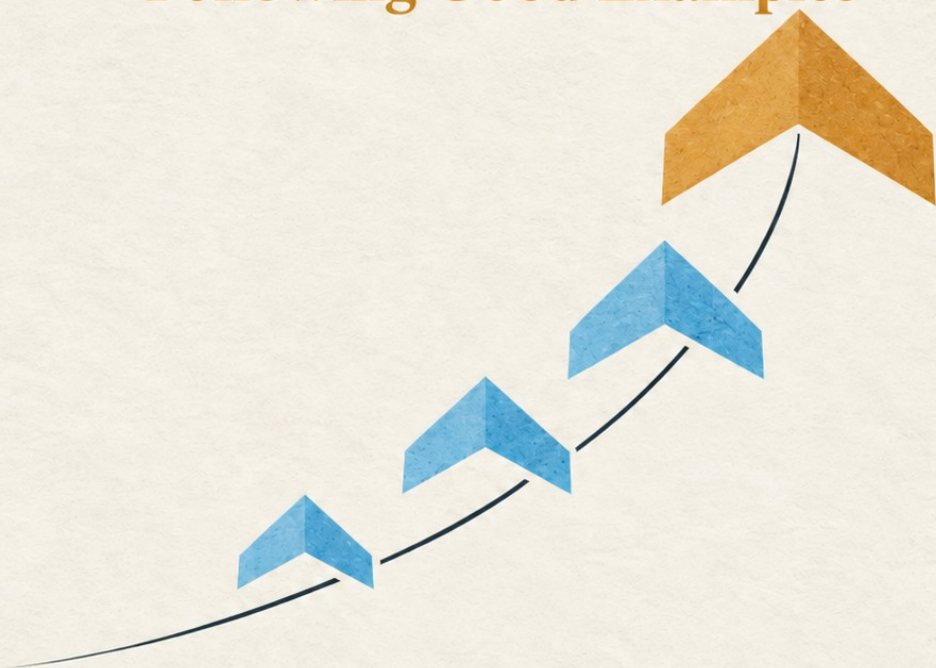


Until the Soul Stands Firm

— Volume Two —

**Worship and Lessons in
Following Good Examples**



مدارج

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Until the Soul Stands Firm

Volume Two

Worship and Lessons in Following Good Examples

Patience, self-discipline and the steady work of becoming responsible

English edition

The Volumes in This Series

Volume One: Nurturing the Self

Patience, striving against one's own failings and consistency; raising a family; and the changing relationship between responsibility and ability at different stages of life.

Volume Two: Worship and Lessons in Following Good Examples

Consistency in worship, and what the Prophet's guidance and accounts of the earliest Muslim generations teach us about learning and acting on what we know.

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Our responsibilities to others at home and at work, shared obligations, and the contribution contemporary research can make within its proper limits.

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Choosing an area of life to work on, learning a skill, observing how we carry it out, and responding to setbacks while continuing the work.

You may read the volumes in order or turn to the subject you need. To put them into practice, choose a clear responsibility and a specific area of life. The short introductory cycle and the twelve-week programme are suggested alternatives; you do not have to combine their durations.

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Dedication

For those who know the way, yet find returning to it exhausting. For those whose days are so crowded with responsibilities that their own needs, and the needs of people they love, keep being postponed. For those who begin eagerly, then feel ashamed to try again because they did not finish the last time.

This book is for you, and for us alongside you. We all need to learn how to guide ourselves towards good without treating ourselves unjustly; how to give a task its due without neglecting another responsibility; and how to remain faithful to our duties when enthusiasm fades.

It is also for a father and mother teaching their child to pray, for a teacher who remains patient with a pupil, and for anyone struggling with something no one else sees, who rises the next morning to try once more.

We ask Allah to guide us to the best deeds, and to grant us sincerity, gentleness and steadfastness in carrying them out. Please remember us, our parents, and everyone who helped this book reach you in a sincere prayer.

Written and distributed by Madarej.

Chapter One: Prayer—Its Time, Preparation and Performance

Prayer is an act of worship offered to Allah before it is a way of organising the day. It has a prescribed time and form, and requires stillness. It is not enough to squeeze it into whatever space work leaves behind, or turn it into a quick item on a list of achievements.

{إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ كَانَتْ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ كِتَابًا مَوْقُوتًا}.

«موقوتًا»

Allah Most High says, in meaning: ‘Prayer has been prescribed for the believers at appointed times’ [al-Nisa’ 4:103]. Al-Tabari explains ‘at appointed times’ as an obligation for which a time of performance has been set. The practical meaning is straightforward: know where prayer belongs in your day before filling the whole day with other things. Learn the rulings on its times and the concessions that may apply from their proper sources. Do not turn your planning tool into a new religious ruling.¹

1 Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari, Jami‘ al-bayan ‘an ta’wil ay al-Qur'an, commentary on al-Nisa’ 4:103: the meaning of kitaban mawqutan and his preference for an obligation with a prescribed time.

Prayer has a claim on your time

‘Abd Allah ibn Mas‘ud, may Allah be pleased with him, related the following:

«سَأَلْتُ النَّبِيَّ ﷺ: أَيُّ الْعَمَلِ أَحَبُّ إِلَى اللَّهِ؟ قَالَ: الصَّلَاةُ عَلَى وَفْتِهَا. قَالَ: ثُمَّ أَيُّ؟ قَالَ: ثُمَّ بِرُّ الْوَالِدَيْنِ. قَالَ: ثُمَّ أَيُّ؟ قَالَ: الْجِهَادُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ. قَالَ: حَدَّثَنِي بِهِنَّ، وَلَوْ اسْتَزِدْتُهُ لَزَادَنِي»

Meaning in English: ‘I asked the Prophet ﷺ, “Which deed is most beloved to Allah?” He said, “Prayer at its proper time.” I asked, “Then which?” He said, “Then dutifulness to one's parents.” I asked, “Then which?” He said, “Striving in the cause of Allah.” He told me these things; had I asked him for more, he would have told me more.’²

Prayer is not what remains after everything else in the day. If you know that a meeting or journey will extend into its time, arrange what you can before time grows short, and ask about the ruling if your circumstances change.

2 Narrated by ‘Abd Allah ibn Mas‘ud, may Allah be pleased with him. Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Book of the Times of Prayer, chapter on the merit of prayer at its proper time, hadith 527.

Preparation begins before the last-minute rush

Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him, reported that the Prophet ﷺ said:

«إِذَا سَمِعْتُمُ الْإِقَامَةَ فَامْشُوا إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ، وَعَلَيْكُمْ بِالسَّكِينَةِ وَالْوَقَارِ، وَلَا تُسْرِعُوا، فَمَا أَدْرَكْتُمْ فَصَلُّوا، وَمَا فَاتَكُمْ فَأَتِمُّوا»

Meaning in English: ‘When you hear the call announcing that the prayer is about to begin, walk to the prayer with calm and dignity. Do not hurry. Pray whatever you catch of it, and complete whatever you have missed.’³

The congregation had begun, yet the Prophet ﷺ did not prescribe running at the cost of calm. The point that needs correcting often comes earlier: leave what you are doing in good time, perform ablution and prepare, then accept what you have missed and complete the prayer as instructed.

Preparation also includes dealing with urgent bodily needs that seriously distract you. Ibn Abi ‘Atiq related:

«تحدثت أنا والقاسم، عند عائشة -رضي الله عنها- حديثاً وكان القاسم رجلاً لحانة وكان لأم ولد فقالت له عائشة ما لك لا تحدث كما يتحدث ابن أخي هذا أما إنني قد علمت من أين

3 Narrated by Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him. Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Book of the Call to Prayer, chapter on coming to prayer with calm and dignity rather than hurrying, hadith 636.

أتيت . هذا أدبته أمه وأنت أدبتك أمك - قال - فغضب القاسم وأضرب عليها فلما رأى مائدة عائشة قد أتت بها قام . قالت أين قال أصلي . قالت اجلس . قال إني أصلي . قالت اجلس غدر إني سمعت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يقول لا صلاة بحضرة الطعام ولا وهو يدافعه الأخبثان»

Meaning in English: ‘Al-Qasim and I were talking in the presence of ‘A’ishah, may Allah be pleased with her. Al-Qasim made mistakes in his speech, and his mother had been a slave woman. ‘A’ishah said to him, “Why do you not speak as this nephew of mine speaks? I know where this comes from: his mother brought him up, and your mother brought you up.” Al-Qasim became angry and harboured resentment towards her. When he saw that ‘A’ishah’s meal had been brought, he stood up. “Where are you going?” she asked. “To pray,” he replied. “Sit down,” she said. “I am going to pray,” he repeated. “Sit down, you faithless fellow,” she said. “I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say: There is no prayer when food is ready, or when a person is holding back the need to urinate or defecate.”⁴

4 Narrated by ‘A’ishah, Mother of the Believers, may Allah be pleased with her. Muslim, Sahih, Book of Mosques and Places of Prayer, chapter on the undesirability of praying when food one wants to eat is ready or while restraining the need to relieve oneself, hadith 560a.

This does not give us permission to manufacture a recurring excuse. It draws attention to the wisdom of avoiding a long meal or a new task just before prayer, only to enter the prayer with body and mind in obvious conflict.

Learn how to pray, then put it into practice

Malik ibn al-Huwayrith, may Allah be pleased with him, related:

«أَتَيْنَا إِلَى النَّبِيِّ ﷺ وَنَحْنُ شَبَبَةٌ مُتَقَارِبُونَ، فَأَقَمْنَا عِنْدَهُ عَشْرِينَ يَوْمًا وَلَيْلَةً، وَكَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ رَحِيمًا رَفِيقًا، فَلَمَّا ظَنَّ أَنَّا قَدْ اشْتَهَيْنَا أَهْلَنَا، أَوْ قَدْ اشْتَقْنَا، سَأَلَنَا عَمَّنْ تَرَكْنَا بَعْدَنَا فَأَخْبَرْنَاهُ، قَالَ: ارْجِعُوا إِلَى أَهْلِكُمْ فَأَقِيمُوا فِيهِمْ وَعَلِّمُوهُمْ وَمُرُوهُمْ - وَذَكَرَ أَشْيَاءَ أَحْفَظُهَا أَوْ لَا أَحْفَظُهَا - وَصَلُّوا كَمَا رَأَيْتُمُونِي أَصَلِّي، فَإِذَا حَضَرَتِ الصَّلَاةُ فَلْيُؤَذِّنْ لَكُمْ أَحَدُكُمْ وَلْيُؤَمِّكُمْ أَكْبَرُكُمْ»

Meaning in English: ‘We came to the Prophet ﷺ as young men of much the same age and stayed with him for twenty days and nights. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was merciful and gentle. When he thought we longed for our families, or had begun to miss them, he asked whom we had left behind, and we told him. He said, “Return to your families, stay among them, teach them and instruct them”—and he mentioned other things, some of which I may remember and some of which I may not—“and pray as you have seen me pray. When the time for prayer

comes, let one of you call the prayer, and let the eldest of you lead you.”⁵

This account shows people learning by watching, then returning to teach their families. Good intentions are not enough if the form of worship remains unknown. Children and adults learn prayer through a correct example and a clear explanation, rather than commands alone or doubt about every movement.

Stillness is part of the prayer itself

Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him, related:

«أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ دَخَلَ الْمَسْجِدَ، فَدَخَلَ رَجُلٌ فَصَلَّى فَسَلَّمَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ ﷺ فَرَدَّ وَقَالَ: ارْجِعْ فَصَلِّ فَإِنَّكَ لَمْ تُصَلِّ. فَرَجَعَ يُصَلِّي كَمَا صَلَّى، ثُمَّ جَاءَ فَسَلَّمَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ ﷺ فَقَالَ: ارْجِعْ فَصَلِّ فَإِنَّكَ لَمْ تُصَلِّ، ثَلَاثًا. فَقَالَ: وَالَّذِي بَعَثَكَ بِالْحَقِّ مَا أَحْسِنُ غَيْرَهُ فَعَلَّمَنِي. فَقَالَ: إِذَا قُمْتَ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ فَكَبِّرْ، ثُمَّ اقْرَأْ مَا تَيَسَّرَ مَعَكَ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ، ثُمَّ ارْكَعْ حَتَّى تَطْمَئِنَّ رَاكِعًا، ثُمَّ ارْفَعْ حَتَّى تَعْتَدِلَ قَائِمًا، ثُمَّ اسْجُدْ حَتَّى تَطْمَئِنَّ سَاجِدًا، ثُمَّ ارْفَعْ حَتَّى تَطْمَئِنَّ جَالِسًا، وَافْعَلْ ذَلِكَ فِي صَلَاتِكَ كُلِّهَا»

5 Narrated by Malik ibn al-Huwayrith, may Allah be pleased with him. Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Book of the Call to Prayer, chapter on the call and announcement for a group of travellers, and likewise at ‘Arafah and Jam’, hadith 631.

Meaning in English: ‘The Messenger of Allah ﷺ entered the mosque. A man came in, prayed and greeted the Prophet ﷺ. He returned the greeting and said, “Go back and pray, for you have not prayed.” The man went back and prayed as he had before, then came and greeted the Prophet ﷺ. He said, “Go back and pray, for you have not prayed.” This happened three times. The man said, “By Him who sent you with the truth, I cannot do better than this, so teach me.” He said, “When you stand for prayer, say ‘Allah is greatest’, then recite whatever you can of the Qur'an. Bow until you are still in bowing, then rise until you stand upright. Prostrate until you are still in prostration, then rise until you are still in sitting. Do this throughout your prayer.”’⁶

Quick movements that resemble prayer are not the properly learned act of worship. The prayer itself matters. Do not bring the haste of the previous task into it and treat it like a button that closes an item on a list.

6 Narrated by Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him. Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Book of the Call to Prayer, chapter on the obligation of recitation for both the imam and the follower in every prayer, at home and while travelling, whether recitation is aloud or quiet, hadith 757.

Taking a concession is also an act of following

Ya‘la ibn Umayyah, may Allah be pleased with him, related:

«لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَقْصُرُوا مِنَ الصَّلَاةِ إِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَنْ يَفْتِنَكُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا».

«قُلْتُ لِعُمَرَ بْنِ الْخَطَّابِ: «لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَقْصُرُوا مِنَ الصَّلَاةِ إِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَنْ يَفْتِنَكُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا»، فَقَدْ أَمِنَ النَّاسُ. فَقَالَ: عَجِبْتُ مِمَّا عَجِبْتَ مِنْهُ، فَسَأَلْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ عَنْ ذَلِكَ، فَقَالَ: صَدَقَ تَصَدَّقَ اللَّهُ بِهَا عَلَيْكُمْ فَاقْبَلُوا صَدَقَتَهُ»

Meaning in English: ‘I said to ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab, “There is no blame on you for shortening the prayer if you fear that those who disbelieve may harm you”—yet people are now safe. He said, “I wondered about the same thing you have wondered about, so I asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. He said, ‘It is a gift of charity Allah has given you, so accept His gift.’”⁷

A concession established in the revealed teachings is not a failure of discipline. Travellers and people who are ill learn the ruling that applies to their circumstances; they do not make hardship the measure of sincerity. Equally, the word ‘ease’ must not become an excuse for guessing at religious rulings. Reliable knowledge remains the reference.

⁷ Narrated by ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him. Muslim, Sahih, Book of Travellers' Prayer and Its Shortening, chapter on travellers' prayer and its shortening, hadith 686a.

Review what is observable without judging the heart

If disruption to prayer keeps recurring, ask: do I begin a long task just before it? Does my pattern of sleep make waking particularly difficult? Do I arrive in a rush because I have left no time to get there? Is there a ruling I need to learn? Then choose one observable cause and address it.

Do not give yourself a ‘concentration and humility score’ or try to measure sincerity. There is a large difference between ‘I am undisciplined’ and ‘I start a phone call before prayer and arrive late.’ The second describes a specific problem you can work on. The first may remain no more than self-reproach.

Prayer teaches us that faithfulness is not haste. We know its time, prepare for it, learn its form, become still in performing it, and accept a concession when its grounds are established. If we fall short, we return for the next prayer instead of judging the whole day to have been wasted.

Chapter Two: Purification and Order Without Obsessive Doubt

The difficulty may begin with a commendable concern to worship correctly, then turn into endless repetition. Did the water reach the skin? Has my ablution been broken? Should I do it again? Two guiding principles are needed together: learn how to purify yourself so that you do not neglect it, and recognise when you have finished so that you do not obey every doubt.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا قُمْتُمْ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ فَاغْسِلُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ
وَأَيْدِيَكُمْ إِلَى الْمَرَافِقِ وَامْسَحُوا بِرُءُوسِكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ إِلَى
الكَعْبَيْنِ ﴿١﴾

﴿مَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيَجْعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ حَرَجٍ وَلَكِنْ يُرِيدُ لِيُطَهِّرَكُمْ﴾

Allah Most High says, in meaning: ‘You who believe, when you rise for prayer, wash your faces and your arms to the elbows, wipe your heads, and wash your feet to the ankles.’ After the rulings on the full ritual bath and purification with clean earth, He says: ‘Allah does not intend to place hardship upon you, but intends to purify you’ [al-Ma’idah 5:6].⁸

8 The Qur'an, al-Ma'idah 5:6: ablution, the full ritual bath and purification with clean earth; the concluding statement on removing hardship and intending purification.

Purification is an act of worship with known actions. It is not a test in which you must achieve a perfect inner feeling of certainty.

A practice that can be shown and taught

Humran, the freedman of ‘Uthman, may Allah be pleased with him, related the following:

«أَنَّ عُثْمَانَ بْنَ عَفَّانَ دَعَا بِوُضُوءٍ فَتَوَضَّأَ، فَغَسَلَ كَفَّيْهِ ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ، ثُمَّ مَضْمَضَ وَاسْتَنْشَرَ، ثُمَّ غَسَلَ وَجْهَهُ ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ، ثُمَّ غَسَلَ يَدَهُ الْيُمْنَى إِلَى الْمِرْفَقِ ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ، ثُمَّ غَسَلَ يَدَهُ الْيُسْرَى مِثْلَ ذَلِكَ، ثُمَّ مَسَحَ رَأْسَهُ، ثُمَّ غَسَلَ رِجْلَهُ الْيُمْنَى إِلَى الْكَعْبَيْنِ ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ، ثُمَّ غَسَلَ الْيُسْرَى مِثْلَ ذَلِكَ، ثُمَّ قَالَ: رَأَيْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ تَوَضَّأَ نَحْوَ وَضُوءِي هَذَا، ثُمَّ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: مَنْ تَوَضَّأَ نَحْوَ وَضُوءِي هَذَا، ثُمَّ قَامَ فَرَكَعَ رَكَعَتَيْنِ لَا يُحَدِّثُ فِيهِمَا نَفْسَهُ، غُفِرَ لَهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِهِ»

Meaning in English: ‘‘Uthman ibn ‘Affan called for water and performed ablution. He washed his hands three times, then rinsed his mouth and cleared his nose. He washed his face three times, then his right arm to the elbow three times, and his left arm in the same way. He wiped his head, washed his right foot to the ankles three times, then his left foot in the same way. He said, ‘‘I saw the Messenger of Allah ﷺ perform ablution like this ablution of mine. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ then said: Whoever performs ablution like this ablution of mine, then

stands and prays two units without letting his mind wander during them, will have his previous sins forgiven.”⁹

‘Uthman, may Allah be pleased with him, saw how ablution was performed and showed it to those who came after him. A Muslim learns what is required from a reliable source and carries it out, without inventing new steps whenever anxiety returns.

Washing thoroughly does not mean repeating endlessly

Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him, related:

«أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ ﷺ رَأَى رَجُلًا لَمْ يَغْسِلْ عَقْبَيْهِ فَقَالَ: وَيْلٌ لِلْأَعْقَابِ مِنَ النَّارِ»

Meaning in English: ‘The Prophet ﷺ saw a man who had not washed his heels and said, “Woe to the heels because of the Fire.”’¹⁰

9 Narrated by ‘Uthman ibn ‘Affan, may Allah be pleased with him. Muslim, Sahih, Book of Purification, chapter on the form and completeness of ablution, hadith 226a.

10 Narrated by Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him. Muslim, Sahih, Book of Purification, chapter on the obligation to wash the feet completely, hadith 242a.

The text rules out carelessness: washing must reach the places it is meant to reach. It does not make the amount of water or the number of repetitions a measure of doing something well. Anas, may Allah be pleased with him, related:

«كَانَ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ يَغْسِلُ - أَوْ كَانَ يَغْتَسِلُ - بِالصَّاعِ إِلَى خَمْسَةِ أَمْدَادٍ، وَيَتَوَضَّأُ بِالْمُدِّ»

Meaning in English: ‘The Prophet ﷺ used to wash—or bathe—with a sa‘ to five mudds of water, and perform ablution with one mudd.’¹¹

We need not turn these quantities into a test measured in litres. The point is to understand that the Prophet's ablution did not consist of pouring water without end. Water must reach what has to be washed. A person need not keep repeating the action until every trace of uncertainty has disappeared from how they feel.

11 Narrated by Anas ibn Malik, may Allah be pleased with him. Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Book of Ablution, chapter on performing ablution with a mudd of water, hadith 201.

The teaching on doubt: do not leave because of an impression alone

‘Abbad ibn Tamim related from his uncle:

«أَنَّه سُكَا إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ الرَّجُلَ الَّذِي يُحَيِّلُ إِلَيْهِ أَنَّهُ يَجِدُ الشَّيْءَ فِي الصَّلَاةِ، فَقَالَ: لَا يَنْفَتِلْ - أَوْ لَا يَنْصَرِفْ - حَتَّى يَسْمَعَ صَوْتًا أَوْ يَجِدَ رِيحًا»

Meaning in English: ‘He asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ about a man who imagines that he feels something during prayer. He said, “He should not turn away—or leave—until he hears a sound or notices an odour.”’¹²

In the situation described, an established state is not set aside because of a passing doubt. We may not generalise this ruling to every issue without knowledge. Yet the lesson is clear: not every passing thought is an instruction to act. Sometimes discipline means refraining from an additional action once you have done what is required.

When does repetition become a wider problem?

