in an-Nibbāj, sorrowful and agitated, calling,

O Beloved of the one who is made beloved to Him! O Coolness of the eye of the one who seeks refuge in Him and devotes himself to Him! O Master and Lord! The kings have locked their doors and their chamberlains are standing at them, and every lover has withdrawn with his beloved while the hearts of the gnostics refuse anything but your Love and intimacy with You. I have come to you in this night without relying on an action or deserving a gift. I ask You to be gracious to me and to not deprive me in this night of the sweetness of Your intimate conversation and generous gift from Your generous repayments.

I asked about that and I was told that it was Salamah the black woman who worshipped Allāh sincerely.

Ismā‘īl ibn Abī Khālid^[23] said: “There was a young man with us in Yemen who was extravagant to himself and rarely obeyed Allāh. He possessed both beauty and wealth. His name was Sahl. One night he dreamt that a girl came to him wearing a garment of pearls whose ends were doubled. In her hand she held a book of green silk whose writing was in gold, which she brought to him. She said, ‘My brother, read this book to me.’ She gave it to him, and on it was written:

Sahl! One whom the All-Merciful has fashioned her in high rooms
from musk which is kneaded from October’s water
For the one whose love is contained in the heart
although his heart is diverted from Him by diversion and temptation.
Sahl! What sorrow you have left me!
How much time brings me from you of that which I do not love
Do you not yearn to divert yourself on beds set out
with virgin houris with beautiful eyes?

He woke up from his sleep in anxiety and alarm and left his prior idleness and clung to worship and devotion in the best manner until he died like that, may Allāh have mercy on him.”

Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī said, “I saw my father when the night had covered him in darkness. He was holding onto his beard with his right hand, weeping tears, and lamenting with sighs. He was saying:

My God and Master and Creator, My Provider and Beloved, He who will make me die, raise me up and inherit from me, what am I? What is my worth? What is my importance to You so that You would intend me with Your punishment and turn to me with Your anger? Do You want to punish me? By Your might, majesty, glory and kindness, my good deeds do not increase Your kingdom at all, my bad deeds do not tarnish it and my wealth does not decrease Your treasures nor are they increased by my poverty!

O Allāh, make Your hope firm in my heart so that I do not hope for anyone but You. O You Who make us love You by Your blessings, You Who make Yourself known to us by Your blessings and Who is mine in affairs when I am happy, show mercy on my tears today!

Buhaym al-‘Ajli^[24] used to say in his prostration at the end of the night when he finished his *tahajjud*:

My God! Your poor wretch wants to reach You by obeying You, so help him to do that by Your granting success, O Generous! My God! Your poor wretch is full of hope in Your good, so do not deprive him of that!

My God! Your poor wretch is like a Bedouin woman waylaid on the Mina road who said, ‘Lord, You take and give. You bestow blessings and seize. All of that is just and excellent. That which is hard for creatures is Your command. I do not let my tongue ask other than You nor do expend my desire except on You. O coolness of the eye of those who ask, help me with generosity from You such that I become established in the paradises of its blessings and delight in the purification of its help. Carry me on the journey, enrich me from poverty and lower over me Your veil which spears cannot pierce nor winds remove. You hear the supplication.

It is said that al-Junayd spent the night of the ‘Īd in the desert. At dawn he saw a young man wrapped in a woollen cloak, weeping, saying:

By the sanctity of my exile! How great this obstruction is.
Unless You are kind to me! Unless You are generous!
The happiness of the ‘Īd encompasses all areas
while my sorrow increases endlessly.
If I approach the traits of evil,
my excuse in my passion that I do not revert.

Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad ibn Ishāq said, “I saw Yaḥyā ibn Mu‘ādh ar-Rāzī^[25] on the day of ‘Īd speaking intimately with his Lord, saying:

My God, I do not observe Your due but I do not call to other than You. My God! I do not hurry to good actions and I do not knock at the door of allegiance. My God, if I am not silent

about backbiting, yet I do not abuse Your prophets and pure friends. My God, I do not leave Your door because I do not speak of other than You. My God, I do not leave Your door because I do not rejoice in other than You.

My God, My actions are like a mirage and my heart is a ruin of *taqwā*. My wrong actions are more numerous than the dust. You are most worthy to pardon and overlook, so forgive us and show mercy to us with Your generosity and bounty, O Possessor of Majesty and Generosity!

End of His Advice

A man made a supplication and said:

O Allāh, You know that even with my evil, injustice and transgression I do not assign You a son or a partner or a companion or an equal. If You punish, it is by Your justice. If You pardon, then You are the Almighty, All-Wise, O You whom hearing does not distract from hearing!