Some repetition helps us learn or correct a known mistake. Other repetition is intended to silence anxiety that returns

12 Narrated by ‘Abd Allah ibn Zayd ibn ‘Asim, may Allah be pleased with him. Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Book of Ablution, chapter on not repeating ablution because of doubt until there is certainty, hadith 137.

minutes later. A person performs ablution, then thinks, ‘Perhaps the water did not reach everywhere,’ and repeats it. Then, ‘Perhaps my intention was not right,’ and repeats it again. If every repetition opens another question, a lack of information may not be the only problem.

Reliable medical sources describe obsessive-compulsive disorder as potentially involving recurring, unwanted thoughts and compulsive actions that take up time, cause distress or interfere with daily life. This is a general description, not a diagnosis of the reader. It does not mean that every repetition of ablution indicates a mental health condition.¹³

If repetition becomes compulsive, severely distressing or disruptive, a sound response has two parts: ask a reliable scholar about the religious ruling, and a qualified mental health professional about treatment. Neither field replaces the other. Saying ‘strengthen your willpower’ is not sufficient treatment for a possible medical condition.

Teaching children without creating fear

A child watches ablution, learns its actions and tries them. An adult corrects an observable mistake, then allows room for independence. Repeatedly asking ‘Are you one hundred per

¹³ National Institute of Mental Health, ‘Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)’, official information page: definitions of obsessions and compulsions, and symptoms that may be time-consuming, distressing or disruptive to daily life.

cent sure?’ may instead teach the child that worship is valid only when accompanied by a perfect feeling of certainty that they cannot always summon.

Correct the mistakes you can see rather than constructing a chain of possibilities. Once the child has properly completed what they have learned, they move on to prayer. Education in purification teaches an action; it is not training in constant inspection.

A practical example

Consider this hypothetical situation. A young man washes his arm again because of a slight doubt, then repeats his ablution because he cannot remember whether he washed his face twice or three times. Next he goes back because of a movement he felt in his abdomen. He arrives late for the congregation, saying, ‘I want my purification to be correct.’

The answer is not to neglect ablution. It is to learn what is required and distinguish a known mistake from a possibility. If the cycle continues despite knowing the ruling, takes up time, causes distress and spreads to other areas, he seeks specialist help.

For a few days, he can review observable behaviour: did I repeat the action because I was certain of a problem, or merely because I doubted? Did I leave the water running unnecessarily? Did repetition delay my prayer? This observation gives him no ‘purification score’ and does not measure his religious

scrupulousness. It identifies where learning or treatment may be needed.

Purification teaches a complete understanding of discipline: knowing when to begin, how to perform an action and when to finish. Knowledge comes before action, thoroughness prevents neglect, and a clear endpoint prevents repetition without end.

Chapter Three: Fasting— Obedience at the Beginning and the End

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ
مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٤٥﴾
(كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ).

Fasting is not a contest in enduring hunger. It is worship that begins and ends within known limits, accompanied by standards of conduct and prescribed concessions. Allah Most High says, in meaning: ‘You who believe, fasting has been prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may become mindful of Allah’ [al-Baqarah 2:183]. Al-Tabari explains fasting as refraining from what Allah has commanded us to refrain from, and explains the obligation expressed in the words ‘has been prescribed for you’.^{14, 15}

The verse does not enable us to assign a score to mindfulness of Allah. What we can observe is outward behaviour: respecting the times, guarding the tongue, knowing the relevant

14 The Qur'an, al-Baqarah 2:183: the obligation of fasting and the stated aim of taqwa, mindfulness of Allah.

15 Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari, Jami‘ al-bayan ‘an ta’wil ay al-Qur'an, commentary on al-Baqarah 2:183: the meaning of ‘fasting has been prescribed for you’ and the root meaning of fasting.

concession, and resuming the fast after a lapse through forgetfulness.

Worship has a beginning and an end

﴿وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمُ الْخَيْطُ الْأَبْيَضُ مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الْأَسْوَدِ مِنَ الْفَجْرِ ثُمَّ أَتِمُّوا الصِّيَامَ إِلَى اللَّيْلِ﴾

Allah Most High says, in meaning: ‘Eat and drink until the white thread of dawn becomes distinct to you from the black thread, then complete the fast until nightfall’ [al-Baqarah 2:187].¹⁶

«تَسَحَّرُوا فَإِنَّ فِي السَّحُورِ بَرَكَهَةً»

Obedience means abstaining when the fast begins and breaking it when it ends. Increasing hardship is not an act of worship in itself. Preparing for the fast is part of the Sunnah. The Prophet ﷺ said, ‘Take the meal before dawn, for there is blessing in it.’ Preparing the body for obedience is not weakness, and the meal before dawn need not be turned into a single health prescription that suits everyone.¹⁷

16 The Qur'an, al-Baqarah 2:187: eating and drinking until dawn, completing the fast until nightfall, and Allah's prescribed limits.

17 Narrated by Anas ibn Malik, may Allah be pleased with him. Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Book of Fasting, chapter on the blessing of the meal before dawn without making it obligatory, hadith 1923.

Fasting also governs the tongue

Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him, reported that the Prophet ﷺ said:

«مَنْ لَمْ يَدَعْ قَوْلَ الزُّورِ وَالْعَمَلَ بِهِ، فَلَيْسَ لِلَّهِ حَاجَةٌ فِي أَنْ يَدَعَ طَعَامَهُ وَشَرَابَهُ»

Meaning in English: ‘Whoever does not give up false speech and acting upon it—Allah has no need of his giving up food and drink.’¹⁸

We do not derive from this text alone a ruling that the fast of everyone who sins is invalid; the details belong to Islamic jurisprudence. Its educational meaning, however, needs no lengthy digression: successful fasting does not consist of leaving food while giving free rein to lies and harm.

Another hadith sets out the teaching on this subject more fully:

«قَالَ اللَّهُ: كُلُّ عَمَلٍ ابْنِ آدَمَ لَهُ إِلَّا الصِّيَامَ فَإِنَّهُ لِي وَأَنَا أَجْزِي بِهِ، وَالصِّيَامُ جُنَّةٌ، وَإِذَا كَانَ يَوْمٌ صَوْمٍ أَحَدِكُمْ فَلَا يَرْفُثْ وَلَا يَصْخَبْ، فَإِنْ سَابَهُ أَحَدٌ أَوْ قَاتَلَهُ فَلْيَقُلْ: إِنِّي امْرُؤٌ صَائِمٌ. وَالَّذِي نَفْسُ مُحَمَّدٍ بِيَدِهِ لَخُلُوفٌ فِيمَ الصَّائِمِ أَطْيَبُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ مِنْ رِيحِ

18 Narrated by Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him. Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Book of Fasting, chapter on a person who does not give up false speech and acting upon it during fasting, hadith 1903.

المِسْكِ، لِلصَّائِمِ فَرْحَتَانِ يَفْرَحُهُمَا: إِذَا أَفْطَرَ فَرِحَ، وَإِذَا لَقِيَ رَبَّهُ
فَرِحَ بِصَوْمِهِ»

Meaning in English: ‘Allah said, “Every deed of the son of Adam is for him except fasting; it is for Me, and I reward it.” Fasting is a shield. When one of you is fasting, let him neither speak obscenely nor raise a clamour. If someone insults him or fights him, let him say, “I am a person who is fasting.” By Him in whose hand is the soul of Muhammad, the changed smell of the fasting person's mouth is more fragrant to Allah than the scent of musk. The fasting person has two joys: joy when breaking the fast, and joy in the fast when meeting his Lord.’¹⁹

When a fasting person is provoked, the struggle is not only with hunger. It also means refusing to let provocation draw them into obscenity and shouting. This teaching concerns fasting; it is not a slogan for surrendering rights or remaining silent about an injustice that calls for a lawful response.

19 Narrated by Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him. Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Book of Fasting, chapter on saying ‘I am fasting’ when insulted, hadith 1904.

Forgetfulness does not ruin the whole day

The Prophet ﷺ said:

«إِذَا نَسِيَ فَأَكَلَ وَشَرِبَ فَلْيُتِمَّ صَوْمَهُ، فَإِنَّمَا أَطْعَمَهُ اللَّهُ وَسَقَاهُ»

Meaning in English: ‘If a person forgets and eats and drinks, let him complete his fast, for it was Allah who fed him and gave him drink.’²⁰

This text specifically concerns eating and drinking through forgetfulness. We do not generalise it to everything that breaks a fast or every failure to fulfil its requirements. The lesson is nevertheless clear: do not use a lapse whose ruling the text has explained as an excuse to abandon the rest of the day. Learn the ruling, then complete what you have been instructed to complete.

Concessions are part of the prescribed order

﴿وَمَنْ كَانَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ﴾

Allah Most High says, in meaning: ‘Whoever is ill or on a journey must make up the same number on other days. Allah

20 Narrated by Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him. Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Book of Fasting, chapter on a fasting person who eats or drinks through forgetfulness, hadith 1933.

intends ease for you and does not intend hardship for you’ [al-Baqarah 2:185].²¹

The lesson appears in the account of Jabir, may Allah be pleased with him:

«كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ فِي سَفَرٍ، فَرَأَى زِحَامًا وَرَجُلًا قَدْ ظَلَّلَ عَلَيْهِ، فَقَالَ: مَا هَذَا؟ فَقَالُوا: صَائِمٌ. فَقَالَ: لَيْسَ مِنَ الْبِرِّ الصَّوْمُ فِي السَّفَرِ»

Meaning in English: ‘The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was on a journey. He saw a crowd and a man who was being shaded. “What is this?” he asked. They said, “He is fasting.” He said, “Fasting on a journey is not an act of righteousness.”’²²

Other texts address travellers who fast and those who do not. We must therefore not make this account alone a ruling for every traveller. Here, fasting had brought this man to that degree of hardship on that journey. The lesson relevant to the reader is to avoid making the endurance of harm a measure of

21 The Qur'an, al-Baqarah 2:185: Ramadan fasting, illness and travel, making up missed days, ease and completing the required number.

22 Narrated by Jabir ibn ‘Abd Allah, may Allah be pleased with him. Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Book of Fasting, chapter on the Prophet's words about a man shaded in intense heat, ‘Fasting on a journey is not an act of righteousness’, hadith 1946.

sincerity. Ask about the ruling that applies to you instead of taking pride in refusing a concession.

Scientific research does not establish the value of worship

Studies of Ramadan fasting and cognitive control have produced findings that cannot be reduced to a slogan. A recent study reported improvement on some measures of inhibitory control in a group that fasted during Ramadan, while retaining design limitations and lacking random assignment. Another found a momentary cognitive cost in some circumstances when food was on participants' minds during fasting.^{23, 24}

We do not have to choose the finding that makes the best publicity. A laboratory task does not measure mindfulness of Allah, and worship does not need a certificate from a laboratory. Read each study within the limits of its question, without

23 Mostafa Salari Rad, 'Self-deprivation and cognition in Ramadan: could fasting practice improve inhibitory control?', Religion, Brain & Behavior 16(3) (2026): 234–259; published online 16 June 2025.

24 Mostafa Salari Rad, Morteza Ansarinia and Eldar Shafir, 'Temporary Self-Deprivation Can Impair Cognitive Control: Evidence From the Ramadan Fast', Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin 49(3) (2023): 415–428. Consultation recorded in the Arabic edition: PubMed abstract.

turning it into a verdict on fasting or assuming an automatic transfer to truthfulness and trustworthiness.

At home and at work

Do not make Ramadan a project that fills the family with tension. One child should not be compared with a sibling, someone who is ill should not be accused of weakness for asking about a concession, and a fasting person should not use hunger as an excuse for bad conduct. Anyone organising sleep and work should do so to fulfil responsibilities, rather than create the hardest possible day and then boast of enduring it.

Consider this hypothetical example. A young man skips the meal before dawn to test his willpower, deliberately delays breaking his fast, stays up late, then becomes angry at work. The correction is not simply to seek comfort. It is to return the standard of success to the revealed teaching: eat before dawn in following the Sunnah, begin and end the fast at their proper times, guard the tongue, and ask about a concession if one's capacity changes.

In reviewing your practice, ask four questions about what can be observed. Do I respect the beginning and end of the fast? Does its influence appear in my speech? If I lapse through forgetfulness, do I know the ruling and resume? If I become ill or travel, do I turn to reliable knowledge? These questions do not measure mindfulness of Allah. They reveal specific areas to work on.

Fasting teaches that virtue lies in obeying the whole of the prescribed limit, rather than abstention alone: beginning at the proper time, breaking the fast at the proper time, guarding the tongue, taking a concession when its grounds are established, and returning correctly after forgetfulness.

Chapter Four: Remembrance, Qur'an Reading and Regular Devotions

It is easy to abandon a small, beneficial practice while waiting for an ideal time. It is also easy to turn a personal routine into an act of worship bound by restrictions that revelation did not impose. The guiding principle is to follow the prescribed number and time where the text specifies them, while keeping our personal plans adjustable.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ ذِكْرًا كَثِيرًا ۖ وَسَبِّحُوهُ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلًا۝

Allah Most High says, in meaning: ‘You who believe, remember Allah abundantly, and glorify Him morning and evening’ [al-Ahzab 33:41–42]. The verse gives a broad instruction, while the Sunnah specifies a number or occasion for certain forms of remembrance. There is no contradiction between that breadth and observing a specified limit.²⁵

²⁵ The Qur'an, al-Ahzab 33:41–42: the command to remember Allah abundantly and glorify Him morning and evening.

When the number comes from the text

Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him, reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

«مَنْ سَبَّحَ اللَّهَ فِي دُبُرِ كُلِّ صَلَاةٍ ثَلَاثًا وَثَلَاثِينَ، وَحَمِدَ اللَّهَ ثَلَاثًا وَثَلَاثِينَ، وَكَبَّرَ اللَّهَ ثَلَاثًا وَثَلَاثِينَ، فَتِلْكَ تِسْعَةٌ وَتِسْعُونَ، وَقَالَ تَمَامَ الْمِائَةِ: لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ، لَهُ الْمُلْكُ وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ؛ غُفِرَتْ خَطَايَاهُ وَإِنْ كَانَتْ مِثْلَ زَبَدِ الْبَحْرِ»

Meaning in English: ‘Whoever, after every prayer, glorifies Allah thirty-three times, praises Allah thirty-three times, and declares Allah's greatness thirty-three times—making ninety-nine—and completes the hundred by saying, “There is no god worthy of worship except Allah alone, with no partner. His is the dominion and His is the praise, and He has power over all things,” will have his sins forgiven, even if they are like the foam of the sea.’²⁶

Here the number comes from the narration, rather than a tracking tool the reader has devised. If you practise this remembrance, preserve its stated form. Saying ‘I will read two

26 Narrated by Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him. Muslim, Sahih, Book of Mosques and Places of Prayer, chapter on the recommendation and form of remembrance after prayer, hadith 597a.

pages after the dawn prayer because that suits my day' is, in principle, a permissible personal arrangement. It does not give those two pages or that time a special religious merit without evidence.

Nor does a number alone reveal the true quality of a deed. You can know whether you have completed the prescribed count, but a counter does not measure sincerity or your standing before Allah.

The Qur'an is an ongoing relationship

Abu Umamah, may Allah be pleased with him, said that he heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say:

«اقْرَءُوا الْقُرْآنَ فَإِنَّهُ يَأْتِي يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ شَفِيعًا لِأَصْحَابِهِ، اقْرَءُوا الزَّهْرَ الْوَيْنِ: الْبَقْرَةَ وَسُورَةَ آلِ عِمْرَانَ، فَإِنَّهُمَا تَأْتِيَانِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ كَأَنَّهُمَا غَمَامَتَانِ، أَوْ كَأَنَّهُمَا غَيَايَتَانِ، أَوْ كَأَنَّهُمَا فِرْقَانِ مِنْ طَيْرٍ صَوَافٍ، تُحَاجَّانِ عَنْ أَصْحَابِهِمَا. اقْرَءُوا سُورَةَ الْبَقْرَةِ، فَإِنَّ أَخْذَهَا بَرَكَةٌ وَتَرْكُهَا حَسْرَةٌ وَلَا تَسْتَطِيعُهَا الْبَطَلَةُ»

Meaning in English: 'Read the Qur'an, for on the Day of Resurrection it will come as an intercessor for its companions. Read the two radiant ones, al-Baqarah and Surat Al 'Imran, for on the Day of Resurrection they will come like two clouds, or two canopies of shade, or two flocks of birds with outspread wings, pleading for their companions. Read Surat al-Baqarah:

taking it up brings blessing, abandoning it brings regret, and sorcerers cannot withstand it.²⁷

The text encourages reading and gives these two surahs the particular merits stated in it. This need not turn achievement into quantity alone. The Qur'an is read, learned, reflected upon and acted upon. Someone who reads less with understanding is not competing with someone who reads more; combining abundant reading with understanding is a blessing. The problem begins when the page count becomes the sole definition of a person's relationship with the Qur'an.

Being able to do more does not require endless increases

‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Amr, may Allah be pleased with them both, related:

«قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: اقْرَأِ الْقُرْآنَ فِي شَهْرٍ قُلْتُ: إِنِّي أَجِدُ قُوَّةً، حَتَّى قَالَ: فَأَقْرَأْهُ فِي سَبْعٍ وَلَا تَزِدْ عَلَى ذَلِكَ»

Meaning in English: ‘The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Read the Qur'an in a month.” I said, “I have the strength for more,”

27 Narrated by Abu Umamah al-Bahili, may Allah be pleased with him. Muslim, Sahih, Book of Travellers' Prayer and Its Shortening, chapter on the merit of reading the Qur'an and Surat al-Baqarah, hadith 804a.

until he said, “Then read it in seven days, and do not complete it in less than that.”²⁸

Saying ‘I can do more’ does not always make an increase wiser. Choose an amount that leaves room for understanding, obligations, sleep and family rights, rather than a plan that burns brightly for a few days and then goes out.

A regular portion and a plan for returning

A wurd is a portion a person chooses in order to return regularly to Qur'an reading or remembrance. It is useful when it is clear, realistic and does not displace an obligation, and when the person recognises it as a personal arrangement rather than a rule of religion imposed on others.

Among the texts that teach us to return after missing a practice are these words of the Prophet ﷺ:

«مَنْ نَامَ عَنْ حِزْبِهِ أَوْ عَنْ شَيْءٍ مِنْهُ فَقَرَأَهُ فِيمَا بَيْنَ صَلَاةِ الْفَجْرِ وَصَلَاةِ الظُّهْرِ كُتِبَ لَهُ كَأَنَّمَا قَرَأَهُ مِنَ اللَّيْلِ»

Meaning in English: ‘Whoever sleeps through his regular portion, or part of it, then reads it between the dawn and noon

28 Narrated by ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘As, may Allah be pleased with them both. Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Book of the Merits of the Qur'an, chapter on the time taken to read the Qur'an, hadith 5054.

prayers, will have it recorded as though he had read it during the night.’²⁹

This text concerns the portion of recitation in the circumstances described. We do not automatically extend it to making up every act of worship. It does, however, overturn the idea that missing a time means losing the whole deed. An obligatory act has its own ruling. A personal portion can be moved or reduced when the day changes.

A plan that survives a busy day

Consider this hypothetical situation. An employee with two children chooses to read four pages after the dawn prayer and maintain the prescribed remembrances after prayer. Then his working hours change and a child becomes ill.

First, he distinguishes the two practices. For remembrances with specified limits, he learns the wording, occasion and number from the text. The four pages, however, are his own choice. On a crowded day, he can read one page to preserve the connection and read more on a less crowded day. If he misses his reading time, he moves it to a suitable time. If it conflicts with a child's urgent need that no one else can meet, he fulfils that responsibility and then returns.

29 Narrated by ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him. Muslim, Sahih, Book of Travellers' Prayer and Its Shortening, chapter collecting reports about night prayer and someone who misses it through sleep or illness, hadith 747.

Success does not mean never missing a day. It means knowing the difference between a prescribed Sunnah practice and your own plan, and not allowing a brief lapse to become a prolonged absence.

When should you adjust your regular portion?

If the amount repeatedly causes you to neglect an obligation, rush so quickly that you understand nothing, or lose hope for a week because you missed one night, review the plan. If it shrinks whenever your mood grows heavy until it disappears, establish a smaller amount that can be maintained on ordinary days.

This does not mean that every difficulty is a mistake; worship requires striving. The point is to distinguish the ordinary effort a person can bear from a badly designed plan that keeps producing the same failure. ‘A’ishah, may Allah be pleased with her, reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

«سَدِّدُوا وَقَارِبُوا، وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ لَنْ يُدْخَلَ أَحَدَكُمْ عَمَلُهُ الْجَنَّةَ، وَأَنَّ أَحَبَّ الْأَعْمَالِ أَذْوَمُهَا إِلَى اللَّهِ، وَإِنْ قَلَّ»

Meaning in English: ‘Aim for what is right and come as close as you can. Know that none of you will enter Paradise by his

deeds, and that the deeds most beloved to Allah are those maintained most consistently, even if they are few.’³⁰

The aim is sound work that lasts, rather than a large quantity that prevents its doer from returning.

In the twelve-week programme, a tracking number describes the behaviour the participant has chosen. It is neither a measure of mindfulness of Allah nor a new source of religious merit. The whole programme is a suggested educational approach, not a validated instrument, and remains adjustable according to capacity and responsibilities.

Remembrance and reading do not require an ideal day. We preserve what the text specifies as it is given, choose a helpful amount where the scope is broad, know how to return after missing it, and keep a personal portion from displacing an obligatory right. Numbers can then serve worship without taking the place of its meaning.

30 Narrated by ‘A’ishah, Mother of the Believers, may Allah be pleased with her. Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Book of Softening the Heart, chapter on moderation and consistency in deeds, hadith 6464.

Chapter Five: Night Prayer, Gentleness and Consistency

The night offers a space unlike the day. Voices fade, many activities cease, and we find it easier to hear what is passing through our hearts. Night prayer is therefore among the noblest voluntary acts of worship, and the Qur'an describes the worship of those who do good during the night. Yet this practice also reveals a subtle aspect of the discipline explored in this series. Discipline does not mean resisting sleep at any cost. It means learning to bring together effort and sound understanding, love of worship and actual capacity, consistency and the body's rights.

We may imagine that the strongest form of worship must be the longest and hardest. After praying for an hour, we want to make it two. Sleeping through a night feels like defeat. Seeing someone else stand for longer makes us measure ourselves against them. Prophetic guidance, however, does not build night prayer on this simple equation. It includes long, attentive prayer and it includes sleep. It forbids praying when overcome by drowsiness, provides for returning to a practice missed for a valid reason, and directs the person who wishes to stand all night to pray and also sleep.

This fuller picture matters. Gentleness is not the opposite of striving; it can be one of the conditions that allow striving to continue.

The night is for worship, not for displaying endurance

يَا أَيُّهَا الْمُزَّمِّلُ ﴿١﴾ قُمْ اللَّيْلَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿٢﴾ نِصْفَهُ أَوْ انْقُصْ مِنْهُ قَلِيلًا ﴿٣﴾ أَوْ زِدْ عَلَيْهِ وَرَتِّلِ الْقُرْآنَ تَرْتِيلًا ﴿٤﴾

Surah al-Muzzammil begins with a momentous address.

Translation of the meaning: ‘O you who are wrapped in garments, stand in prayer through the night, except a little: half of it, or a little less, or a little more; and recite the Qur’an with measured recitation.’ At its close, Allah says:³¹

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَعْلَمُ أَنَّكَ تَقُومُ أَدْنَىٰ مِنْ ثُلُثِي اللَّيْلِ وَنِصْفَهُ وَثُلُثَهُ وَطَائِفَةٌ مِّنَ الَّذِينَ مَعَكَ ۚ وَاللَّهُ يُقَدِّرُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ ۚ عَلِمَ أَن لَّنْ نَّحْصُوهُ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ ۖ فَافْرَءُوا مَا تَيَسَّرَ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ ۚ عَلِمَ أَن سَيَكُونُ مِنْكُم مَّرْضَىٰ ۖ وَآخَرُونَ يَضْرِبُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ يَبْتَغُونَ مِن فَضْلِ اللَّهِ ۖ وَآخَرُونَ يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۖ فَافْرَءُوا مَا تَيَسَّرَ مِنْهُ ۚ وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَقْرِضُوا اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا ۚ وَمَا تُقَدِّمُوا لِأَنفُسِكُمْ مِن خَيْرٍ تَجِدُوهُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ هُوَ خَيْرًا وَأَعْظَمَ أَجْرًا ۚ وَاسْتَغْفِرُوا اللَّهَ ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٥﴾

Translation of the meaning: ‘Your Lord knows that you stand in prayer for nearly two-thirds of the night, or half of it, or a third of it, as do a group of those with you. Allah determines the

31 Qur’an, al-Muzzammil 73:1–4: the command to pray at night and recite the Qur’an with measured recitation.

night and the day. He knows that you will not be able to keep full account of it, so He has turned to you in mercy. Recite, then, what is easy for you of the Qur'an. He knows that some of you will be ill, others travelling through the land seeking Allah's bounty, and others fighting in Allah's cause. So recite what is easy of it, establish prayer, give zakat, and lend Allah a good loan. Whatever good you send ahead for yourselves, you will find it with Allah, better and greater in reward. Seek Allah's forgiveness. Allah is indeed All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.' (Al-Muzzammil 73:20.)³²

The surah brings together meanings that everyone on this path needs: responsibility and striving at the beginning; knowledge of human capacity, illness and travel, with provision for ease, at the end. Mercy is not an afterthought in worship, and hardship is not sought for its own sake.

﴿وَالَّذِينَ يَبِيتُونَ لِرَبِّهِمْ سُجَّدًا وَقِيَامًا﴾.

In Surah al-Furqan, night prayer appears among the qualities of the servants of the Most Merciful. Translation of the meaning: 'And those who spend the night before their Lord, prostrating and standing.' The verse does not give every Muslim the same schedule of units or hours. It describes devotion during the night. We should not turn that Qur'anic description into a contest of numbers, as though less sleep necessarily meant

32 Qur'an, al-Muzzammil 73:20: the concession, illness, travel and reciting what is manageable.

greater devotion, or a longer prayer necessarily meant better discipline. Such comparisons add something the text does not say.³³

Night prayer is worship offered to Allah. Discipline serves that worship: it helps us prepare, go to sleep at a suitable time, wake, begin, continue and return after missing it. It does not turn prayer into a test of physical performance.

When guidance tells us to sleep

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said:

«إِذَا نَعَسَ أَحَدُكُمْ وَهُوَ يُصَلِّي فَلْيَرْقُدْ حَتَّى يَذْهَبَ عَنْهُ النَّوْمُ، فَإِنْ أَحَدُكُمْ إِذَا صَلَّى وَهُوَ نَاعِسٌ لَا يَذَرِي لَعَلَّهُ يَسْتَغْفِرُ فَيَسِبُّ نَفْسَهُ»

Translation: ‘If one of you becomes drowsy while praying, let him sleep until the sleepiness has left him. For when one of you prays while drowsy, he does not know: perhaps he intends to seek forgiveness but instead curses himself.’³⁴

This teaching corrects a common misunderstanding of striving. Striving does not always mean saying no to the body.

33 Qur’an, al-Furqan 25:64: spending the night before their Lord in prostration and standing.

34 ‘A’ishah; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Ablution, chapter on sleep and drowsiness, no. 212.

Sometimes obedience means recognising that awareness has weakened and that continuing the outward form of an act no longer fulfils its purpose as it should.

There is a considerable difference between reluctance we can overcome and drowsiness that overpowers awareness. In the first case, we may need to get out of bed, perform ablution and begin. In the second, there is an explicit instruction to sleep until we know what we are saying. We should neither treat every desire for sleep as an excuse to abandon night prayer nor call every resistance to sleep virtuous, regardless of its effect on awareness and the body.

Learning to distinguish these conditions is part of mature discipline. A beginner may see only two possibilities: being harsh with oneself or giving up. Someone who is learning asks more useful questions. What is my condition now? Is this ordinary reluctance that needs a beginning, or exhaustion that makes the prayer itself confused? Has this kept happening because my plan for the night was unrealistic from the outset?

The rope the Prophet would not leave in the mosque

Anas ibn Malik, may Allah be pleased with him, reported:

«دَخَلَ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ فَإِذَا حَبْلٌ مَمْدُودٌ بَيْنَ السَّارِيَتَيْنِ فَقَالَ: مَا هَذَا الْحَبْلُ. قَالُوا: هَذَا حَبْلٌ لِرَيْتَبٍ فَإِذَا فَتَرْتُ تَعَلَّقْتُ. فَقَالَ: النَّبِيُّ ﷺ لَا، حُلُوهُ، لِيُصَلَ أَحَدُكُمْ نَشَاطَهُ، فَإِذَا فَتَرَ فَلْيَقْعُدْ»

Translation: ‘The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, entered and found a rope stretched between two pillars. He asked, “What is this rope?” They said, “It is a rope for Zaynab; when she grows tired, she holds on to it.” The Prophet said, “No. Untie it. Let each of you pray while feeling energetic; when he grows tired, let him sit down.”’³⁵

This incident speaks directly to our subject. Zaynab had not placed the rope there for amusement, but to continue worshipping when her body weakened. Even so, the means was not approved. Not everything that helps us ‘finish the plan’ is praiseworthy. The means we adopt can itself reveal that we have taken on more than it is wise to carry.

Modern achievement culture might praise such a scene as commitment at any cost. Prophetic teaching asks about the cost itself. Does continuing a voluntary act now require a device that prevents the body from responding to fatigue? Has the desire to do good become a struggle against a natural limit that deserves consideration?

This does not mean that any tiredness requires us to stop. Prayer involves standing and effort, and people differ in capacity. The hadith does, however, place a limit on a dangerous idea: do not make continuing a voluntary act depend on forcing the body into a condition it cannot bear.

35 Anas ibn Malik; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Night Prayer, chapter on disapproved severity in worship, no. 1150.

The most devoted worship does not eliminate sleep

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said to ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Amr, may Allah be pleased with them both:

«أَحَبُّ الصَّلَاةِ إِلَى اللَّهِ صَلَاةُ دَاوُدَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ وَأَحَبُّ الصِّيَامِ إِلَى اللَّهِ صِيَامُ دَاوُدَ، وَكَانَ يَنَامُ نِصْفَ اللَّيْلِ وَيَقُومُ ثُلُثَهُ وَيَنَامُ سُدُسَهُ، وَيَصُومُ يَوْمًا وَيُفْطِرُ يَوْمًا»

Translation: ‘The prayer most beloved to Allah is the prayer of Dawud, peace be upon him, and the fasting most beloved to Allah is the fasting of Dawud. He used to sleep for half the night, stand in prayer for a third of it, and sleep for a sixth of it. He would fast one day and not fast the next.’³⁶

Notice that sleep is not simply an empty interval between acts of worship. It is an explicit part of the pattern described. He would pray and then return to sleep. This prevents us from assuming that the best night prayer must consume the entire night.

We do not derive from this hadith an arithmetic timetable that every Muslim must follow. It describes Dawud’s prayer in its context, while people’s circumstances differ. We can, however, draw out a lasting principle: excellence in worship does not

36 ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘As; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Night Prayer, chapter on sleeping towards dawn, no. 1131.

require the removal of rest. Dividing the night may accord more closely with guidance than an impulsive effort that consumes the night and damages the following day.

This matters for anyone whose work, studies, children, driving or other responsibilities require alertness. A voluntary act must not be organised in a way that causes an obligation, a right or safety to be neglected. The aim is not to use worldly affairs as a pretext for abandoning night prayer, but to make prayer part of a life that can continue.

Pray and sleep: guiding enthusiasm before it becomes a burden

‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Amr, may Allah be pleased with them both, said:

«قَالَ: لِي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ يَا عَبْدَ اللَّهِ أَلَمْ أُخْبِرْ أَنَّكَ تَصُومُ النَّهَارَ وَتَقُومُ اللَّيْلَ. فَقُلْتُ: بَلَى يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ. قَالَ: فَلَا تَفْعَلْ، صُمْ وَأَفِطِرْ، وَقُمْ وَنَمْ، فَإِنَّ لَجَسَدِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا، وَإِنَّ لِعَيْنِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا، وَإِنَّ لِرِزْقِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا، وَإِنَّ لِحَسْبِكَ أَنْ تَصُومَ كُلَّ شَهْرٍ ثَلَاثَةَ أَيَّامٍ، فَإِنَّ لَكَ بِكُلِّ حَسَنَةٍ عَشْرَ أَمْثَالِهَا، فَإِنَّ ذَلِكَ صِيَامُ الدَّهْرِ كُلِّهِ. فَشَدَدْتُ، فَشَدَدَ عَلَيَّ، قُلْتُ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، إِنِّي أَجِدُ قُوَّةً. قَالَ: فَصُمْ صِيَامَ نَبِيِّ اللَّهِ دَاوُدَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ وَلَا تَزِدْ عَلَيْهِ. قُلْتُ: وَمَا كَانَ صِيَامُ نَبِيِّ اللَّهِ دَاوُدَ

عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ قَالَ: نِصْفَ الدَّهْرِ فَكَانَ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ يَقُولُ بَعْدَ مَا كَبِرَ
يَا لَيْتَنِي قَبِلْتُ رُحْصَةَ النَّبِيِّ ﷺ

Translation: ‘The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said to me, “O ‘Abd Allah, have I not been told that you fast during the day and stand in prayer at night?” I said, “Yes, Messenger of Allah.” He said, “Do not do that. Fast and also refrain from fasting; stand in prayer and also sleep. Your body has a right over you, your eyes have a right over you, your wife has a right over you, and your guests have a right over you. It is enough for you to fast three days each month. For every good deed you receive ten like it, so that is like fasting all the time.” But I insisted on a more demanding course, and it was made more demanding for me. I said, “Messenger of Allah, I find that I have strength.” He said, “Then fast as Allah’s Prophet Dawud, peace be upon him, fasted, and do not do more than that.” I asked, “How did Allah’s Prophet Dawud, peace be upon him, fast?” He said, “Half the time.”” Later, when he had grown old, ‘Abd Allah would say, ‘If only I had accepted the concession of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.’³⁷

This hadith is foundational to balanced discipline. The problem was not love of worship. It was the design of a life in which one voluntary practice could take over at the expense of other rights.

37 ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘As; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Fasting, chapter on the body’s rights during fasting, no. 1975.

The message is not to stop striving, but to strive in a way that preserves what Allah has obliged us to protect.

Today, someone may manage long night prayers for a night or two, then arrive at work unable to concentrate, become quick-tempered with family, fail to perform Fajr on time, or drive while dangerously drowsy. A voluntary act does not justify neglecting a duty. Our own safety and the safety of those around us are rights to be protected.

The opposite mistake is to use the body's rights as a pretext for postponing every effort. The body has a right, but it is not the only consideration. Perhaps what prevents night prayer is simply choosing to stay up late on a phone. Gentleness then means addressing the cause, preparing for sleep and choosing a manageable amount, rather than yielding to every inclination.

An amount that can last

Abu Salamah ibn 'Abd al-Rahman reported:

«أَنَّهُ سَأَلَ عَائِشَةَ كَيْفَ كَانَتْ صَلَاةُ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ فِي رَمَضَانَ قَالَتْ: مَا كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ يَزِيدُ فِي رَمَضَانَ وَلَا فِي غَيْرِهِ عَلَى إِحْدَى عَشْرَةِ رَكْعَةٍ يُصَلِّي أَرْبَعًا فَلَا تَسْأَلُ عَنْ حُسْنِهِنَّ وَطَوْلِهِنَّ ثُمَّ يُصَلِّي أَرْبَعًا فَلَا تَسْأَلُ عَنْ حُسْنِهِنَّ وَطَوْلِهِنَّ ثُمَّ يُصَلِّي ثَلَاثًا فَقَالَتْ: عَائِشَةُ فَقُلْتُ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَتَنَامُ قَبْلَ أَنْ تُوتِرَ فَقَالَ: يَا عَائِشَةُ إِنَّ عَيْنَيَّ تَنَامَانِ وَلَا يَنَامُ قَلْبِي»

Translation: ‘He asked ‘A’ishah what the prayer of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was like in Ramadan. She said, “The Messenger of Allah never prayed more than eleven units in Ramadan or at other times. He would pray four: do not ask how beautiful and long they were. Then he would pray four: do not ask how beautiful and long they were. Then he would pray three.” ‘A’ishah said, “I asked, ‘Messenger of Allah, do you sleep before praying with?’ He replied, ‘O ‘A’ishah, my eyes sleep, but my heart does not sleep.’”³⁸

This was a practice repeated with excellence, and ‘A’ishah recalled its beauty and length. A beginner needs to care for the quality of what is being offered, so that a desire to increase the amount does not displace attentiveness of heart and understanding of what is recited.

‘A’ishah, may Allah be pleased with her, also reported:

«قَالَتْ: قَالَ: رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ أَحَبُّ الْأَعْمَالِ إِلَى اللَّهِ تَعَالَى
أَدْوَمُهَا وَإِنْ قَلَّ. قَالَ: وَكَأَنْتِ عَائِشَةُ إِذَا عَمِلْتَ الْعَمَلَ لَزِمْتَهُ»

Translation: ‘She said: The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, “The deeds most beloved to Allah Most High are those done most consistently, even if

38 ‘A’ishah; Sahih Muslim, Book of Travellers’ Prayer and Its Shortening, chapter on night prayer and the Prophet’s number of units, no. 738a.

they are few.” And when ‘A’ishah undertook a practice, she would keep to it.’³⁹

Anyone wishing to begin should choose what they can maintain, then increase it as their capacity grows.

The starting point might be two units of prayer at a time when a person can reliably wake. More may be added once sleep is settled and the effect on the day is understood. This is a suggestion for organising a practice, not a religious specification of an ideal number for everyone. Rulings concerning witr, night prayer and their forms should be learned from their evidence and qualified scholars. The practical design of a waking routine depends on individual circumstances.

This helps explain why a modest, sincere plan may be more beneficial educationally than an ambitious one that lasts only three days. Smallness is not an end in itself. Consistency gives us time to learn to wake, begin and return, instead of learning another cycle of enthusiasm followed by abandonment.

39 ‘A’ishah; Sahih Muslim, Book of Travellers’ Prayer and Its Shortening, chapter on the virtue of consistent night prayer and other acts, no. 783b.

A missed night does not define you

‘A’ishah, may Allah be pleased with her, reported:

«أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ كَانَ إِذَا فَاتَتْهُ الصَّلَاةُ مِنَ اللَّيْلِ مِنْ وَجَعٍ أَوْ غَيْرِهِ صَلَّى مِنَ النَّهَارِ ثِنْتَيْ عَشْرَةَ رَكْعَةً»

Translation: ‘When the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, missed his night prayer because of illness or another reason, he would pray twelve units during the day.’⁴⁰

Missing the practice did not bring it to an end. An interruption could have a valid excuse, and there was a way to return.

Many people stop not because they cannot begin, but because they do not know what to do after the first interruption.

Someone makes a night-prayer plan, then falls ill, travels, or stays awake caring for a sick child and misses two days. Feeling that the sequence has been broken, they abandon the whole week.

Prophetic guidance teaches a different way of thinking: there may be a valid excuse, a missed practice, an opportunity to make it up, and a return. A missed night need not become a verdict on character: ‘I cannot be consistent.’ What happened was a particular event, not a definition of the person.

40 ‘A’ishah; Sahih Muslim, Book of Travellers’ Prayer and Its Shortening, chapter on night prayer and missing it through sleep or illness, no. 746e.

At the same time, making up missed practice should not become an accumulating personal backlog that suffocates us. Where making something up has a religious ruling, learn that ruling in its proper context. An additional personal target does not have to be doubled as a punishment for every missed occasion.

Night prayer does not compensate for a disordered day

We may love the idea of night prayer while leaving the reasons we cannot manage it untouched. We stay up consuming content we do not need, delay sleep, set three alarms, and then resent ourselves for not waking. Here the problem may have less to do with weak willpower than with how the day is arranged.

If night prayer is a real intention, some of its effort begins before nightfall: closing what is unnecessary, arranging sleep, finishing essential tasks on time, and avoiding an evening so full of optional commitments that Fajr is left to bear the cost.

This does not mean that everyone who misses night prayer is poorly organised. Illness, caring for children, night work, sleep disorders, travel and many other circumstances affect capacity. We must not reduce these conditions to moral blame. Yet when an obstacle is within our control, sincerity includes working on it rather than repeatedly complaining about it.

Gentleness does not mean waiting for the perfect mood

This chapter could be misunderstood in the other direction: if guidance takes sleep and fatigue into account, perhaps we should pray only when we feel entirely energetic. That is not what is meant.

Worship itself requires effort. The bed is warm, the night is still, and the self may prefer comfort. If we wait for every trace of inner resistance to disappear, we may never begin. Proper gentleness does not remove the unwelcome moment of getting up. It prevents striving from turning into harm, excess or neglect of rights.

For self-understanding, rather than as legal rulings, we can distinguish three approximate conditions:

Reluctance: you are capable, but you do not want to act. Here you may need to get up before entering a long negotiation with yourself.

Manageable tiredness: you can pray with awareness, although you are not at your most energetic. You may shorten the amount or choose a more suitable time.

Overpowering drowsiness and impaired awareness: here the texts direct us to sleep until the drowsiness passes.⁴¹

41 ‘A’ishah; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Ablution, chapter on sleep and drowsiness, no. 212.

These distinctions are neither a diagnostic tool nor an individual religious ruling. They help prevent us from putting every condition into a single category called laziness.

A practical example: replacing an hour every night with a sustainable routine

The following is a hypothetical example for illustration.

A young man who works in the morning reads about the virtues of night prayer and decides to pray for a full hour every night. During the first week he does so four times. But he already stays up until midnight, so he now gets very little sleep. In the second week he begins arriving late for work; in the third he abandons night prayer altogether.

If he reads this experience only as a test of willpower, he may decide that he needs a louder alarm and a harsher penalty. Through the lens of this chapter, he would ask different questions.

First, where is the actual problem? Not in the virtue of night prayer, but in adding an hour to the night without removing anything from his previous late-night routine.

Second, what can he begin with? He chooses an earlier bedtime and starts with a short prayer that preserves awareness and humility, leaving room to increase it later. This is a personal organisational choice, not a new Sunnah.

Third, what should he do if drowsiness overcomes him? He should not turn prayer into a struggle to remain conscious, but

follow the Sunnah's direction to sleep until the drowsiness passes.⁴²

Fourth, what if he misses a night for a valid reason? He need not declare the whole undertaking a failure. He can learn the rulings on making up missed worship and learn from the Prophet's example of returning after a missed practice.⁴³

Fifth, how can he tell whether the plan is suitable? He does not measure faith by counting nights. He looks at observable conduct: is sleep becoming more regular? Can he pray at night without neglecting Fajr or work? Does he return after missing it? Are his family's rights still protected?

After several weeks he may increase his prayer, remain with a modest amount, or pass through illness or caring responsibilities that reduce his capacity. The plan succeeds not by making him a copy of someone else, but by helping him build sincere worship that can endure within the bounds of religious guidance, capacity and rights.

42 'A'ishah; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Ablution, chapter on sleep and drowsiness, no. 212.

43 'A'ishah; Sahih Muslim, Book of Travellers' Prayer and Its Shortening, chapter on night prayer and missing it through sleep or illness, no. 746e.

What can we measure, and what can we not measure?

Night prayer can invite numerical measurement: units, nights, minutes and pages recited. Such figures may help us follow a personal practice. On their own, however, they do not measure humility, sincerity or acceptance by Allah.

In the practical volume, we can ask: on how many nights did you carry out the plan you chose? How often did you return after missing it? What obstacle keeps recurring? Has the plan affected a binding right? These questions concern implementation. A table cannot settle the question of how much God-consciousness you have attained.

Measurement should serve learning, not self-punishment. If the record shows that most missed nights follow voluntary late nights, it has identified something the person can change. If the reason is night shifts outside their control, the plan needs adjusting, rather than their willpower being condemned. If lengthy prayer repeatedly leads to overpowering drowsiness, the texts themselves give reason to reconsider the amount.⁴⁴

44 ‘A’ishah; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Ablution, no. 212; Anas ibn Malik; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Night Prayer, chapter on disapproved severity in worship, no. 1150.