Praise belongs to Allāh alone, and may Allāh bless our master Muḥammad and his family and Companions and grant them peace.

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^[11] This is related with similar variants in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim (6:38), *al-Jāmi‘ of at-Tirmidhī* (5:231, no. 3011), and Ibn Mājah in *as-Sunan* (2:932, no. 2801).

^[12] He is Ibrāhīm ibn Yazīd at-Taymī Abū Usāmah, the imām, exemplar, jurist and devotee of Kūfa. His father Yazīd was also one of the imāms of Kūfa. Imām adh-Dhahabī said he was a righteous young man, submissive to Allāh, a scholar, a jurist of great standing and an admonisher. Al-A‘mash said, ‘When he prostrated it was as if he was a piece of the wall; sparrows would land on his back! It is said that al-Ḥajjāj killed him, and it also said that he died in his prison in the year 92 AH. He never reached 40 years of age.’ *Siyar a‘lām an-nubalā’* (5:60)

^[13] *Ḥilyat al-awliyā’* (4:112); *Maḥāsin an-nafs* (34); *At-Takhwīf min an-nār* (47)

^[14] A *marfū‘ ḥadīth* which is related by Imām Aḥmad in *al-Musnad* (2:301), *Ibn Mājah* (2:1405, no. 4202) and *Muslim* (8:223).

^[15] Hishām ibn Yaḥyā al-Ghassānī related that a man said: “I used to be a show-off. I would be the first to enter the mosque and the last to leave it. I would make an outward show of worship and religious zeal, but I would never walk past anyone except that he would say ‘a show-off.’ I remained like this for two years and did not attain anything of what I longed for. So I got up in the depth of the night, prayed two *rak‘ahs* and said: ‘O Allāh! I bear witness to You that I have left every empty pretension that I was engrossed in.’ I set out at night to the mosque and passed by two men. One of them said: ‘Is this so-and-so the show-off?’ and the other replied: ‘He has abandoned it today.’ *Akḥbār wa ‘l-ḥikāyāt li ‘l-Ghassānī* (18)

^[16] This is one of the sayings of Muṭarrif ibn ‘Abdullāh ibn ash-Shikḥkhīr, the ascetic who is counted as one of the illustrious Followers.

^[17] He is Abū Sulaymān ‘Abd ar-Raḥmān ibn Aḥmad ibn ‘Atiyah ad-Dārānī of Dāriyyā, near Damascus. He was famous for his devotion and abstinence. Imām adh-Dhahabī said of him: “The abstinent one and exemplar [...] he was incomparable in his abstinence and uprightness. He has some profound utterances on Sufism and exhortations.”

^[18] Ibrāhīm ibn Adham ibn Manṣūr, Abū Ishāq al-Balkhī, the ascetic and eminent man, one of the spiritual leaders. He entered Makkah and there kept the company of Sufyān ath-Thawrī and Fuḍayl ibn ‘Iyāḍ. He went to Syria and died there in the year 126 AH. He would eat from the labour of his hands, by working as a harvester for instance, a garden watchman and other jobs. Among his statements there is, “Three things will be most precious in the last days: a brother in Allāh to keep company with;

earning a dirham lawfully; speaking a true word to the Sultan.” Al-‘Ibar (1:183); *Tahdhīb al-kamāl* (2:27)

^[9] This is one of the utterances of Bilāl ibn Sa‘d, as mentioned in *az-Zuhd* by Ibn al-Mubārak (24), and in *Ḥilyat al-awliyā’* (5:223).

^[10] Yazīd ar-Raqāshī Abū ‘Amr al-Baṣrī, the storyteller and ascetic. He was one of the foremost servants of Allāh who would cry at night. However he neglected to memorise *ḥadīth* out of his love for worship. *Tahdhīb at-tahdhīb* (6:195)

^[11] Ar-Riqqah wa ‘l-bukā’ of Ibn Abī ‘d-Dunyā (248) (p. 338).

^[12] She is Umm ad-Dardā’ aṣ-Ṣughrā, the wife of Abū ‘d-Dardā’. Her name is Hujaymah bint Ḥayy al-Awṣābiyyah. She was left widowed by the death of Abū ‘d-Dardā’, and Mu‘āwiyah proposed to her but she would not accept it. She narrates from a group of Companions. She was a jurist and given to worship, and women would worship with her. One of her sayings is, ‘The best knowledge is gnosis.’ *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl* (35:352)

^[13] Shahr ibn Ḥawshab al-Ash‘arī ash-Shāmī. He read the Qur’ān to Ibn ‘Abbās. He was a scholar who related much. His narrations are good (*ḥasan*). *Al-‘Ibar* (1:90); *Ḥilyat al-awliyā’* (6:59).