Consistency need not look the same at every stage of life

Someone may maintain long night prayers during one stage of life, then have a child, become ill, start shift work or grow older. If consistency means preserving one unchanging pattern, every change will look like a loss. If it means maintaining devotion to Allah within one's capacity and obligations, the pattern can change without the practice itself being abandoned.

Not every reduction is therefore praiseworthy. A change may arise from carelessness that needs resisting. We need honesty with ourselves: have I reduced the amount because my capacity has genuinely changed, or because comfort has expanded until it has swallowed the practice? One number cannot always answer that question; the cause and context need examination.

Night prayer is an excellent setting for learning this honesty. Ordinarily, other people do not see you, and you have nothing to prove to them. You can choose a suitable amount, increase it when your capacity grows, reduce it for a recognised excuse, and return after a missed night. Throughout, the purpose remains worshipping Allah, rather than constructing an image of yourself as a disciplined person.

Beginning tonight may be easier than you imagine: close what delays your sleep, prepare for a prayer you can offer with awareness, and preserve the rights of Fajr, family and work. If you miss a night, return. The purpose is to sustain your devotion

to Allah and let worship grow within a life in which rights are fulfilled.

Chapter Six: Zakat and Faithful Fulfilment

There is a difference between having wealth in our hands and believing that everything we hold belongs to us alone, with no rights attached. Zakat teaches Muslims this distinction repeatedly. We earn, save, trade and plan; then a duty falls due that is not left to a passing mood or momentary generosity. It has conditions, amounts, eligible recipients and a time.

Zakat is therefore one of the clearest acts of worship through which to understand financial discipline in Islam. It is not an optional donation made when we feel generous, a psychological payment to relieve guilt, or a competition to give conspicuously. It is worship and a defined obligation. Discipline begins with something that sounds simple but reveals much: knowing what wealth we actually hold, knowing what is due on it, and giving what is due where it belongs, without deliberate delay, evasion or choosing goods we would not accept for ourselves.

﴿خُذْ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً تُطَهِّرُهُمْ وَتُزَكِّيهِمْ بِهَا وَصَلِّ عَلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ صَلَاتَكَ سَكَنٌ لَهُمْ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ﴾

Allah says, in translation of the meaning: ‘Take charity from their wealth to cleanse them and purify them thereby, and pray for them. Your prayer is a source of reassurance for them. Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.’ Zakat is not a calculation detached from purification of the self. Yet its spiritual meaning

does not remove the need to calculate; it works through that calculation. To fulfil the duty, we need to know the threshold, the kind of wealth, the relevant period where one applies, the amount and the eligible recipient. Here the heart meets orderly practice: worship does not become meaningless numbers, and spiritual meaning does not remain a claim unsupported by action.⁴⁵

A defined right rather than seasonal generosity

﴿إِنَّمَا الصَّدَقَاتُ لِلْفُقَرَاءِ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَالْعَامِلِينَ عَلَيْهَا وَالْمُؤَلَّفَةِ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَالْغَارِمِينَ وَفِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ ۖ فَرِيضَةً مِّنَ اللَّهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ﴾.

The Qur'an specifies the recipients of zakat. Translation of the meaning: 'Zakat is only for the poor, the needy, those employed to administer it, those whose hearts are to be reconciled, for freeing those in bondage, for those in debt, in Allah's cause, and for the stranded traveller: an obligation from Allah. Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.'⁴⁶

This verse rules out the idea that an owner may distribute zakat however they wish simply because their intention is good. There are recognised categories and detailed rulings governing their application. Some contemporary cases require advice from qualified scholars and trusted bodies. The basic principle

45 Qur'an, al-Tawbah 9:103.

46 Qur'an, al-Tawbah 9:60.

remains clear: wealth on which zakat is due is not entirely at the owner's discretion.

Ibn 'Abbas, may Allah be pleased with them both, reported:

«أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ لَمَّا بَعَثَ مُعَاذًا رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ عَلَى الْيَمَنِ قَالَ: إِنَّكَ تَقْدُمُ عَلَى قَوْمٍ أَهْلِ كِتَابٍ، فَلْيَكُنْ أَوَّلَ مَا تَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَيْهِ عِبَادَةُ اللَّهِ، فَإِذَا عَرَفُوا اللَّهَ فَأَخْبِرْهُمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ فَرَضَ عَلَيْهِمْ خَمْسَ صَلَوَاتٍ فِي يَوْمِهِمْ وَلَيْلَتِهِمْ، فَإِذَا فَعَلُوا، فَأَخْبِرْهُمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ فَرَضَ عَلَيْهِمْ زَكَاةً تُؤْخَذُ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ وَتُرَدُّ عَلَى فُقَرَائِهِمْ، فَإِذَا أَطَاعُوا بِهَا فَخُذْ مِنْهُمْ، وَتَوَقَّ كَرَائِمَ أَمْوَالِ النَّاسِ»

Translation: ‘When the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, sent Mu‘adh, may Allah be pleased with him, to Yemen, he said, “You are going to a people of the Scripture. Let the first thing to which you invite them be the worship of Allah. When they acknowledge Allah, tell them that Allah has made five prayers obligatory upon them in each day and night. When they do that, tell them that Allah has made zakat obligatory upon them, to be taken from their wealth and returned to their poor. When they comply, take it from them, but avoid taking people’s most prized possessions.”’⁴⁷

47 ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Abbas; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Zakat, chapter on not taking people’s most prized possessions as zakat, no. 1458.

Zakat is worship and a right connecting those with means to those entitled to receive it. It is to be fulfilled properly, without injustice to either giver or recipient.

This reveals an important aspect of becoming disciplined: some rights do not wait for us to feel their importance. At the end of the year we may be busy, attached to our money, conscious of many approaching expenses, or tempted to wait until circumstances improve. But when a duty is defined by religious guidance, our feelings do not redefine it.

Someone who fulfils commitments only when comfortable remains dependent on their mood. Learning to distinguish what is discretionary from what must be paid takes us into a deeper kind of discipline.

Knowing what you hold is part of the trust

We cannot properly fulfil a financial duty without knowing its basis. Financial disorder can therefore become more than an administrative weakness: it can obstruct obligatory worship.

Someone who does not know how much they own, which debts owed to them are expected to be recovered, what liabilities they have, or when money came into their possession may reach the zakat due date searching through old messages and scattered accounts, then resort to guessing.

This does not mean that Islamic law requires a particular app or spreadsheet. The organising tool is not itself an act of worship. A paper record, a file, a program or an accountant may serve the

purpose. What matters is enough order to establish the facts on which a ruling will depend.

Two stages should therefore be kept distinct:

First, gather the facts. What assets exist? When did you acquire them? What kind are they? What debts are involved? What is held for trade? What changed during the year?

Second, establish the religious ruling. Which assets are subject to zakat? How is the threshold calculated? How are debts treated? When does the relevant year begin in this particular case? What are the rulings for newly acquired wealth, shares, funds, stock or saved salary?

The owner can work carefully on the first stage. Depending on the complexity of the case, the second may require a qualified jurist or trusted zakat body. Discipline here means preparing the facts and asking the right question, rather than rushing to issue a ruling for oneself.

The threshold keeps obligation independent of mood

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said:

«لَيْسَ فِيْمَا دُونَ خَمْسٍ دَوْدٍ صَدَقَّةٌ مِنَ الْإِبِلِ، وَلَيْسَ فِيْمَا دُونَ خَمْسٍ أَوَاقٍ صَدَقَّةٌ، وَلَيْسَ فِيْمَا دُونَ خَمْسَةِ أُوسُقٍ صَدَقَّةٌ»

Translation: ‘No zakat is due on fewer than five camels; no zakat is due on less than five uqiyyahs; and no zakat is due on less than five wasqs.’⁴⁸

This chapter does not attempt to turn these historical measures into a contemporary calculator. Weights, values and the application of thresholds to modern currencies require detailed legal treatment. The existence of a threshold itself, however, teaches an important lesson: an obligation has a boundary that feelings do not create.

A wealthy person may say, ‘My money does not seem like much to me.’ Someone else may say, ‘I am willing to give even when nothing is due.’ The second has the opportunity of voluntary charity. The first cannot make a personal impression

48 Abu Sa‘id al-Khudri; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Zakat, chapter on zakat on silver, no. 1447. Uqiyyah and wasq are the historical measures retained in the report; this passage does not provide modern conversions.

the measure of obligation. The threshold moves the question beyond subjective feeling into a defined ruling.

Anas, may Allah be pleased with him, reported:

«أَنَّ أَبَا بَكْرٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ كَتَبَ لَهُ هَذَا الْكِتَابَ لَمَّا وَجَّهَهُ إِلَى الْبَحْرَيْنِ: بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ. هَذِهِ فَرِيضَةُ الصَّدَقَةِ الَّتِي فَرَضَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ عَلَى الْمُسْلِمِينَ، وَالَّتِي أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهَا رَسُولُهُ، فَمَنْ سَأَلَهَا مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ عَلَى وَجْهِهَا فَلْيُعْطَهَا، وَمَنْ سَأَلَ فَوْقَهَا فَلَا يُعْطِ. فِي أَرْبَعٍ وَعِشْرِينَ مِنَ الْإِبِلِ فَمَا دُونَهَا مِنَ الْغَنَمِ مِنْ كُلِّ خَمْسٍ شَاةٌ، إِذَا بَلَغَتْ خَمْسًا وَعِشْرِينَ إِلَى خَمْسٍ وَثَلَاثِينَ فَفِيهَا بِنْتُ مَخَاضٍ أَنْثَى، فَإِذَا بَلَغَتْ سِتًّا وَثَلَاثِينَ إِلَى خَمْسٍ وَأَرْبَعِينَ فَفِيهَا بِنْتُ لَبُونٍ أَنْثَى، فَإِذَا بَلَغَتْ سِتًّا وَأَرْبَعِينَ إِلَى سِتِّينَ فَفِيهَا حِقَّةٌ طَرُوقَةٌ الْجَمَلِ، فَإِذَا بَلَغَتْ وَاحِدَةً وَسِتِّينَ إِلَى خَمْسٍ وَسَبْعِينَ فَفِيهَا جَذَعَةٌ، فَإِذَا بَلَغَتْ يَعْغِي سِتًّا وَسَبْعِينَ إِلَى تِسْعِينَ فَفِيهَا بِنْتُ لَبُونٍ، فَإِذَا بَلَغَتْ إِحْدَى وَتِسْعِينَ إِلَى عِشْرِينَ وَمِائَةٍ فَفِيهَا حِقَّتَانِ طَرُوقَتَا الْجَمَلِ، فَإِذَا زَادَتْ عَلَى عِشْرِينَ وَمِائَةٍ فَفِي كُلِّ أَرْبَعِينَ بِنْتُ لَبُونٍ، وَفِي كُلِّ خَمْسِينَ حِقَّةٌ، وَمَنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ مَعَهُ إِلَّا أَرْبَعٌ مِنَ الْإِبِلِ فَلَيْسَ فِيهَا صَدَقَةٌ، إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ رَبُّهَا، فَإِذَا بَلَغَتْ خَمْسًا مِنَ الْإِبِلِ فَفِيهَا شَاةٌ، وَفِي صَدَقَةِ الْغَنَمِ فِي سَائِمَتِهَا إِذَا كَانَتْ أَرْبَعِينَ إِلَى عِشْرِينَ وَمِائَةٍ شَاةٌ، فَإِذَا زَادَتْ عَلَى عِشْرِينَ وَمِائَةٍ إِلَى مِائَتَيْنِ شَاتَانِ،

فَإِذَا زَادَتْ عَلَى مَائَتَيْنِ إِلَى ثَلَاثِمِائَةٍ فَفِيهَا ثَلَاثٌ، فَإِذَا زَادَتْ
 عَلَى ثَلَاثِمِائَةٍ فَفِي كُلِّ مِائَةٍ شَاةٌ، فَإِذَا كَانَتْ سَائِمَةُ الرَّجُلِ
 نَاقِصَةً مِنْ أَرْبَعِينَ شَاةً وَاحِدَةً فَلَيْسَ فِيهَا صَدَقَةٌ، إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ
 رَبُّهَا، وَفِي الرِّقَّةِ رُبْعُ الْعُشْرِ، فَإِنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ إِلَّا تِسْعِينَ وَمِائَةً
 فَلَيْسَ فِيهَا شَيْءٌ، إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ رَبُّهَا»

Translation: ‘Abu Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, wrote this document for him when sending him to Bahrain: “In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Especially Merciful. This is the obligation of zakat that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, prescribed for the Muslims, and which Allah commanded His Messenger. Any Muslim asked to pay it in its proper form should give it; anyone asked for more should not give the excess. For twenty-four camels or fewer, the payment is from sheep: one sheep for every five camels. When the number reaches twenty-five through thirty-five, a female bint makhad is due. When it reaches thirty-six through forty-five, a female bint labun is due. When it reaches forty-six through sixty, a hiqqah fit for mating is due. When it reaches sixty-one through seventy-five, a jadha‘ah is due. When it reaches” — meaning seventy-six — “through ninety, two bint labun camels are due. When it reaches ninety-one through one hundred and twenty, two hiqqah camels fit for mating are due. Above one hundred and twenty, a bint labun is due for every forty, and a hiqqah for every fifty. A person with only four camels owes no zakat on them, unless their owner

wishes to give. When they reach five camels, one sheep is due. For zakat on grazing sheep, one sheep is due when there are forty through one hundred and twenty. Above one hundred and twenty through two hundred, two sheep are due. Above two hundred through three hundred, three are due. Above three hundred, one sheep is due for every hundred. If a person's grazing flock is one sheep short of forty, no zakat is due unless its owner wishes to give. On silver, one quarter of one tenth is due. If it amounts to only one hundred and ninety, nothing is due unless its owner wishes to give.”⁴⁹

The document gives amounts that vary with the type and number of assets; the owner does not set them according to preference. When wealth takes several forms, its facts must be gathered and the ruling for each category understood before payment.

This distinction matters because discipline does not mean false simplicity. Not everything can be settled by one rule. An organised person first classifies the wealth and learns the ruling for each kind, rather than looking for a single sentence to apply to every asset.

49 Anas ibn Malik; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Zakat, chapter on zakat on sheep, no. 1454. The camel classifications *bint makhad*, *bint labun*, *hiqqah* and *jadha‘ah* are retained as technical terms from the report.

Timing is part of the duty

Allah says:

﴿وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنشَأَ جَنَّاتٍ مَّعْرُوشَاتٍ وَغَيْرَ مَعْرُوشَاتٍ وَالنَّخْلَ
وَالزَّرْعَ مُخْتَلِفًا أَكُلُهُ وَالزَّيْتُونَ وَالرَّمَانَ مُمْتَشَابِهًا وَغَيْرَ مُتَشَابِهٍ
كُلُوا مِنْ ثَمَرِهِ إِذَا أَثْمَرَ وَآتُوا حَقَّهُ يَوْمَ حَصَادِهِ وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا إِنَّهُ
لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ﴾

Translation of the meaning: ‘He is the One who brings forth gardens, trellised and untrellised, date palms and crops of different produce, olives and pomegranates, similar and dissimilar. Eat of their fruit when they bear fruit, and give its due on the day of harvest. Do not be wasteful; He does not love those who waste.’ (Al-An‘am 6:141).⁵⁰

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said:

«فِيمَا سَقَتِ السَّمَاءُ وَالْعُيُونُ أَوْ كَانَ عَثَرِيًّا الْعُشْرُ، وَمَا سَقِيَ
بِالنَّضْحِ نِصْفُ الْعُشْرِ»

Translation: ‘On what is watered by rain or springs, or draws water naturally through its roots, one tenth is due; on what is irrigated by drawing water, half of one tenth is due.’⁵¹

The detailed rulings cannot all be covered here, but the lesson is clear: some financial obligations are connected to a particular

50 Qur’an, al-An‘am 6:141.

event. Not every kind of wealth waits for the end of a year in the same way.

‘Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, is reported in Abu Dawud’s narration as follows:

«فَإِذَا كَانَتْ لَكَ مِائَتَا دِرْهَمٍ وَحَالَ عَلَيْهَا الْحَوْلُ فَفِيهَا خُمْسُهُ دَرَاهِمَ وَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكَ شَيْءٌ - يَعْنِي فِي الذَّهَبِ - حَتَّى يَكُونَ لَكَ عِشْرُونَ دِينَارًا فَإِذَا كَانَ لَكَ عِشْرُونَ دِينَارًا وَحَالَ عَلَيْهَا الْحَوْلُ فَفِيهَا نِصْفُ دِينَارٍ فَمَا زَادَ فَبِحِسَابِ ذَلِكَ. قَالَ: فَلَا أَدْرِي أَعَلَيْي يَقُولُ فَبِحِسَابِ ذَلِكَ. أَوْ رَفَعَهُ إِلَى النَّبِيِّ ﷺ وَلَيْسَ فِي مَالٍ زَكَاةٌ حَتَّى يَحُولَ عَلَيْهِ الْحَوْلُ. إِلَّا أَنَّ جَرِيرًا قَالَ: ابْنُ وَهْبٍ يَزِيدُ فِي الْحَدِيثِ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ ﷺ لَيْسَ فِي مَالٍ زَكَاةٌ حَتَّى يَحُولَ عَلَيْهِ الْحَوْلُ»

Translation: ‘When you have two hundred dirhams and a year has passed over them, five dirhams are due. Nothing is due from you — meaning on gold — until you have twenty dinars. When you have twenty dinars and a year has passed over them, half a dinar is due; any excess is assessed proportionately.’ The narrator said, ‘I do not know whether ‘Ali himself said “assessed proportionately” or attributed it to the Prophet, may

51 ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Umar; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Zakat, chapter on the tenth due on crops watered by rain or running water, no. 1483.

Allah bless him and grant him peace.’ ‘No zakat is due on wealth until a year has passed over it.’ Jarir, however, said that Ibn Wahb adds to the report from the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace: ‘No zakat is due on wealth until a year has passed over it.’⁵²

Time matters for assets on which the passage of a year is a condition. An owner should not choose an administrative date and force every category into the same rule.

A common contemporary difficulty is choosing a day in Ramadan because it is easy to remember, then treating everything one owns as though it had the same ruling. A fixed date may help with organisation in some cases, but an organising device does not change religious rulings. Some assets are subject to the passage of a year; some have a duty at harvest; others require distinctions related to how they were acquired and what they are. The tool must serve the ruling, rather than reshape it.

52 ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib; Sunan Abi Dawud, Book of Zakat, chapter on grazing livestock, no. 1573; graded sahih by al-Albani. The narrator’s qualification about attribution is preserved in the text.

Do not choose inferior goods to fulfil another's right

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْفِقُوا مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ مَا كَسَبْتُمْ وَمِمَّا أَخْرَجْنَا لَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ ۖ وَلَا تَيَمَّمُوا الْخَبِيثَ مِنْهُ تُنْفِقُونَ وَلَسْتُمْ بِآخِذِيهِ إِلَّا أَنْ تُغْمِضُوا فِيهِ ۚ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ حَمِيدٌ۝

Allah says, in translation of the meaning: ‘O you who believe, give from the good things you have earned and from what We have brought forth for you from the earth. Do not deliberately choose the inferior part to give, when you would not accept it yourselves except by overlooking its defects. Know that Allah is Self-Sufficient, Praiseworthy.’⁵³

This verse is broader than any single detail of zakat law. It establishes an ethical measure we should not lose sight of: do not use what you would dislike for yourself as a way of discharging other people's rights.

The earlier instruction to Mu‘adh also protects the owner. The owner must not evade the duty by offering poor-quality goods, while the collector must not exceed the duty by unjustly taking the best possessions.

This balance is essential to Islamic discipline. Financial discipline cannot be strict with one party and careless with another. The right is defined on both sides: the person liable

⁵³ Qur'an, al-Baqarah 2:267.

must not give less than is due, and the collector must not act unjustly.

The principle extends into everyday life. Much moral disorder begins when we view rights only from our own position. When others owe us money, we demand precision and punctuality; when we owe them, we ask for indulgence and delay. Zakat trains us to acknowledge a right that does not arise from our own preference, and to fulfil it even though we could physically keep the money.

Zakat does not make all money available for charity

Moved by the virtue of giving, a person may donate large sums and then be unable to meet obligatory maintenance. Someone may pay zakat from funds they have no authority to use, confuse company money with personal money, or take partners' entitlements to give charity on everyone's behalf. A good destination does not by itself make such conduct commendable.

Paying zakat requires respect for ownership and rights. Just as miserliness does not justify withholding a duty, enthusiasm does not justify disposing of someone else's property. Shared assets, company interests and the rights of creditors or partners make careful accounting and qualified religious advice more necessary, not less.

Here the distinction between voluntary charity and zakat becomes clear. Voluntary giving is broadly open in principle,

while zakat has conditions, recipients and prescribed amounts. ‘I give charity all year, so I do not need to calculate zakat’ is a mistake. Voluntary gifts do not automatically discharge the obligation because their total is large. Nor does paying a large sum necessarily suffice without the proper intention and applicable rulings. Questions of intention, advance payment and what can count towards zakat belong to its jurisprudence.

The lesson for self-discipline is straightforward: do not replace an obligation with an activity you prefer. We may enjoy supporting a visible project while resisting the calculation of what is actually due. We may wish to choose a particular beneficiary when the ruling requires a recognised category. Discipline puts the obligation first, then leaves room for additional voluntary giving.

A practical example: a shopkeeper unsure which assets to assess

This is a hypothetical illustration, not a religious ruling.

A man owns a small shop. He has savings in a personal account, goods in the shop, money owed by customers and payments due to suppliers. He sometimes buys gold for his wife and holds a small investment in a financial fund. Each Ramadan, he checks his bank balance, pays 2.5 per cent of it, and assumes that he has fulfilled his zakat obligation.

He may have dealt correctly with some assets and incorrectly with others. The first difficulty is not his intention but his

incomplete picture of the wealth. He does not know what belongs in the calculation, how debts, stock, investments or gold are treated, or how different acquisition dates affect the ruling.

What should he do before seeking a religious answer?

He should list assets by kind, record their values or quantities at the relevant date, distinguish personal property from what belongs to the business or partners, identify debts owed to him and by him, and establish acquisition dates wherever time affects the ruling. He can then present the facts to a trusted body for an assessment.

This step does not resolve the jurisprudence, but it prevents a vague question such as, ‘I have a lot of money; how much should I give?’ More accurate facts allow a more accurate application of the ruling.