^[14] He is Jaylān ibn Farwah al-Baṣrī. Ḥāfiẓ Abū Nu‘aym al-Aṣbahānī described him with the words: “He had memorised the revealed Books, he would admonish using the spiritual counsels and the states of the prophets, and was devoted to reciting invocations.” Among his sayings is: “I found procrastination to be one of the armies of the devil, a great many of Allāh’s creation have been destroyed by it.” *Ḥilyat al-awliyā’* (6:54)

^[15] He is Aḥmad ibn ‘Abdullāh ibn Maymūn ibn Abī ‘l-Ḥuwārī al-Dimashqī, the ascetic, originally from Kūfa and one of the foremost shaykhs of Syria. He spoke about the knowledge of love and conduct. He kept the company of Abū Sulaymān ad-Dārānī and entered the path of asceticism at the hand of his father, Abū ‘l-Ḥuwārī. Al-Junayd used to say of him, “Aḥmad ibn Abī ‘l-Ḥuwārī is the sweet smelling plant of Syria.” Among his sayings is: “Allāh does not try a slave with anything worse than heedlessness and hard-heartedness.

^[16] He is Manṣūr ibn ‘Ammār as-Sulamī al-Khurāsānī, an eloquent preacher, who was right-acting and godly. He was incomparable in his exhortations and reminders. He preached in Iraq, Syria and Egypt.

^[17] Ibn Hishām related it in his *Sīrah* (1:420). Ḥāfiẓ al-Haythamī said in *Majma‘ al-zawā‘id* (6:38): “At-Ṭabarānī related it, and Ibn Ishāq is in the

chain of narration and he would omit the shaykh he related from (*tadlīs*) but he is reliable, and the other narrators are reliable.”

[18] This is the wording of the author as found in the earliest manuscript of this book, but later copies do not have the whole *ḥadīth*. It is related by at-Tirmidhī, and a *ḥadīth* with similar wording is found in *Ibn Mājah*, from ‘Uthmān ibn Ḥunayf that a blind man came to the Prophet ﷺ and said: “Supplicate to Allāh to cure me.” He replied, “If you wish I will supplicate, and if you wish, be patient and that is better for you.” He said, “Supplicate to Him.” He [the narrator] said, “And so he ordered him to make *wuḍū’* and to make it well, and supplicate with this supplication: ‘O Allāh, I ask you and turn to you by Your Prophet Muḥammad, the Prophet of mercy. I turn by you to My Lord in this need of mine, that it may be fulfilled. O Allāh grant him intercession for me.’” At-Tirmidhī related it in his *Sunan* in the “Book of Supplications” (5:569, no. 3578).

[19] And you name the matter rather than saying “This matter”.

[20] He is Yazīd ibn ‘Umayrah az-Zabīdī as-Saksakī ash-Shāmī al-Ḥimṣī. Al-Bukhārī said: “One of them said: ‘Al-Ḥārith ibn ‘Umayrah does not relate rigorously authenticated *ḥadīth*. He is one of the great Followers, and a trustworthy source from among the Syrians. He was one of the leading companions of Mu‘ādh. He relates from a group of the Companions, including Abū Bakr aṣ-Ṣiddīq.”

[21] This statement is related from Farqad as-Sabkhī and Khālid ibn Ma‘dān. See *ar-Riqqah wa ‘l-bukā’* of Ibn Abī ‘d-Dunyā, pages 11 and 15.

[22] The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said: “Our Lord, blessed and exalted is He, descends to the sky of this world every night when only the last third of the night remains, saying ‘Who is calling Me that I may answer him? Who is asking Me that I may give to him? Who is seeking My forgiveness that I may forgive him?’” Muslim relates it in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* (2:175) and at-Tirmidhī in his *Jāmi‘* (2:307).

[23] This is likely to be Ismā‘īl ibn Abī Khālid al-Bijlī al-Aḥmasī al-Kūfī al-Ḥāfiẓ, a notable scholar of *ḥadīth*. He was upright and of sound judgement.

[24] His name was Abū Bakr. He was a tall man with tanned skin. If you saw him, you would have seen a sorrowful man. He would sigh so much that his sighs could be heard, and he cried until he lost his eyelashes. *Ṣifat aṣ-ṣafwah* (3:179)

[25] He is Abū Zakariyyā Yaḥyā ibn Mu‘ādh ibn Ja‘far ar-Rāzī. He lived in Rayy then moved to Naysābūr where he lived until his death. He was an ascetic and a worshipper. He heard *ḥadīth* from Ishāq ibn Ibrāhīm ar-Rāzī and others. Among his statements is: “O son of Adam, your religion

will be ripped apart as long as your heart is attached to the love of this world." *Şifat aş-şafwah* (4:90)