If some earlier payments turn out to have been voluntary charity rather than zakat, this does not mean the money was wasted. There may be reward for it, Allah willing, according to intention and acceptance, while the obligation still needs proper fulfilment. If he has paid more than was due in one category, that should not become a reason to neglect another before learning its ruling.

What financial organisation can and cannot measure

The final practical volume may contain tools that help with paying zakat. They should track visible administrative conduct,

rather than inward religious devotion. We can record whether the asset list is complete, the due date established, complicated questions put to a qualified adviser, payment made on time and evidence of payment retained where needed.

These are indicators of carrying out a task. They do not tell us how much the heart has been purified, how sincere the intention is, or whether the worship has been accepted.

Even accuracy should not turn into obsessive financial checking. The aim is reasonable care that establishes the wealth and the duty, not recalculating dozens of times out of groundless fear. When circumstances are complex, consulting an accountant, zakat adviser or scholar can itself express discipline: it recognises the limits of our knowledge.

Making a date into a useful habit

Organisation can serve worship when it remains subordinate to it. For example, an annual review may help with assets for which that is appropriate, together with an earlier reminder to gather information and a file recording changes during the year. These arrangements do not become a religious Sunnah or bind other people.

The work can be divided into stages: gather information, review the rulings, calculate, choose trusted channels reaching eligible recipients, then pay and document. That way, the due date does not arrive while we are still starting from nothing.

Consistency does not mean paying the same amount each year, since wealth changes. Nor does it mean repeating exactly the same process as life changes. It means preserving faithful review and payment: expanding the system as business grows, seeking informed help as investments diversify, and asking again when regulatory rules or circumstances change.

From worship through wealth to training the self

Zakat touches a particularly sensitive part of the self: ownership. We work hard to acquire money, plan what to do with it, and feel greater security as it grows. Worship then teaches us that part of our relationship with wealth is governed by a command higher than our preferences.

This does not condemn wealth or make financial success suspect. Possessing enough to reach the threshold can be a considerable blessing. Yet the ethical responsibility attached to that blessing includes more than knowing how to earn. We must also know the rights connected to what we have earned.

Here zakat connects with the whole series. Discipline includes more than managing time, rising early or completing a personal plan. Those practices may be useful, but the deeper test is what we do when inclination conflicts with an established right. Do we redefine the right to fit our comfort, or rearrange our comfort to fulfil it?

In prayer we examined time; in fasting, beginning and ending; in remembrance, the distinction between prescribed and

unrestricted forms; and in night prayer, consistency joined to gentleness. Zakat reveals another dimension: discipline that moves beyond the self into other people's rights.

The money we love becomes a means of worship. Accounting that seems dry becomes a way to fulfil a right. A date we might postpone becomes a trust. An eligible recipient we may not personally know enters the circle of our responsibility. We learn that uprightness is more than a general feeling: it is the repeated fulfilment of what is due, when it is due, in the amount and place prescribed.

Chapter Seven: Hajj, Time, Place and Community

Hajj is not an act of worship we can reshape to suit our convenience. It has times, places, movements, rites, restrictions and actions performed among great numbers travelling towards the same destinations. For the formation of the self, it offers a particularly clear lesson in discipline: intention is tied to a time, a place and a manner of acting, while character is tested in a crowd.

Reducing Hajj to that lesson would nevertheless be a mistake. Above all, Hajj is worship of Allah and a rite of the religion, not a course in time management or group logistics. This chapter considers some lessons in personal formation that the worship reveals, while keeping devotion as the primary purpose.⁵⁴

Allah says:

﴿وَأَتِمُّوا الْحَجَّ وَالْعُمْرَةَ لِلَّهِ فَإِنْ أُحْصِرْتُمْ فَمَا اسْتَيْسَرَ مِنَ الْهَدْيِ وَلَا تَحْلِقُوا رُءُوسَكُمْ حَتَّى يَبْلُغَ الْهَدْيُ مَحَلَّهُ فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ مَرِيضًا أَوْ بِهِ أَذًى مِنْ رَأْسِهِ فَفِدْيَةٌ مِنْ صِيَامٍ أَوْ صَدَقَةٍ أَوْ نُسْكِ فَإِذَا أَمِنْتُمْ فَمَنْ تَمَتَّعَ بِالْعُمْرَةِ إِلَى الْحَجِّ فَمَا اسْتَيْسَرَ مِنَ الْهَدْيِ فَمَنْ لَمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ ثَلَاثَةِ أَيَّامٍ فِي الْحَجِّ وَسَبْعَةٍ إِذَا رَجَعْتُمْ

54 Qur'an, al-Hajj 22:27–32, especially verses 27 and 32.

تِلْكَ عَشْرَةٌ كَامِلَةٌ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ أَهْلُهُ حَاضِرِي الْمَسْجِدِ
الْحَرَامِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ.

Translation of the meaning: ‘Complete Hajj and ‘umrah for Allah. If you are prevented, then offer whatever sacrificial animal is readily available. Do not shave your heads until the offering reaches its place of sacrifice. Whoever among you is ill or has an ailment of the scalp must offer compensation by fasting, charity or sacrifice. When you are secure, whoever enjoys the release after ‘umrah before Hajj must offer whatever sacrificial animal is readily available. Whoever cannot find one must fast three days during Hajj and seven when you return: ten in all. This is for those whose families do not live near the Sacred Mosque. Be mindful of Allah, and know that Allah is severe in punishment.’⁵⁵

The words ‘for Allah’ keep organisation from becoming the ultimate aim. A pilgrim may manage the group arrangements, appointments and journeys successfully, yet grasp only the outer form if they forget that they came to worship. Another may move slowly because of age, illness or circumstances, while worshipping more sincerely than someone who moves quickly but harms or quarrels with others.

The lesson is deeper than simply being organised because Hajj is organised. We learn to direct our movements according to the

55 Qur’an, al-Baqarah 2:196.

requirements of worship and preserve good character when space is tight, people are numerous and wishes conflict.

A sacred rite, not merely a travel itinerary

Allah says:

﴿الْحَجُّ أَشْهُرٌ مَّعْلُومَاتٌ فَمَنْ فَرَضَ فِيهِنَّ الْحَجَّ فَلَا رَفَثَ وَلَا فُسُوقَ وَلَا جِدَالَ فِي الْحَجِّ وَمَا تَفَعَّلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ يَعْلَمُهُ اللَّهُ وَتَزَوَّدُوا فَإِنَّ خَيْرَ الزَّادِ التَّقْوَى وَاتَّقُونِ يَا أُولِيَ الْأَلْبَابِ﴾

Translation of the meaning: ‘Hajj takes place in known months. Whoever undertakes Hajj in them must abstain from sexual relations, disobedience and quarrelling during Hajj. Whatever good you do, Allah knows it. Take provisions, but the best provision is God-consciousness. Be mindful of Me, people of understanding.’⁵⁶

The verse brings time and conduct together. The question is not simply knowing when actions begin, but how we behave within this time of worship. We may arrive punctually while spoiling the experience for others through quarrelling; keep the group’s timetable while failing to guard our tongue; follow transport instructions while pushing someone vulnerable or crowding into a place we do not need.

Hajj trains us in something more than punctuality alone. Timing becomes part of a wider obedience. Time is not merely a box on

⁵⁶ Qur’an, al-Baqarah 2:197.

a calendar, but a boundary of worship. Place is not merely a point on a map, but the setting of a rite. The people around us are not a crowd obstructing our personal plan: they are servants of Allah with rights like our own.

This view prevents two opposite mistakes: dismissing details because ‘only the heart matters’, and treating details as procedures detached from the heart. The Qur’an joins known rites and reverence for them with God-consciousness that outward measures alone cannot assess.⁵⁷

When place becomes part of the obligation

One distinctive feature of Hajj is that many actions belong to specific places. The pilgrim moves from one location to another, stands where standing is prescribed, and spends the night, casts pebbles or circumambulates according to the chosen form of pilgrimage and its rulings. Jabir, may Allah be pleased with him, reported that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said:

«نَحَرْتُ هَا هُنَا، وَمِنِّي كُلُّهَا مَنَحَرٍّ، فَأَنْحَرُوا فِي رِحَالِكُمْ، وَوَقَفْتُ هَا هُنَا، وَعَرَفْتُ كُلُّهَا مَوْقِفٌ، وَوَقَفْتُ هَا هُنَا، وَجَمَعْتُ كُلُّهَا مَوْقِفٌ»

Translation: ‘I have sacrificed here, but all of Mina is a place of sacrifice, so sacrifice where you are staying. I have stood here,

57 Qur’an, al-Hajj 22:27–32, especially verses 27 and 32; 22:36–37.

but all of ‘Arafah is a place of standing. I have stood here, but all of Jam‘ is a place of standing.’⁵⁸

This teaches that observing the prescribed place does not mean attaching ourselves to one narrow spot without evidence. We might think discipline requires pushing through to the precise location where the Prophet stood, when the Sunnah itself removes that restriction in parts of the pilgrimage.

We learn something useful beyond Hajj: precision is not severity. Precision means knowing and observing what religious guidance has specified, while recognising the scope it allows and not narrowing it for ourselves or others. Without that distinction, concern for the form of worship can become a pretext for harming Allah’s servants.

This chapter is not a detailed manual of pilgrimage rites. Questions about boundaries, times, concessions, routes and current organisational instructions should be taken to qualified scholars and reliable official authorities. They may involve a precise religious ruling or arrangements that change with the year, crowd conditions and safety needs. Our purpose here is to see how respecting place can teach us to observe a boundary without inventing another one.

58 Jabir ibn ‘Abd Allah; Sahih Muslim, Book of Hajj, chapter explaining that all of ‘Arafah is a place of standing, no. 1218c. Jam‘ is another name for Muzdalifah.

Travel between rites is not an empty interval

Allah says:

﴿لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَبْتَغُوا فَضْلًا مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَإِذَا أَقْضَيْتُمْ مِنْ عَرَفَاتٍ فَأَذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ عِنْدَ الْمَشْعَرِ الْحَرَامِ وَاذْكُرُوهُ كَمَا هَدَاكُمْ وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ لَمَنِ الضَّالِّينَ ۝ ثُمَّ أَفِيضُوا مِنْ حَيْثُ أَفَاضَ النَّاسُ وَاسْتَغْفِرُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ﴾

Translation of the meaning: ‘There is no blame on you for seeking bounty from your Lord. When you depart from ‘Arafat, remember Allah at the Sacred Monument, and remember Him as He has guided you, though before that you were among those astray. Then depart from where the people depart, and seek Allah’s forgiveness. Allah is indeed All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.’⁵⁹

He also says:

﴿وَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ فِي أَيَّامٍ مَعْدُودَاتٍ فَمَنْ تَعَجَّلَ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ وَمَنْ تَأَخَّرَ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ لِمَنِ اتَّقَىٰ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ﴾

Translation of the meaning: ‘Remember Allah during the numbered days. Whoever hastens to leave after two days incurs no sin, and whoever stays longer incurs no sin, for whoever is

59 Qur’an, al-Baqarah 2:198–199 and 203.

mindful of Allah. Be mindful of Allah, and know that you will be gathered to Him.’⁶⁰

Movement itself appears in the text: people depart, travel and remember Allah. Worship is not confined to a still moment followed by a return to ordinary time between two locations. The journey belongs within the setting of worship.

In everyday life, we often treat intervals as time of no value: the journey to work, a wait before an appointment, the transition between tasks or the minutes before a meeting. We may fill them with tension, distraction or argument. Hajj offers another picture: orderly movement can itself belong within a larger purpose.

We should not turn this into an artificial programme demanding that every minute be productive. A traveller may need sleep and silence; a pilgrim may be exhausted or ill. The lesson is not to eliminate unoccupied time, but to stop treating intervals as outside our responsibility. Conduct on the bus, patience during disruption and the way we wait our turn all belong to our life of worship. They are not margins beyond the reach of conscience.

Community tests a discipline that solitude cannot reveal

It is relatively easy to appear disciplined in a tidy room, at a time we chose, with our tools around us and no one competing for space. Hajj places us in different circumstances: people of

60 Qur'an, al-Baqarah 2:198–199 and 203.

many countries, languages, ages and temperaments; crowded roads, waiting, possible delays, fatigue, heat and distance; and sometimes differing understandings, judgements or group arrangements.

Here a form of discipline appears that apps cannot measure: can we preserve good character when things do not go our way?

The verse prohibiting sexual misconduct, disobedience and quarrelling during Hajj does not describe an environment free of reasons for disagreement. The prohibition concerns a great communal act of worship in which many provocations can arise. The value lies not in finding nothing irritating, but in refusing to hand control of ourselves to every irritation.⁶¹

Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him, said that he heard the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, say:

«مَنْ حَجَّ لِلَّهِ فَلَمْ يَرْفُثْ وَلَمْ يَفْسُقْ، رَجَعَ كَيَوْمٍ وَلَدَتْهُ أُمُّهُ»

Translation: ‘Whoever performs Hajj for Allah and neither engages in sexual misconduct nor commits disobedience returns as on the day his mother gave birth to him.’⁶²

The hadith explicitly links the virtue of Hajj with guarding conduct. Concern for the rite cannot justify bad character within

61 Qur’an, al-Baqarah 2:197.

62 Abu Hurayrah; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Hajj, chapter on the virtue of an accepted Hajj, no. 1521.

it. This is not the place to detail the meaning and conditions of forgiveness.

Someone may step ahead without noticing you, the bus may break down, food may arrive late, or a companion may pack carelessly. Not every such event is a religious issue requiring argument. Many are small tests of the self: will our private comfort become a standard placed above the group's rights?

Collective order does not erase the individual

Group discipline can be mistaken for blind obedience to every human arrangement. That is not the point. Pilgrims follow religious rulings, observe legitimate safety and organisational requirements, and consider their group, while remaining responsible for their worship, rights and actual capacity.

An ill or elderly pilgrim is not being disciplined by hiding their condition until they collapse to avoid delaying the group. If a vulnerable person becomes lost, timetable efficiency does not take priority over helping them. If someone is asked to do what appears to conflict with a recognised ruling they know, organisation does not require silence instead of a question.

Mature learning distinguishes cooperation from the abandonment of personal responsibility. We cooperate because working together reduces hardship, protects safety and prevents disorder; we do not make the group the source of what is lawful and unlawful. We ask courteously when needed and avoid turning every difference into a battle.

This also matters greatly for institutions, a subject considered later. A good system does not produce people without conscience. It helps everyone understand their role, their limits and when an error needs to be referred to someone with responsibility.

Learn your rites before improvising

Jabir, may Allah be pleased with him, reported:

«رَأَيْتُ النَّبِيَّ ﷺ يَرْمِي عَلَى رَاحِلَتِهِ يَوْمَ النَّحْرِ، وَيَقُولُ: لَتَأْخُذُوا مَنَاسِكَكُمْ، فَإِنِّي لَا أَدْرِي لَعَلِّي لَا أَحُجُّ بَعْدَ حَجَّتِي هَذِهِ»

Translation: ‘I saw the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, casting pebbles from his mount on the Day of Sacrifice and saying, “Learn your rites from me, for I do not know: perhaps I shall not perform Hajj after this Hajj of mine.”’⁶³

This brings us back to a foundation of every complex act of worship: learn before improvising. Hajj is not a setting in which to arrive unprepared and decide at each stage what seems sensible. Some actions cannot be understood through preference alone, and good intentions alone do not repair every mistake.

63 Jabir ibn ‘Abd Allah; Sahih Muslim, Book of Hajj, chapter on casting pebbles at Jamrat al-‘Aqabah while mounted on the Day of Sacrifice and the instruction to learn the rites, no. 1297.

Preparation also reduces the burden of deciding under pressure. A pilgrim who knows the fundamentals of their pilgrimage, the order of the days, what requires a question and which concessions may apply enters with greater calm. Someone who leaves everything to the moment may spend energy on questions that could have been learned before travelling.

Learning itself needs direction. Dozens of conflicting short clips may leave a pilgrim more confused. Memorising the details of one school or group may lead them to assume that it is the only valid approach to every issue. A reliable legal explanation suited to their circumstances, awareness of recognised differences and a trusted source for difficult questions offer a better foundation.

Every pilgrim need not become a legal researcher. The aim is to be a responsible worshipper who knows what they must know and where to ask about what they do not.

Order matters, but it is not absolute in every detail

Discussion of timing and sequence might suggest that any action brought forward or delayed ruins the pilgrimage. The Prophet's Sunnah teaches a more precise understanding.

‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Amr, may Allah be pleased with them both, reported:

«أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ وَقَفَ فِي حَجَّةِ الْوَدَاعِ، فَجَعَلُوا يَسْأَلُونَهُ، فَقَالَ رَجُلٌ: لَمْ أَشْعُرْ فَحَلَقْتُ قَبْلَ أَنْ أُذْبَحَ. قَالَ: اذْبَحْ وَلَا حَرَجَ. فَجَاءَ آخَرُ فَقَالَ: لَمْ أَشْعُرْ فَتَحَرْتُ قَبْلَ أَنْ أُرْمِيَ. قَالَ: ارمِ وَلَا حَرَجَ. فَمَا سُئِلَ يَوْمَئِذٍ عَنْ شَيْءٍ قُدِّمَ وَلَا أُخِّرَ إِلَّا قَالَ: افْعَلْ وَلَا حَرَجَ»

Translation: ‘The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, stood during the Farewell Pilgrimage while people asked him questions. One man said, “I did not realise, and I shaved before sacrificing.” He said, “Sacrifice; there is no harm.” Another came and said, “I did not realise, and I sacrificed before casting the pebbles.” He said, “Cast the pebbles; there is no harm.” That day, whenever he was asked about something done earlier or later, he said, “Do it; there is no harm.”’⁶⁴

We must not turn this into a general claim that the sequence of all Hajj actions is irrelevant, or use it to avoid learning. That would go beyond the text. It does show that the religious order is not a fragile mechanism in which every error in a subsidiary

64 ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘As; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Hajj, chapter on giving rulings from a mount at the jamrah, no. 1736.

sequence destroys the worship. There are rulings, concessions and particular cases for which allowance has been made.

This offers a valuable lesson: sound discipline allows correction. A system recognising only perfection or failure encourages despair or denial. A mature approach knows the proper course, then asks when an error occurs: what is its ruling, how can it be corrected, and is there an allowance? It then continues.

In Hajj, mistakes can arise from ignorance, forgetfulness or crowding. In ordinary life, they can arise from illness, circumstances or misjudgement. Discipline does not mean never making mistakes. It means neither treating one mistake as permission to abandon everything else nor inventing a correction without knowledge.

Reaching a place must not mean harming the people there

It is a painful contradiction when eagerness for a rite leads us to hurt someone performing the same rite. Wanting a closer position, quicker access, a better photograph or to remain beside our companions may lead us to push, shout, block a path or crowd someone vulnerable.

{ذَلِكَ وَمَنْ يُعَظِّمْ شَعَائِرَ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّهَا مِنْ تَقْوَى الْقُلُوبِ}

Allah says, in translation of the meaning: ‘That is so. Whoever honours the sacred rites of Allah, that is from the God-consciousness of hearts.’⁶⁵

Honouring the rites cannot be separated from God-consciousness. The means of showing reverence should not destroy a clear right belonging to other people.

Not all crowding during Hajj is aggression; some is unavoidable. Nor can everyone always find a spacious place or ideal time. The point is to examine the conduct within our control: are we pushing unnecessarily, cutting into a queue, raising our voice over a right we could request calmly, or failing to consider older people, children and the ill?

At a particular moment, the greater effort may be to give up a desirable position to prevent harm, rather than reach it at any cost. This is not a call to abandon the Sunnah or a rite. It is a call to perform what is prescribed within the prescribed boundaries of conduct and rights.

65 Qur’an, al-Hajj 22:27–32, especially verses 27 and 32.

Outward appearance cannot measure the whole act of worship

Concerning sacrificial animals, Allah says:

لَنْ يَنَالَ اللَّهَ لُحُومُهَا وَلَا دِمَاؤُهَا وَلَكِنْ يَنَالُهُ التَّقْوَىٰ مِنْكُمْ
كَذَلِكَ سَخَّرَهَا لَكُمْ لِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ مَا هَدَاكُمْ وَبَشِّرِ
الْمُحْسِنِينَ

Translation of the meaning: ‘Neither their flesh nor their blood reaches Allah; rather, your God-consciousness reaches Him. Thus He has subjected them to you so that you may proclaim Allah’s greatness for having guided you. Give glad tidings to those who do good.’⁶⁶

The verse guards against a common weakness in any attempt at discipline: making outward form the complete measure. Hajj has great visible forms — clothing, circumambulation, standing, travelling, sacrifice and casting pebbles. Yet no table can claim to measure the God-consciousness of a person’s Hajj from steps taken or punctuality.

We can track organisational matters. Did the pilgrim know the day’s plan, carry necessities without excess, reach the meeting point, follow safety instructions and keep needed medicines available? Such measures support performance. The heart, acceptance by Allah and God-consciousness cannot be reduced to a dashboard.

⁶⁶ Qur’an, al-Hajj 22:36–37.

Excessive recording may itself distract. A pilgrim who spends too long logging every movement or photographing every stage may shift from being present in worship to observing their own performance. Not every moment needs proof.

The discipline sought in this series does not turn life into a screen of data. It uses information when helpful, while knowing when to put the phone aside and worship Allah.

A practical example: the pilgrim with the perfect plan

This is a hypothetical illustration, not a ruling on pilgrimage rites.

A man reads widely before Hajj and prepares a detailed file: every departure time, preferred routes, places he wants to reach and the expected duration of each action. He arrives believing success means following the plan minute by minute.

On the first day, the bus is late. The next day, crowd management changes the entrance route. An elderly companion walks more slowly. Elsewhere, the crowd is particularly dense. He begins to resent every change, blame the organisers, hurry his companion and argue with staff. He feels that his Hajj is being spoiled because the plan is not working.

The problem is not planning, which was useful. It is making the tool the measure of the worship.

His plan could have had two levels. One would hold the fixed obligations, essential rites and boundaries that he does not

determine for himself. The other would remain flexible: practical departure times, routes, meeting places and time allowances. A change in the practical arrangements would then leave the essentials protected.

At each change, he could ask: does this affect a religious ruling I need to ask about, or is it an organisational adjustment I can accommodate? Is my companion's safety more important now than arriving early? Should a delay beyond my control cost me control of my tongue and composure?

Planning would then serve Hajj, instead of making the pilgrim serve a plan written before encountering the actual circumstances.

Managing energy is part of responsibility

Hajj involves bodily effort: walking, travelling, late nights or changed sleep and surroundings. Some approach it as a test of endurance, determined to perform every voluntary act, walk every distance and refuse every means of easing the effort. They see fatigue as proof that they are giving more.

This view needs correction. Hardship is not an aim in itself. Some hardship accompanies an action and calls for patience; additional hardship should not be manufactured to prove sincerity. The ill have rulings applicable to them, older people have needs, and those with limited strength have concessions and arrangements appropriate to their circumstances.

Discipline includes knowing one's medicines, water needs, sleep and walking capacity, and informing companions of a condition that may require help. Depriving people of water, food or sleep is not training in striving. Symptoms of illness or exhaustion are not simply weak willpower; they may signal a health need requiring rest or care.

This connects with the chapter on night prayer: voluntary worship or enthusiasm must not swallow the body's rights. During Hajj, the importance is heightened by crowds and long distances.

What can pilgrims carry home?

If the effect of Hajj ended on its final day, a great opportunity for learning would be lost. Yet returning pilgrims should not be expected to turn all of life into a copy of the Hajj programme. The useful question is: what did I learn about myself while bound by time, place and community?

Perhaps we discovered that delay provokes anger, too many small decisions exhaust us, preparation the night before brings relief, we postpone questions until problems worsen, or cooperation becomes easier when our role is clear. These observations about behaviour can remain useful after Hajj.

Three practical lessons can be carried into daily life without calling them religious rulings derived from Hajj:

First, make room for fixed duties before flexible choices. Just as Hajj has boundaries that preference cannot alter, life contains

rights and obligations that work or recreation should not consume.

Second, leave room for reality. A plan that cannot accommodate any delay, illness or another person's need is fragile, however demanding it appears.

Third, examine conduct when interacting with others, as well as efficiency when alone. We may be highly organised at a desk but lose discipline while waiting, disagreeing or moving through a crowd. Another stage of self-formation begins there.

These are suggested educational applications, not new rites or promises of proven psychological outcomes. They help the reader bring a lesson into observable behaviour.

From pilgrimage to dealings with others

The earlier chapters approached worship from several angles. Prayer taught time, preparation and performance; purification showed the boundary between completing an act and obsessive doubt; fasting joined abstention at its proper beginning and end with guarding the tongue; remembrance distinguished prescribed and unrestricted forms; night prayer joined striving to gentleness; and zakat brought discipline into a financial right involving others.

Hajj gathers many of these elements into one experience: time, place, body, wealth, community, movement, learning and conduct. It also opens a further question: does the effect of

worship remain when we leave the rite for the marketplace, home, workplace and road?

We may be disciplined during Hajj because the setting is exceptional, then return home to lateness, quarrelling, queue-jumping and neglected rights. This does not authorise us to declare that the Hajj was not accepted; that judgement is not ours. We can, however, ask about the continuation of its behavioural lessons: did we learn something that stayed with us?

That is the bridge to the next chapter. We study worship here to understand how it forms servants of Allah and how that formation can show itself in dealings with others. We do not use worship as a set of productivity tricks or claim to measure what is in the heart.

In this sense, Hajj is an intensive school. We turn to Allah in the company of people, not apart from them, seeking nearness to Him in a place full of their rights. We learn to be orderly servants, while also learning that the effects of order remain incomplete when mercy, justice and restraint of the tongue are absent.

Chapter Eight: Bringing the Effects of Worship into Our Dealings

Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him, reported:

«أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ مَرَّ عَلَى صُبْرَةٍ طَعَامٍ، فَأَدْخَلَ يَدَهُ فِيهَا،
فَنَالَتْ أَصَابِعُهُ بَلَلًا، فَقَالَ: مَا هَذَا يَا صَاحِبَ الطَّعَامِ؟ قَالَ:
أَصَابَتْهُ السَّمَاءُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ. قَالَ: أَفَلَا جَعَلْتَهُ فَوْقَ الطَّعَامِ كَيْ
يَرَاهُ النَّاسُ؟ مَنْ غَشَّ فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي»

Translation: ‘The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, passed a heap of food and put his hand into it. His fingers encountered moisture. He asked, “What is this, owner of the food?” The man replied, “Rain fell on it, Messenger of Allah.” He said, “Why did you not put it on top of the food so that people could see it? Whoever cheats is not of me.”’⁶⁷

Trustworthiness here did not remain a word admired by seller and buyer. It became an action people could see: disclosing what affected their understanding of the goods, instead of letting an attractive surface conceal what they needed to know. This instance of uprightness may seem small — a hand moving wet food to the top — yet it reveals the difference between admiring

67 Abu Hurayrah; Sahih Muslim, Book of Faith, chapter on the saying that one who cheats is not of us, no. 102.

honesty inwardly and honouring it when money may be at stake.

At the point where an action touches another person's right, the question that follows prayer, fasting, zakat and Hajj becomes clear. How do the meanings we love move from feeling into dealings? How does humility affect speech, reverence for Allah's command affect a promise, and fear of accountability affect money we could delay paying or a defect we could hide?

We are not looking for a worldly benefit to justify worship. We worship Allah because He is our Lord, and hope that worship will reform our hearts and actions. The question concerns a gap we recognise in ourselves: a heart may soften in one place while the tongue becomes harsh in another. We may prepare for prayer before its time, then promise someone an appointment without knowing how to keep it. This gap calls for neither despair nor excuses. It calls for honesty that identifies it and action that reconnects what has become separated.

One life, with worship and dealings held together

Allah says:

﴿اَتْلُ مَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَى
عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَصْنَعُونَ﴾.

Translation of the meaning: 'Recite what has been revealed to you of the Book and establish prayer. Prayer restrains indecency

and wrongdoing, and the remembrance of Allah is greater. Allah knows what you do.’⁶⁸

In his commentary, al-Sa‘di explains how establishing prayer with its conditions, pillars and humility is connected to increased faith, desire for good and restraint from evil. He also explains the great purpose of remembering Allah within it. Worship is not an isolated movement unrelated to the rest of the day.⁶⁹

In the verse concerning righteousness, Allah says:

لَيْسَ الْبِرُّ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ وَآتَى الْمَالَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَالسَّائِلِينَ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَالْمُوفُونَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا عَاهَدُوا وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي الْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَاءِ وَحِينَ الْبَأْسِ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ.

Translation of the meaning: ‘Righteousness is not that you turn your faces towards east or west. Rather, righteousness is in one who believes in Allah, the Last Day, the angels, the Book and the prophets; gives wealth, despite loving it, to relatives, orphans, the needy, the stranded traveller, those who ask and for

⁶⁸ Qur’an, al-‘Ankabut 29:45.

⁶⁹ ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Sa‘di, Taysir al-Karim al-Rahman fi Tafsir Kalam al-Mannan, commentary on al-‘Ankabut 29:45.

freeing those in bondage; establishes prayer and gives zakat; and in those who fulfil their covenant when they make it, and who are patient in poverty, hardship and battle. Those are the ones who are truthful, and those are the God-conscious.’⁷⁰

The verse brings together the foundations of faith, giving wealth, establishing prayer, paying zakat, keeping covenants and patience. It restores life to its common foundation: a Lord whose nearness we seek, commands we obey, and rights that do not become dispensable because their owners are outside the mosque.

Correction begins here. Trustworthiness at work is not merely an administrative matter, and a promise to family is not unrelated to the goodness we seek. This does not make every human arrangement an act of worship or every professional mistake a sin. It recognises that ordinary work contains rights and religious obligations, and that asking about them belongs within the pursuit of uprightness.

Visible effects do not authorise judgements about hearts

When someone behaves badly after worship, we need to challenge the wrongdoing without claiming to know the fate of their worship. When they do good, we may commend it without claiming to know the degree of their sincerity. The conduct

⁷⁰ Qur'an, al-Baqarah 2:177.

before us and judgement about their standing with Allah are different matters.

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said:

«أَتَدْرُونَ مَا الْمُفْلِسُ؟»

«إِنَّ الْمُفْلِسَ مِنْ أُمَّتِي يَأْتِي يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ بِصَلَاةٍ وَصِيَامٍ وَزَكَاةٍ، وَيَأْتِي قَدْ شَتَمَ هَذَا، وَقَذَفَ هَذَا، وَأَكَلَ مَالَ هَذَا، وَسَفَكَ دَمَ هَذَا، وَضَرَبَ هَذَا، فَيُعْطَى هَذَا مِنْ حَسَنَاتِهِ، وَهَذَا مِنْ حَسَنَاتِهِ، فَإِنْ فَنِيَتْ حَسَنَاتُهُ قَبْلَ أَنْ يُقْضَى مَا عَلَيْهِ، أُخِذَ مِنْ خَطَايَاهُمْ فَطُرِحَتْ عَلَيْهِ، ثُمَّ طُرِحَ فِي النَّارِ»

Translation: ‘Do you know who is bankrupt?’ They said, ‘Among us, the bankrupt person has neither money nor possessions.’ He said, ‘The bankrupt person of my community will come on the Day of Resurrection with prayer, fasting and zakat, but will come having insulted this person, slandered that person, consumed another’s wealth, shed another’s blood and struck another. This person will be given some of his good deeds, and that person some of his good deeds. If his good deeds run out before what he owes is settled, some of their sins will be taken and cast upon him, then he will be cast into the Fire.’⁷¹

71 Abu Hurayrah; Sahih Muslim, Book of Virtue, Family Ties and Manners, chapter prohibiting injustice, no. 2581.

The hadith gives a severe warning. Abundant worship cannot be used to silence someone who has been wronged or as assurance that their right has disappeared.

Nor does this lead to the opposite conclusion: abandoning worship until one has first improved one's character. Another failure should not be added to the existing one. The path is to preserve worship, repent of wrongdoing and put right what can be put right. A sincere wish to improve does not require defending everything we have done to protect a favourable self-image.

Ask a question about your action that you can answer. Did I conceal information? Did I delay a right I could have fulfilled? Did I hurt someone? Then address the answer. Turning every review into an exhausting inquiry about acceptance and the secrets of the heart can distract from a clear right we could fulfil now.

Why can we understand a value yet miss where it applies?

Sometimes the problem is not rejecting honesty, but failing to name our conduct as dishonest. We tell a colleague, 'I have finished the work', meaning that we intend to start soon. Or we let a customer infer a feature that does not exist, then reassure ourselves that we never said an explicitly false sentence. Repeating our love of honesty is not enough. We need to examine what our words led the other person to understand.

Learning research calls the use of something learned in a new setting the transfer of learning. The report *How People Learn* discusses the importance of understanding, varied examples and recognising situations in which knowledge applies. A learner may know a procedure in one context without using it in another. This is an educational account of learning, not an experiment establishing the effect of a particular act of worship on character.⁷²

The proposed application here is to learn to see the connection. Concealing moisture in food is a specific incident, but the question of disclosure reaches beyond food. What does the person with a right need to know so that appearances do not mislead them? It may concern a defective product, the limits of a service or a gap in your experience. Detailed rulings differ. You still need to learn what your own work requires you to disclose, rather than merely admire honesty in the seller's situation.

Familiar places have familiar habits

We may return from a season of worship with sincere resolve, then sit in the gathering where we habitually mock others and join in before noticing. We may enter the office, find the same

72 National Research Council, *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School*, expanded edition (2000), chapter 3, 'Learning and Transfer', pp. 51–78, especially pp. 62–63 and 77–78.

messages, demands and working patterns, and return to the hasty promises we meant to stop making. Describing the pattern does not remove responsibility; it helps locate what needs changing.

Wood, Tam and Witt studied exercise, newspaper-reading and television-viewing habits among students moving to a new university. The continuation of some habits was associated with continuity in aspects of the circumstances in which they occurred. The study was observational and used participants' reports; its authors acknowledged the need for experiments to strengthen causal conclusions. We therefore do not apply its findings directly to worship or make it the sole explanation for falling short.⁷³

It does prompt a useful practical question: what still cues the old action? Someone wishing to guard their tongue may need to change how they participate in a gathering where people are hurt, rather than only become more moved by reminders elsewhere. Someone wishing to make reliable promises may need to open the work calendar before agreeing, instead of agreeing quickly and then trying to fit the promise into an already full day.

73 Wendy Wood, Leona Tam and Melissa Guerrero Witt, 'Changing Circumstances, Disrupting Habits', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 88(6) (2005), pp. 918–933; method, p. 921; discussion, pp. 929–931.

A good feeling must not stand in for a good action

We may leave a reminder resolved to be kinder to family. That is a good beginning, but it does not by itself answer the evening's question: what will we do when a child interrupts, a spouse disagrees or someone makes a request while we are tired? If kindness remains only a broad feeling, we may not find its practical expression when patience narrows.

Bring the value close to a familiar situation. Instead of only saying, 'I will be kind', try: 'When I need to postpone a conversation at home, I will offer a nearby time I can keep, and will not rebuke the person as though asking to speak were itself wrong.' This is a suggested application, not a complete definition of mercy or a substitute for addressing more serious injustice where it exists.

In an experiment by Gollwitzer and Brandstätter, specifying when and where to begin helped participants who returned their reports to complete a writing task within the required time. Many participants did not return reports, however, and the experiment did not test trustworthiness or the effects of worship. Specifying a situation and an action can be tried as an

organising tool. It is neither a guarantee of transformation nor a new religious prescription.⁷⁴

An intention that loves good needs to know where to begin. A clear sentence prepared before the situation occurs may help, followed by review of what worked and what did not.

Begin with a right that belongs to someone

Allah says:

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا بِالْعَدْلِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ نِعِمَّا يَعِظُكُمْ بِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا﴾.

Translation of the meaning: ‘Allah commands you to return trusts to their rightful owners and, when you judge between people, to judge with justice. Excellent indeed is what Allah instructs you to do. Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing.’⁷⁵

Consider the destination: their rightful owners. A trust is not fulfilled because we thought about it at length, wrote it in a record or regretted delaying it. Someone needs their right to reach them.

74 Peter M. Gollwitzer and Veronika Brandstätter, ‘Implementation Intentions and Effective Goal Pursuit’, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 73(1) (1997), pp. 186–199; Study 2, pp. 191–192.

75 Qur’an, al-Nisa’ 4:58.

Choose a specific matter in your life: an amount you agreed to repay, a document entrusted to you, a task a colleague knows you accepted, or an appointment for which someone is waiting. Do not choose an easy matter to avoid a heavier, urgent right. A small beginning helps when it opens the way to action, not when it conceals escape.

Then ask three connected questions: what is the right, what prevents fulfilment, and what action will deliver it? You may need to transfer money, hand over the document or tell the person waiting for a task its true position without embellishment. If the ruling is unclear, gather the facts and ask someone qualified. Good intentions alone do not settle every contractual relationship or professional responsibility.

This may reveal the sincerity of our review more clearly than much else. Are we concerned with appearing improved, or with changing what people experience from us? They may never know we began a programme of self-improvement. They will know that their money was returned, their appointment respected and the answer they received this time was truthful.

Honesty before a promise is easier than apology afterwards

The moment before a new commitment deserves attention. We may find 'I cannot' uncomfortable, and choose a promise that eases the conversation for a minute but burdens the following days. We have not solved the problem, only moved it to another time and another person.

Before setting a date, look at actual capacity. What have you already committed to? Which part depends on others? What information remains unverified? This need not complicate every promise; the level of care should match its consequences. A brief meeting with a friend differs from a commitment on which a team's work or a family's travel depends.

When an outcome is uncertain, describe it accurately: an estimate, a date awaiting confirmation or a commitment within stated limits. Do not use reassuring language that leads the other person to assume certainty you do not have. Nor should minor details become a way to bury the important point under many words.

If a real obstacle appears, do not wait for repeated inquiries. Explain what changed, what you can do and which options remain. This will not remove every consequence of delay or cancel an established right. It does prevent concealment and an indefinite wait from being added to the original difficulty.

Mercy preserves rights, and firmness need not wound

We may think good treatment requires agreeing to every request, then fail to deliver and resent the person who asked. Or we may think maintaining order requires harsh words. Both assumptions close off a wider path: clear explanation, fair boundaries and a guarded tongue.

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said:

«مَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَلَا يُوْذِ جَارَهُ، وَمَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَلْيُكْرِمْ ضَيْفَهُ، وَمَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَلْيَقُلْ خَيْرًا أَوْ لِيَصْمُتْ»

Translation: ‘Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day must not harm his neighbour. Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should honour his guest. Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should speak good or remain silent.’⁷⁶

This does not require agreement with wrongdoing or silence about a right that must be stated. It asks us to examine our speech: does it explain what is needed, or add an unnecessary insult?

We can tell a colleague that work needs correction without making the mistake a permanent description of their character. We can decline a request beyond our capacity without mocking the need behind it. We can seek repayment without treating the claim as permission to transgress. These examples do not resolve every dispute, but bring the question back to an action within our control: what needs saying, and what hurt can be left out?

76 Abu Hurayrah; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Manners, chapter on not harming one’s neighbour, no. 6018.

Justice reaches beyond those we love. Allah says:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ لِلَّهِ شُهَدَاءَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُ قَوْمٍ عَلَىٰ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا اعْدِلُوا هُوَ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ﴾

Translation of the meaning: ‘O you who believe, stand firmly for Allah as witnesses with justice. Do not let hatred of a people lead you to be unjust. Be just; that is nearer to God-consciousness. Be mindful of Allah. Allah is fully aware of what you do.’⁷⁷

Disagreeing with someone does not permit attributing words they never said to them or denying a right we know they possess.

A practical example: making promises trustworthy

Consider this hypothetical case. A man runs a small business, takes care over prayer and wants to be useful. Whenever a customer calls, he promises an early delivery, then asks employees to bridge the gap between his promise and their capacity. When delivery becomes impossible, he delays replying; when the customer persists, he resents the repeated requests.

⁷⁷ Qur'an, al-Ma'idah 5:8.

His review begins with a sentence he had avoided: the problem is not simply that customers lack patience, but that some arranged their affairs around inaccurate statements. He did not need to close the business or announce a dramatic transformation. First, he needed to identify existing promises: to whom, for what, by when, and which could actually be kept.

He separated what could be delivered, what required a new date acceptable to the customer, and what carried a financial or contractual right that still had to be fulfilled. Where he did not know the ruling, enthusiasm for reform did not authorise him to invent a convenient answer. He consulted a specialist, because apology does not allow him to decide other people's rights for them.

He then changed the moment that generated the problem. He stopped setting new deadlines before checking capacity. A single record of commitments was maintained by a clearly designated employee. Where a promise depended on a supplier or another party, he explained the dependence instead of presenting certainty. The tool was simple, with a precise function: keeping words connected to reality.

In a difficult call, he almost returned to his old habit. The customer wanted an immediate answer; he wanted the pressure to end. He needed the alternative action prepared earlier: explain what was known, say when the missing information would be available, and keep that commitment to reply. He did

not use time for verification as a means of stalling. Organisation used to escape merely repeats the error more politely.

Another difficulty could emerge: the commitment record might be accurate while workers still lacked time or tools. Asking for more discipline would not be enough. He would need to adjust the acceptance, allocation or resourcing of work within his capacity and authority. He could not repair his image with customers by treating employees unjustly.

In reviewing the experience, he would ask not how righteous he had become, but whether he spoke truthfully when accepting work, delivered what he promised, informed those affected of changes in time, and still owed anyone a right. These questions do not judge the acceptance of his prayer. They prevent love of prayer from becoming a screen concealing defective dealings.

The example does not end with a promise of immediate business success. He may lose an order by stating the real lead time, and rebuilding damaged trust may take time. What he can begin now is to stop purchasing momentary approval with a promise he cannot fulfil.

Repair concerns the past as well as the future

It is easy to say, ‘I will not repeat it.’ Returning to the harm already caused is harder. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said:

«مَنْ كَانَتْ لَهُ مَظْلَمَةٌ لِأَحَدٍ مِنْ عَرَضِهِ أَوْ شَيْءٍ، فَلْيَتَحَلَّلْهُ مِنْهُ الْيَوْمَ، قَبْلَ أَنْ لَا يَكُونَ دِينَارٌ وَلَا دِرْهَمٌ؛ إِنْ كَانَ لَهُ عَمَلٌ صَالِحٌ أَخَذَ مِنْهُ بِقَدْرِ مَظْلَمَتِهِ، وَإِنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ لَهُ حَسَنَاتٌ أَخَذَ مِنْ سَيِّئَاتٍ صَاحِبِهِ فَحُمِلَ عَلَيْهِ»

Translation: ‘Whoever has wronged another in his honour or in anything else should seek release from that wrong today, before there is neither dinar nor dirham. If he has good deeds, some will be taken in proportion to his wrongdoing. If he has no good deeds, some of the wronged person’s sins will be taken and placed upon him.’⁷⁸

«مَظْلُ الْغَنِيِّ ظُلْمٌ»

Organising future appointments is therefore insufficient while delaying money already due that you can repay. The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, in translation: ‘Delay in payment by one who can afford to pay is injustice.’⁷⁹

78 Abu Hurayrah; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Wrongs, chapter on seeking release from a wrong committed against another, no. 2449.

79 Abu Hurayrah; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Loans, chapter on delay by a solvent debtor being injustice, no. 2400.

As for someone in financial difficulty, Allah says:

﴿وَإِنْ كَانَ ذُو عُسْرَةٍ فَنَظِرَةٌ إِلَىٰ مَيْسَرَةٍ وَأَنْ تَصَدَّقُوا خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ﴾

Translation of the meaning: ‘If the debtor is in hardship, then allow time until ease comes. But to remit it as charity is better for you, if only you knew.’⁸⁰

A debtor unable to pay is not the same as someone who can pay but stalls. Distinguishing the circumstances is part of justice, whether we are creditor or debtor.

Beyond money, repair may require correcting misinformation we spread, apologising for harm or redoing deficient work, according to the right, the damage and the ruling involved. A good intention to repair must not cause fresh harm. Matters involving honour or disputed rights require knowledge and wisdom; a general statement cannot cover them all.

An apology must not become another demand on the wronged person: a demand to reassure us, accept our explanation immediately or certify our improvement. Apologising is our action to perform. Their feelings, trust and rights do not become ours to reclaim simply because we feel remorse.

⁸⁰ Qur'an, al-Baqarah 2:280.

Notice effects without turning people into scores

A short review may help us notice what we miss. We might choose a week to examine one aspect of conduct, not because the week has any special religious merit here, but because it is easy to remember. Record one incident when useful: what happened, what did I do, and what needs correction? Then return to life.

Counting occasions without considering circumstances is not enough. Anger may decrease because we met no one, not because we handled disagreement better. A few deadlines may be met because they were easy, with the difficulty returning under the first pressure. Look at the situation in which the value was tested and the obstacle encountered, as well as the number.

Do not turn those around you into permanent monitors of your improvement or collect unnecessary details about them. It may be enough to ask a trusted companion about one specific action and receive the answer without immediate defence. If the problem returns, ask why: did you forget, promise beyond your capacity, lack knowledge of the ruling, or choose comfort over a clear right? Different causes require different responses.

If the cause is illness, exhaustion or a condition requiring care, do not reduce it to weak willpower. Arranging commitments and seeking appropriate help may be part of fulfilling a trust. Fair responsibility sees capacity as it is and asks for action within it.

When the lesson returns with you to ordinary life

Living with these meanings does not require feeling moved every hour. The intensity of emotion may fade while a more truthful effect remains in action: disclosing a defect, guarding the tongue, saying 'I do not know', returning a right or checking a promise before someone places hope in it.

Correction need not begin with a large project. Begin where you know honesty is needed. Learn the ruling, identify the other person's right, prepare for the moment in which you usually fall short, then examine what happened. If you make a mistake, return to correction without calling the mistake a success or declaring yourself incapable of all good.

Worship then remains more than a beautiful memory outside working hours. It remains worship of Allah, while reverence for His command accompanies us into the marketplace, home and road. Good dealings do not replace prayer, and prayer does not excuse poor dealings. One purpose joins them: to stand upright before Allah wherever we are, and to let those with rights experience a truthfulness that goes beyond words.

Chapter Nine: A Day of Prophetic Guidance in Teaching and Work

An example for an ordinary day

﴿لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُو اللَّهَ
وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا﴾.

Allah Most High says. Translation of the meaning: ‘You have in the Messenger of Allah an excellent example for whoever hopes in Allah and the Last Day and remembers Allah often.’ [Al-Ahzab 33:21]⁸¹

The guidance of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, connects worship with teaching, serving one’s family and carrying responsibility. These scenes teach us to give each right its place and to combine clear expectations with gentleness towards those we teach and work alongside. We may need this in an ordinary day more than we need an exceptional plan we never repeat.

A morning of worship with room for people

«قُلْتُ لَجَابِرِ بْنِ سَمُرَةَ: أَكُنْتُ تُجَالِسُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ؟ قَالَ: نَعَمْ كَثِيرًا، كَانَ لَا يَقُومُ مِنْ مُصَلَّاهُ الَّذِي يُصَلِّي فِيهِ الصُّبْحُ أَوْ

81 Qur’an, Al-Ahzab 33:21: following the example of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.

الْعِدَاةَ حَتَّى تَطْلُعَ الشَّمْسُ، فَإِذَا طَلَعَتِ الشَّمْسُ قَامَ، وَكَانُوا يَتَحَدَّثُونَ فَيَأْخُذُونَ فِي أَمْرِ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ فَيُضْحَكُونَ وَيَتَبَسَّمُونَ»

Simak ibn Harb reported. Translation: ‘I asked Jabir ibn Samurah, “Did you sit with the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace?” He said, “Yes, often. He would not rise from the place where he had prayed the dawn prayer until the sun had risen. When it rose, he would get up. They would talk about matters from the time of ignorance, and they would laugh while he smiled.”’⁸²

Worship and companionship came together in this gathering. The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, sat after prayer; his Companions spoke about the past, and they laughed while he smiled. Here we find room for human warmth within a serious life of knowledge and action.

This reveals a subtle point about teaching. A committed teacher may think that every minute with students must contain information, and that silence or permissible conversation wastes a teaching opportunity. Yet a person is no machine that can receive instruction without pause. A gathering that combines worship, companionship and tranquillity may keep hearts

82 Jabir ibn Samurah; Sahih Muslim, Book of Mosques and Places of Prayer, chapter on the virtue of remaining in one’s prayer place after dawn prayer and the virtue of mosques, no. 670a.

receptive more effectively than one that burdens them with exhortation until they turn away.

A day can have a place for worship, a place for teaching and a place for permissible conversation, each observed appropriately. Our gatherings need not be filled with uninterrupted instruction to be beneficial.

To review your own gatherings, ask: Have I packed my programme so tightly that those around me receive nothing but instructions? Do I leave natural room for companionship, questions and conversation with my family and students, or treat their presence as an opportunity to finish my list of things to say?

Do not exhaust a learner in the name of doing good

«كَانَ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ يَتَخَوَّلُنَا بِالْمَوْعِظَةِ فِي الْأَيَّامِ، كَرَاهَةَ السَّامَةِ عَلَيْنَا»

Ibn Mas‘ud, may Allah be pleased with him, said. Translation: ‘The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, would choose particular days to admonish us, lest we grow weary.’⁸³

83 ‘Abd Allah ibn Mas‘ud; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Knowledge, chapter on the Prophet choosing occasions for admonition and instruction so that people would not turn away, no. 68.

This brief report places a firm limit on a teacher's enthusiasm: the benefit of instruction cannot be separated from the learner's capacity to receive it.

Choosing the occasion here means considering when to offer an admonition so that people do not become weary; it does not mean abandoning knowledge.

«يَسِّرُوا وَلَا تُعَسِّرُوا، وَبَشِّرُوا وَلَا تُنْفِرُوا»

Anas, may Allah be pleased with him, reported that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said. Translation: 'Make things easy, and do not make them difficult. Give glad tidings, and do not drive people away.'⁸⁴

Making things easy does not mean removing a ruling that the self finds burdensome or turning an obligation into an option. Lawful ease is one thing; changing the religion to please an audience is another. Yet the text also prevents us from treating a harsh manner or excessive talk as signs of strong teaching.

A teacher may know ten useful points about a subject without needing to give them all to a beginner in one sitting. A father may want to correct five faults in his child, yet wisdom does not always require correcting all five in the same minute. A manager may see many things that need changing, but gathering

84 Anas ibn Malik; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Knowledge, chapter on the Prophet choosing occasions for admonition and instruction so that people would not turn away, no. 69.

them into an angry speech can leave an employee unsure what to do first.

Good timing is part of good teaching. Discipline may mean postponing a useful word until a more useful moment: the truth has not changed, but you want it to reach the person.

This requires balance. An educator might use ‘not upsetting the learner’ as an excuse to abandon all correction. That is not the point. The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, taught, guided, commanded and forbade, while taking weariness into account. Combining clear instruction with gentleness is more faithful to this example than choosing only one extreme: endless talk, or silence that leaves an error untaught.

When a command is not enough, teach the action

«أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ دَخَلَ الْمَسْجِدَ، فَدَخَلَ رَجُلٌ فَصَلَّى، فَسَلَّمَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ ﷺ فَرَدَّ وَقَالَ: ارْجِعْ فَصَلِّ، فَإِنَّكَ لَمْ تُصَلِّ. فَرَجَعَ يُصَلِّي كَمَا صَلَّى، ثُمَّ جَاءَ فَسَلَّمَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ ﷺ، فَقَالَ: ارْجِعْ فَصَلِّ فَإِنَّكَ لَمْ تُصَلِّ، ثَلَاثًا. فَقَالَ: وَالَّذِي بَعَثَكَ بِالْحَقِّ مَا أَحْسَنُ غَيْرَهُ فَعَلَّمَنِي. فَقَالَ: إِذَا قُمْتَ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ فَكَبِّرْ، ثُمَّ اقْرَأْ مَا تَيَسَّرَ مَعَكَ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ، ثُمَّ ارْكَعْ حَتَّى تَطْمَئِنَّ رَاكِعًا، ثُمَّ ارْفَعْ حَتَّى تَعْتَدِلَ قَائِمًا، ثُمَّ اسْجُدْ حَتَّى تَطْمَئِنَّ سَاجِدًا، ثُمَّ ارْفَعْ حَتَّى تَطْمَئِنَّ جَالِسًا، وَافْعَلْ ذَلِكَ فِي صَلَاتِكَ كُلِّهَا»

Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him, reported.

Translation: ‘The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and

grant him peace, entered the mosque. A man entered and prayed, then greeted the Prophet. He returned the greeting and said, “Go back and pray, for you have not prayed.” The man went back and prayed as he had before, then came and greeted the Prophet. He said, “Go back and pray, for you have not prayed.” This happened three times. The man said, “By Him who sent you with the truth, I do not know how to do any better, so teach me.” He said, “When you stand for prayer, say the takbir, then recite what you can of the Qur’an. Then bow until you are still in bowing. Then rise until you stand upright. Then prostrate until you are still in prostration. Then rise until you are still in sitting. Do that throughout your prayer.””⁸⁵

We encountered this hadith in the chapter on prayer in connection with stillness. Here we consider its teaching. Something in the man’s performance was deficient, and a general instruction such as ‘Improve your prayer’ would not explain how to correct it. Once it became clear that he did not know the proper way to perform it, the teaching became a sequence of actions: say the takbir, recite, bow until still, rise until upright, and prostrate until still.

85 Abu Hurayrah; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Adhan, chapter on the obligation of recitation for the imam and follower in every prayer, at home and while travelling, whether recitation is audible or quiet, no. 757.

When the man asked to be taught, he received an explanation he could act on. An educator should explain the step a learner needs and choose demonstrations and practice that help the learner master it.

How often do we call someone careless without defining what completing a task means? We tell a child, ‘Tidy your room,’ an employee, ‘Send a better report,’ or a student, ‘Revise properly,’ then grow angry because the picture in our minds has not appeared in theirs. Some shortcomings may indeed be deliberate. But part of the difficulty may be that the teaching itself remained vague.

The question this scene gives an educator is not, ‘How can I repeat my order more loudly?’ It is, ‘Does the learner know how to do what I am asking?’ If not, teaching is part of our responsibility. If the learner knows and still leaves it undone, we turn to a different question about choice, consistency and rights. Treating the two situations as identical prevents us from addressing each one properly.

A learner does not remain a recipient for ever

«أَتَيْنَا إِلَى النَّبِيِّ ﷺ وَنَحْنُ شَبَبَةٌ مُتَقَارِبُونَ، فَأَقَمْنَا عِنْدَهُ عَشْرِينَ يَوْمًا وَلَيْلَةً، وَكَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ رَحِيمًا رَفِيقًا، فَلَمَّا ظَنُّ أْنَا قَدْ اشْتَهَيْنَا أَهْلَنَا أَوْ قَدْ اشْتَقْنَا، سَأَلْنَا عَمَّنْ تَرَكْنَا بَعْدَنَا فَأَخْبَرَنَاهُ، قَالَ: ارْجِعُوا إِلَى أَهْلِكُمْ فَأَقِيمُوا فِيهِمْ وَعَلِّمُوهُمْ وَمُرُوهُمْ - وَذَكَرَ أَشْيَاءَ أَحْفَظَهَا أَوْ لَا أَحْفَظَهَا - وَصَلُّوا كَمَا

رَأَيْتُمُونِي أَصَلِّي، فَإِذَا حَضَرَتِ الصَّلَاةُ فَلْيُؤَذِّنْ لَكُمْ أَحَدُكُمْ
وَلْيُؤَمِّمَكُمْ أَكْبَرُكُمْ»

Malik ibn al-Huwayrith, may Allah be pleased with him, said.
Translation: ‘We came to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, as young men of about the same age, and stayed with him for twenty days and nights. The Messenger of Allah was merciful and gentle. When he thought that we wished to be with our families, or missed them, he asked us about those we had left behind, and we told him. He said, “Return to your families, stay among them, teach them and instruct them.” He mentioned things that I remember, or do not remember. “Pray as you have seen me pray. When the time for prayer comes, let one of you call the adhan, and let the eldest of you lead you.”’⁸⁶

This report adds another aspect of teaching: the end of a period of learning is not the end of responsibility. It may be the beginning of passing knowledge to others. These young men did not remain around their teacher on the assumption that staying in his gathering was always the highest course. A time came to go home and carry what they had learnt to those they had left behind.

86 Malik ibn al-Huwayrith; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Adhan, chapter on the adhan and iqamah for travellers in a group, and likewise at ‘Arafah and Jam‘, no. 631.

The report also shows attention to their human circumstances. Missing their families was not treated as weakness in seeking knowledge. He asked about their families, then directed them to return and teach. The duration of study varies with a learner's needs; benefiting one's family with what one has learnt remains a responsibility.

We can ask ourselves: Does our teaching create lasting dependence on the teacher, or prepare learners to act independently and then benefit others? Some programmes succeed in keeping participants enrolled without making them more capable outside the programme. When a learner needs the trainer's voice at every step, we should ask whether the skill has really been acquired or remains tied to the teaching session.

Beginning to teach does not mean becoming a scholar in every subject. Malik, may Allah be pleased with him, passed on what he knew; the report did not give him authority over what he had never studied. This principle protects us from a common failing: learning one subject, then imagining that success in it makes us an authority in every part of life.

Order responsibilities before multiplying lessons

«أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ ﷺ بَعَثَ مُعَاذًا رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ إِلَى الْيَمَنِ فَقَالَ: ادْعُهُمْ إِلَى شَهَادَةِ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، وَأَنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ، فَإِنْ هُمْ أَطَاعُوا لِذَلِكَ فَأَعْلِمُهُمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ افْتَرَضَ عَلَيْهِمْ خَمْسَ صَلَوَاتٍ فِي كُلِّ يَوْمٍ وَلَيْلَةٍ، فَإِنْ هُمْ أَطَاعُوا لِذَلِكَ فَأَعْلِمُهُمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ

افْتَرَضَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَدَقَةً فِي أَمْوَالِهِمْ، تُؤْخَذُ مِنْ أَغْنِيَائِهِمْ وَتُرَدُّ عَلَى فَقَرَائِهِمْ»

Ibn ‘Abbas, may Allah be pleased with them both, reported. Translation: ‘The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, sent Mu‘adh, may Allah be pleased with him, to Yemen and said, “Call them to testify that none has the right to be worshipped except Allah and that I am the Messenger of Allah. If they obey you in that, inform them that Allah has made five prayers obligatory upon them in every day and night. If they obey you in that, inform them that Allah has made charity obligatory upon their wealth, to be taken from their rich and returned to their poor.”’⁸⁷

Responsibility requires knowing what comes first, what follows, and which right must be kept distinct. Mu‘adh was not going to a new land with an unordered list of topics to deliver. He had guidance that identified foundations, stages and rights.

Specifying where the money is taken from and where it goes shows that implementing a system is bound by people’s rights. Efficiency must not conceal injustice. A zakat collector might gather money very efficiently yet wrong people in what he selects or takes. Completing the procedure cannot excuse neglecting the right that the procedure exists to serve.

87 ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Abbas; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Zakat, chapter on the obligation of zakat, no. 1395.

In teaching, too, an orderly syllabus is insufficient if the learner becomes a means of proving a programme's success. You may follow the plan precisely while failing to preserve a learner's dignity. You may finish the syllabus on time while some students still lack the foundation on which later lessons depend. Good organisation serves its purpose without swallowing it up.

Public responsibility does not turn appearances into truth

Umm Salamah, may Allah be pleased with her, reported:

«عن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم أنه سمع خصومة بباب حجرته، فخرج إليهم، فقال إنما أنا بشر وإنه يأتيني الخصم، فلعل بعضكم أن يكون أبغ من بعض، فأحسب أنه صدق، فأقضي له بذلك، فمن قضيت له بحق مسلم فإنما هي قطعة من النار، فليأخذها أو فليتركها»

Translation: 'The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, heard a dispute at the door of his chamber. He came out to them and said, "I am only a human being, and litigants come to me. One of you may be more eloquent than another, so I think he has spoken truthfully and rule in his favour on that basis. Whoever I award a Muslim's right to, it is only a piece of the Fire: let him take it or leave it."'⁸⁸

88 Umm Salamah; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Wrongs, chapter on the sin of knowingly arguing a false claim, no. 2458.

This report shows remarkable humility about the limits of procedure. Judgement has its evidence and rules, but a ruling based on what appears does not turn something wrongful in reality into a rightful claim. The ability to present an argument may affect what a judge hears; it does not alter the truth before Allah.

This teaches anyone entrusted with responsibility a vital lesson: a system does not relieve the conscience of its duty of honesty. Someone may possess an official document, a signature or an approval based on incomplete information. That does not make something lawful if the person knows it is not rightfully theirs merely because a procedure awarded it to them.

It also teaches those in authority not to claim knowledge they have not received. The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, explains that he judges according to what he hears. When reviewing your work, remember to base your decision on information you may legitimately rely upon, while recognising the limits of your knowledge. If new information changes what is right, discipline does not mean defending the earlier decision simply because it was yours.

In a modern workplace, a manager may draw a conclusion from an incomplete report, or read a powerfully written complaint and imagine it is the whole truth. Procedural duties differ by field, but the virtue remains the same: do not substitute eloquence for the verification available to you, and do not use your authority to dress up what you know is unjust.

Home is not an empty interval between important tasks

«سَأَلْتُ عَائِشَةَ: مَا كَانَ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ يَصْنَعُ فِي أَهْلِهِ؟ قَالَتْ: كَانَ فِي مَهْنَةِ أَهْلِهِ، فَإِذَا حَضَرَتِ الصَّلَاةُ قَامَ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ»

Al-Aswad said. Translation: ‘I asked ‘A’ishah, “What did the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, do among his family?” She said, “He would serve his family, and when the prayer was due, he would rise to pray.”’⁸⁹

Service to one’s family belongs within this guidance. Do not make major responsibilities a permanent excuse for turning away from those you live with.

He served his family, then went to prayer when its time came. In one line, the right of the household and the right of worship meet without an artificial conflict between them. This does not mean dividing every minute equally or assuming everyone’s responsibilities are identical. It means that the home itself is a place of work and trust.

A person may manage an organisation well while leaving someone at home to carry every detail, because that person considers their own time more valuable. They may run many beneficial programmes yet fail to help with a nearby need within their ability. Families distribute responsibilities differently, but

89 ‘A’ishah, Mother of the Believers; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Manners, chapter on a man’s conduct with his family, no. 6039.

we should still question the superiority we assign to some tasks: Have we begun to look down on service that people do not see because it contributes nothing to our public image of achievement?

When a duty with a set time becomes due, a person turns to it. This is a life containing several trusts, rather than a contest between two competing items. Discipline means knowing when to be here and when to move there, instead of choosing one right and letting it consume all the others.

Gentleness is revealed in long companionship

«خَدَمْتُ النَّبِيَّ ﷺ عَشْرَ سِنِينَ، فَمَا قَالَ لِي أَفٍّ، وَلَا: لِمَ صَنَعْتُ؟ وَلَا: أَلَا صَنَعْتُ؟»

Anas, may Allah be pleased with him, said. Translation: ‘I served the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, for ten years. He never said “Uff” to me, nor “Why did you do that?” nor “Why did you not do that?”’⁹⁰

This describes ten years, not one brief moment in which someone successfully controlled an emotion. That gives it particular weight in our dealings. It is easy to display good manners during a passing encounter. Long companionship and

90 Anas ibn Malik; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Manners, chapter on good character, generosity and the dislike of miserliness, no. 6038.

repeated work reveal our habits when we are tired, time is short and mistakes recur.

We must not understand the hadith to mean that he left people untaught or gave no guidance. Many commands and corrections are authentically reported from him, may Allah bless him and grant him peace; some have appeared in this chapter. The point is that correction does not require humiliating a worker or learner, and great responsibility gives no permanent licence for harshness.

A manager can review a mistake, a parent can correct a child, and a teacher can ask for work to be repeated. The question remains: Does upholding what is right require the humiliation I have added? Much cruelty makes instruction no clearer. It leaves the person who erred preoccupied with self-defence instead of understanding what needs repair.

Gentleness does not remove standards. The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, taught the man who prayed incorrectly. The litigants heard a stern warning against taking others' rights. Mu'adh received a task with boundaries. This guidance combines clarity about what is right with good treatment of people. Holding both together is harder and more fruitful than replacing either with the other.

Principles to carry into your work

Together, these scenes offer principles for reviewing your work and teaching.

First, worship is at the centre of the day, rather than an ornament at its edge. Dawn prayer and other prayers are present, yet they leave room for human companionship and serving one's family. They do not make the rest of the day less significant as a trust.

Second, teaching has its time and method. Admonition should not overwhelm the learner; an unclear action should become understandable steps. The student moves from observing to practising, then from receiving instruction to teaching the family what has been learnt.

Third, responsibility does not justify violating a right. An appointed worker receives boundaries that prevent injustice. An outward ruling does not turn your brother's right into yours. An efficient procedure does not remove the obligation to be truthful in what we submit to it.

Fourth, the home is part of the trust. Serving one's family belongs within a serious life, just as prayer must not disappear into the demands of the household. Rights exist alongside one another, and each needs its place.

Fifth, gentleness and firmness belong together. You can ask a learner to repeat a task, explain how it should be done and warn against injustice, while remaining merciful in your dealings and refusing to make hurt a teaching method.

Sixth, a disciplined person does not claim to know more than they do. A teacher recognises when an explanation is needed. A

person in authority recognises that the available information is what they have heard and seen. A learner knows that returning home to teach does not make them a scholar in everything. These limits protect work from conceit; they do not diminish it.

Review your day through its rights

Let these meanings hold up a mirror to your day. When you finish an act of worship, ask which right comes next. When you teach, ask whether you have chosen a time when the learner can listen. When you see an error, ask whether the person knows the correct action. When you exercise authority, ask what information supports your decision and where its limits lie. When you return home, do not treat it as a place that requires no trustworthiness simply because other people cannot see it.

At the day's end, ask: Did my day show anything of this guidance — worship in its proper place, teaching considerate of people, work that preserves rights, a home that is not neglected, and a tongue that does not turn firmness into harm?

The fruit appears in an ordinary day whose details are largely unknown to other people, though Allah knows what we fulfilled and what we neglected. Choose a right you have failed to honour and begin to repair it. Then consider how a different way of teaching or organising work can help you preserve it next time.

Chapter Ten: The Companions and the Sharing of Responsibilities

Fairness does not always mean everyone doing the same thing

We may misunderstand discipline when we picture one individual carrying everything alone. The image looks impressive: a business owner who never delegates, a father who leaves no task to anyone else, a student who wants to attend every gathering and read every book, or a person in charge who checks every detail, however small. Yet the sheer amount someone holds in their hands does not establish how well they fulfil their responsibility. It may reveal a lack of trust, a poor division of work, or a system unable to continue when one person is absent.

Scenes from the Companions' lives can help correct this understanding, provided we read them as they were reported. We must not turn them into modern organisational charts and then attribute the details to their time. We find people taking turns in a way that preserves learning alongside work; people chosen for a task according to their ability; an appointee sent to a defined assignment with boundaries protecting people's rights; and reminders that a person owes rights to the Lord, to family and to the self, none of which should consume the others.

These accounts do not supply a ready-made 'Prophetic management structure' for every organisation, nor require every

collective endeavour to copy a single arrangement. They teach us to ask questions that come before the chart: Who is best able to carry out this task? What will that person need? Who will honour the remaining rights meanwhile? How will information and responsibility pass from one person to another without being lost?

‘Umar and his neighbour: taking turns without losing touch

«كُنْتُ أَنَا وَجَارٌ لِي مِنَ الْأَنْصَارِ فِي بَنِي أُمَيَّةَ بْنِ زَيْدٍ، وَهِيَ مِنْ عَوَالِي الْمَدِينَةِ، وَكُنَّا نَتَنَاقَشُ التَّزْوِيلَ عَلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ، يَنْزِلُ يَوْمًا وَأَنْزِلُ يَوْمًا، فَإِذَا نَزَلْتُ جِئْتُهُ بِخَبَرِ ذَلِكَ الْيَوْمِ مِنَ الْوَحْيِ وَغَيْرِهِ، وَإِذَا نَزَلَ فَعَلَ مِثْلَ ذَلِكَ، فَتَذَلَّ صَاحِبِي الْأَنْصَارِيُّ يَوْمَ نَوْبَتِهِ، فَضَرَبَ بَابِي ضَرْبًا شَدِيدًا، فَقَالَ: أَتَمَّ هُوَ؟ فَفَزَعْتُ فَخَرَجْتُ إِلَيْهِ، فَقَالَ: قَدْ حَدَثَ أَمْرٌ عَظِيمٌ. قَالَ: فَدَخَلْتُ عَلَى حَفْصَةَ فَإِذَا هِيَ تَبْكِي، فَقُلْتُ: طَلَّقَكَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ؟ قَالَتْ: لَا أَدْرِي. ثُمَّ دَخَلْتُ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ ﷺ فَقُلْتُ وَأَنَا قَائِمٌ: أَطَلَّقْتَ نِسَاءَكَ؟ قَالَ: لَا. فَقُلْتُ: اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ»

‘Umar ibn al-Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him, said.
Translation: ‘A neighbour of mine from the Ansar and I lived among Banu Umayyah ibn Zayd, in the upper parts of Madinah. We used to take turns going down to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace: he would go one day and I would go the next. When I went, I brought him the news

of that day, of revelation and other matters; when he went, he did the same. My Ansari companion went down on his day, then struck my door forcefully and asked, “Is he there?” Alarmed, I went out to him. He said, “Something momentous has happened.” I went in to Hafsa and found her weeping. I asked, “Has the Messenger of Allah divorced you?” She said, “I do not know.” Then I entered upon the Prophet and, standing, asked, “Have you divorced your wives?” He said, “No.” I said, “Allah is greatest.”⁹¹

The value of this account is not in copying an alternate-day system. That was part of these two men’s circumstances, not a binding timetable for seeking knowledge. Its value is that taking turns enabled each to receive from the other what he had missed. Knowledge continued to pass between them while attendance alternated. Someone who misses a gathering of knowledge can seek a trustworthy account of what was missed; someone who attends can benefit a companion with what was heard.

Taking turns carries another meaning: not personally performing a task at a particular moment does not end one’s responsibility for it. One attends while the other relies on him to convey what happened; then the roles reverse. This requires

91 ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Knowledge, chapter on taking turns in seeking knowledge, no. 89.

faithful reporting, knowing whose turn it is, and preserving the task during an absence.

That differs from dividing work in a way that dissipates responsibility. In some modern settings, everyone says, ‘I thought the other person would do it.’ No one clearly owns the task; there is no handover time or means of passing on information. It looks like cooperation, but in reality everyone shares an empty space. Useful rotation needs clear answers: Who is acting now? What will that person hand over to the next? What must not remain in one person’s memory alone?

Because ‘Umar’s account concerns seeking knowledge, an important qualification applies. A companion’s report does not turn every passing account into verified knowledge. The report describes two men who knew each other conveying what had happened that day. Religious matters that require accurate wording or a ruling have established methods of verification. We may benefit from this arrangement without treating it as permission to rely on unverified reports.

Capability and trustworthiness: two qualities, not one

﴿قَالَتْ إِحْدَاهُمَا يَا أَبْتَ اسْتَأْجِرْهُ إِنَّ خَيْرَ مَنْ اسْتَأْجَرْتَ الْقَوِيُّ الْأَمِينُ﴾.

In the account of Musa, peace be upon him, one of the two women said. Translation of the meaning: ‘One of them said,

“My father, hire him. Surely the best one you can hire is the strong and trustworthy.” [Al-Qasas 28:26]⁹²

This verse belongs to the account of Musa, peace be upon him, before his prophethood; it is not a report about the Companions. It nevertheless establishes a useful principle before we turn to their examples: work needs suitable ability and the trustworthiness that preserves its rights. Not every trustworthy person can perform every task, just as technical ability alone is insufficient without trustworthiness.

It would be a mistake to restrict ‘strength’ to physical strength in every kind of work. Herding or carrying may have a physical aspect. In teaching, capability includes knowing the subject and explaining it. In managing money, it includes precision, understanding and safekeeping. A technical task may require a specialist skill. These are applications according to the nature of different jobs, rather than a transmitted explanation of the verse for each modern example.

Trustworthiness, too, is more than a good reputation. Someone may speak truthfully yet fail to keep an entrusted secret, accept work knowing they cannot meet its deadline, or conceal an error for fear of appearing less competent. Being trustworthy in a task includes knowing the limits of one’s ability and saying when necessary, ‘I do not know how to do this,’ or ‘I need someone to review my work.’

92 Qur’an, Al-Qasas 28:26: capability and trustworthiness.

A sound division of work therefore begins by asking who is most suitable for this task while preserving its rights, rather than who is the best person in every respect. One person may teach better, another calculate more accurately, and a third communicate more effectively. Allocating roles diminishes none of them when the choice rests on the work's needs rather than contempt for people.

Abu Dharr: personal virtue does not suit a person to every office

«قُلْتُ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، أَلَا تَسْتَعْمِلُنِي؟ قَالَ: فَضْرَبَ بِيَدِهِ عَلَى مَنْكِبِي، ثُمَّ قَالَ: يَا أَبَا ذَرٍّ إِنَّكَ ضَعِيفٌ، وَإِنَّهَا أَمَانَةٌ، وَإِنَّهَا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ خِزْيٌ وَنَدَامَةٌ، إِلَّا مَنْ أَخَذَهَا بِحَقِّهَا وَأَدَّى الَّذِي عَلَيْهِ فِيهَا»

Abu Dharr, may Allah be pleased with him, said. Translation: 'I said, "Messenger of Allah, will you not appoint me?" He placed his hand on my shoulder and said, "Abu Dharr, you are weak, and it is a trust. On the Day of Resurrection it will be disgrace and regret, except for one who takes it with due right and fulfils what it requires of him."'⁹³

93 Abu Dharr al-Ghifari; Sahih Muslim, Book of Government, chapter on the dislike of authority without necessity, nos. 1825 and 1826. The wording quoted here is in no. 1825; no. 1826 is a related report.

This text matters because Abu Dharr was a Companion of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. His beloved standing and virtue did not make every responsibility suitable for him. The observation was no insult, nor a judgement that he was weak in every matter. The hadith concerns authority, a responsibility with particular demands.

Here we need a distinction that some environments overlook: assessing someone for a role is not a judgement on their worth. A righteous, generous man may not suit a management position. A trustworthy, helpful woman may not suit a task that requires expertise she has yet to learn. To say so fairly is not contempt. Assigning a task someone cannot perform merely to flatter them may harm both that person and those whose rights depend on the work.

Nor should we turn this hadith into a harsh device for calling everyone who struggles ‘weak’. The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, knew Abu Dharr, and the statement arose in a particular setting. A single incident does not give us such knowledge of other people. A more precise modern application describes the required ability and what has actually been observed: this task requires a certain skill which the person has not yet learnt, or its scale exceeds what the person can currently carry. Describing a task and a skill is fairer than applying a sweeping label to a person.

The hadith also benefits the person seeking responsibility. Trustworthiness means not pursuing a position for its image or

influence while treating its consequences as secondary details. Office adds more than a title: it brings people's rights and decisions that may affect their money, time and dignity. The wider the effect, the more carefully ability needs to be assessed.

Mu'adh in Yemen: delegation is more than handing over and leaving

«أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ ﷺ بَعَثَ مُعَاذًا رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ إِلَى الْيَمَنِ فَقَالَ: ادْعُهُمْ إِلَى شَهَادَةِ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، وَأَنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ، فَإِنْ هُمْ أَطَاعُوا لِذَلِكَ فَأَعْلِمُهُمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ افْتَرَضَ عَلَيْهِمْ خَمْسَ صَلَوَاتٍ فِي كُلِّ يَوْمٍ وَلَيْلَةٍ، فَإِنْ هُمْ أَطَاعُوا لِذَلِكَ فَأَعْلِمُهُمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ افْتَرَضَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَدَقَةً فِي أَمْوَالِهِمْ، تُؤْخَذُ مِنْ أَغْنِيَائِهِمْ وَتُرَدُّ عَلَى فُقَرَائِهِمْ»

Ibn 'Abbas, may Allah be pleased with them both, reported. Translation: 'The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, sent Mu'adh, may Allah be pleased with him, to Yemen and said, "Call them to testify that none has the right to be worshipped except Allah and that I am the Messenger of Allah. If they obey you in that, inform them that Allah has made five prayers obligatory upon them in every day and night. If they obey you in that, inform them that Allah has made charity

obligatory upon their wealth, to be taken from their rich and returned to their poor.’”⁹⁴

We are not considering the detailed rulings of zakat here; they have their earlier chapter and established jurisprudence. For the division of responsibilities, the point is that this appointment was no vague instruction such as ‘Go and do whatever seems appropriate.’ There was a task, a set of priorities and boundaries protecting the rights of those the appointee would deal with.

This distinguishes delegation from getting rid of a task. A manager who tells a new employee, ‘Take care of everything,’ then disappears until something goes wrong has not necessarily fostered independence. The manager may have passed on uncertainty beyond the employee’s capacity. A parent who demands a task without explaining its limits, then becomes angry at the result, has tested a child in something untaught rather than trained the child in responsibility.

In our contemporary application, good delegation requires at least four things: knowing the desired outcome, the boundaries one must not cross, the resources or information needed, and where to turn when a matter exceeds one’s authority or knowledge. This is our own organisational formulation, not wording from the hadith of Mu‘adh. Its purpose is to prevent responsibility from dissolving into uncertainty.

94 ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Abbas; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Zakat, chapter on the obligation of zakat, no. 1395.

The report also concerns those affected by the task. Zakat is more than a number for a collector to gather. It is a right with entitled recipients, while the owner's protection against wrongful collection must also be respected. When allocating responsibilities, we should ask both whether the employee completed the procedure and whether the procedure preserved the rights of those subject to it. Work may be completed quickly while errors or injustice increase. We should not call that complete discipline.

Rights remain when roles are divided

«أَخَى النَّبِيُّ ﷺ بَيْنَ سَلْمَانَ وَأَبِي الدَّرْدَاءِ، فَزَارَ سَلْمَانُ أَبَا الدَّرْدَاءِ، فَرَأَى أُمَّ الدَّرْدَاءِ مُتَبَدِّلَةً، فَقَالَ لَهَا: مَا شَأْنُكَ؟ قَالَتْ: أَخُوكَ أَبُو الدَّرْدَاءِ لَيْسَ لَهُ حَاجَةٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا. فَجَاءَ أَبُو الدَّرْدَاءِ، فَصَنَعَ لَهُ طَعَامًا، فَقَالَ: كُلْ. قَالَ: فَإِنِّي صَائِمٌ. قَالَ: مَا أَنَا بِأَكِلٍ حَتَّى تَأْكُلَ. قَالَ: فَأَكَلَ. فَلَمَّا كَانَ اللَّيْلُ ذَهَبَ أَبُو الدَّرْدَاءِ يَقُومُ، قَالَ: نَمْ. فَنَامَ، ثُمَّ ذَهَبَ يَقُومُ، فَقَالَ: نَمْ. فَلَمَّا كَانَ مِنْ آخِرِ اللَّيْلِ قَالَ سَلْمَانُ: قُمْ الْآنَ. فَصَلَّيَا، فَقَالَ لَهُ سَلْمَانُ: إِنَّ لِرَبِّكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا، وَلِنَفْسِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا، وَلِأَهْلِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا، فَأَعْطِ كُلَّ ذِي حَقٍّ حَقَّهُ. فَاتَى النَّبِيُّ ﷺ فَذَكَرَ ذَلِكَ لَهُ، فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ: صَدَقَ سَلْمَانُ»

Abu Juhayfah, may Allah be pleased with him, said.

Translation: ‘The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, established brotherhood between Salman and Abu al-

Darda'. Salman visited Abu al-Darda' and saw Umm al-Darda' in plain, unadorned dress. He asked, "What is the matter?" She said, "Your brother Abu al-Darda' has no desire for worldly life." Abu al-Darda' came and prepared food for him. Salman said, "Eat." He replied, "I am fasting." Salman said, "I will not eat until you eat," so he ate. When night came, Abu al-Darda' went to rise for prayer. Salman said, "Sleep," and he slept. Then he went to rise again, and Salman said, "Sleep." When the latter part of the night came, Salman said, "Rise now," and they both prayed. Salman told him, "Your Lord has a right over you, your self has a right over you, and your family has a right over you. Give everyone with a right their due." He came to the Prophet and mentioned this to him. The Prophet said, "Salman has spoken the truth.""⁹⁵

We encountered this hadith when discussing consistency and striving against the self. Here we read it from another angle: one person carries several roles. Someone may be responsible at work, a parent, a spouse and a student of knowledge, with a body that has its rights and acts of worship to fulfil.

Responsibilities are divided within an individual life as well as among members of a team.

95 Abu Juhayfah; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Fasting, chapter on asking a brother under oath to break a voluntary fast when that is more suitable, without requiring him to make it up, no. 1968.

The danger is allowing the role we regard most highly to consume all the others. A manager may succeed in a project because the family absorbs every disruption in the schedule. A learner may attend many lessons because someone else always carries their duties at home. Another person may refuse available help because depending on others seems insufficiently serious. Yet preserving rights may require accepting help, delegating and stating the limits of one's time before making promises one cannot keep.

Balance does not mean giving every right an equal number of hours. Rights differ in their rulings, times and needs. The requirement is that success in one area should not become a permanent argument for abandoning another. When rights compete, a person needs knowledge of the relevant ruling, a realistic assessment of capacity, and candour with those affected by the decision.

How can we divide work without ranking people's worth?

Talk of 'the most capable' can become a door to conceit unless kept within bounds. Someone succeeds at one task and imagines being best suited to everything. A person with the authority to choose gives the best tasks to close associates and calls it allocation by merit. The earlier texts offer no cover for this. They bind capability to trustworthiness and rights.

One suggested practical safeguard is to distinguish three things: a person's worth, their present competence, and the authority

attached to a task. A job grade does not determine human worth. Competence can grow through learning, and may be strong in one field and weak in another. Authority is not personal property; it serves work that must be carried out rightly.

Keeping these distinctions allows us to tell a learner, ‘You need more training before doing this alone,’ without saying, ‘You are no good.’ We can move someone from one role to a more suitable one without turning the move into a public disgrace. We can give a beginner a real share of the work, with review appropriate to that stage, instead of leaving the beginner to watch until suddenly faced with complete responsibility.

Here the benefit of taking turns appears again. Rotation does not mean everyone has equal skill, but it can reduce dependence on one person and allow knowledge to pass on. An expert may perform the hardest task with someone learning alongside, then expand the learner’s role as competence is demonstrated. This is a contemporary application, not a historical claim about ‘Umar and his neighbour.

A hypothetical case: a small team and a shared task

Imagine four people preparing educational material. The first has deep subject knowledge but is slow to edit prose. The second is a precise editor without the same scholarly expertise. The third organises files and deadlines well. The fourth is skilled in technical production but new to the subject.

If we treat ‘the best’ as a universal title, we may give everything to the first person because of that subject knowledge. That person becomes a bottleneck: writing, reviewing, naming files, following up deadlines and approving the layout. When delays arise, we accuse the person of poor discipline, although the system itself demands four different abilities from one individual.

A clearer division leaves the subject expert responsible for the accuracy of the content and matters requiring that expert’s judgement. The editor shapes the wording after understanding the meaning. The organiser manages files and deadlines. The technical specialist produces the layout to known specifications. Yet this division fails if it creates isolated islands. Each transfer needs a clear handover: Which version was approved? What remains unresolved? Who may decide on changes at this stage?

Then comes trustworthiness. The editor must not change a scholarly meaning to improve a phrase without consulting. The scholar must not leave a concern unspoken, then blame the designer for not knowing it. The organiser must not put the deadline above the material’s accuracy. The technical specialist must not conceal a layout fault to avoid delaying delivery. Each person carries a right appropriate to the role.

If someone is absent for a day, continuity becomes a question. What needs to be recorded so the task does not stop entirely? Here we can benefit from the meaning of ‘Umar and his neighbour taking turns. We need not copy their days; we can

make necessary knowledge transferable, so a substitute knows where the work stands, what has been established and what has not.

This is a hypothetical teaching example, not a management experiment with measured results. It tests principles in a contemporary setting: suitable ability, a clear role, preserved rights and the transfer of knowledge.

Signs that the division of work needs repair

The problem may lie in individuals or in the allocation itself. If every decision repeatedly converges on one person, ask not only why that person is late but why suitable knowledge or authority has not been passed on. If someone is blamed for an outcome without having the tools or authority to change its causes, the definition of responsibility is at fault. If two people do the same work and neither knows who decides, cooperation needs a clearer boundary.

Another sign is a skilled person trapped in every detail because they are ‘the best’. That person may need to teach others what can be learnt, freeing time for what no one else can yet do. This does not mean handing precise work to someone unqualified. It means distinguishing what truly requires the expert’s skill from what the expert habitually keeps because doing it personally is quicker in the short term.

Conversely, dividing responsibilities must not become an excuse to avoid learning. An employee may rightly say, ‘That is

not my task,’ when asked to exceed a professional remit or authority. The same words may also avoid knowledge essential to the employee’s own role. Good boundaries prevent confusion without turning a team into people who do not understand how their work affects one another.

Five questions before assigning a task

We can close the chapter with a simple review aid. It does not claim to be a measure of competence.

First: What right or outcome are we trying to preserve? Without knowing it, allocating tasks becomes movement without purpose.

Second: What ability is actually required — knowledge, skill, time, communication, formal authority, or a combination of these?

Third: What does the person already know, and what must they learn or receive help with? Do not confuse a gap that can be addressed through learning with a lasting mismatch.

Fourth: Where are the task’s boundaries? What may the person decide, when must they refer back, and who will be affected by the decision?

Fifth: How will information pass on if the person is absent? The aim is not to watch someone every moment, but to keep people’s rights from depending on one individual’s memory.

These questions draw on the preceding meanings and have been formulated for practical use. They are not statements transmitted from the Companions. If the answers show that the task exceeds the person's capacity, correcting the assignment is better than waiting for a mistake and punishing someone for work they were not equipped to do.

Discipline is not a feat of solitary heroism

These scenes teach us that a serious person need not prove seriousness by carrying everything. 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, accepted his neighbour's account of what he had missed, then did the same for his neighbour. Abu Dharr's status as a Companion was not diminished when he was advised against an office unsuited to him. Mu'adh was sent to a task, but it came with boundaries protecting people's rights. Throughout a Muslim's life, rights remain multiple. Fulfilling one must not become a permanent route to neglecting the rest.

When responsibilities are well divided, discipline becomes quieter and more dependable. Each person knows what is required, recognises what they cannot yet do, seeks help where needed, hands work on clearly, and refuses to measure personal worth by office. When something fails, we examine the person and the system together. Did the person neglect something within their ability, or did we assign work without preparing them for it? Was information lost through carelessness, or did we build a process that only one individual knows how to sustain?

The aim is not for everyone to become capable of everything. It is for rights to reach those entitled to them, for capability to be placed where it benefits and trustworthiness where it protects, and for different abilities to cooperate in work that does not fall apart because one person is absent for an hour.

Chapter Eleven: The Companions between Resolve and Moderation

An example is more than one pattern of exertion

When we read accounts of the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, demanding deeds may catch our attention before quiet ones. We readily remember a long night of prayer or a great act of generosity. It is harder to notice the discipline of someone who fulfils a duty day after day and honours a trust without drawing attention. Selective reading can create an unbalanced picture: as though the path to Allah were sincere only when it exhausted a person's strength, or as though differences in voluntary worship revealed differences in faith that we could judge from the outside.

Yet an account must not be read in isolation, and virtue cannot be deduced from hardship alone. We need to read about resolve alongside knowledge of what has been prescribed, and abundant effort alongside the rights that must be fulfilled. A person may sustain an activity at one stage of life and need another approach later. The aim is to keep aspiration on its intended path, rather than dampen it, so that it does not become a competition to reproduce an image that neither suits the person nor protects those nearby.

Moderation here means neither laziness nor always choosing what is easiest. It means a measured approach that puts an action in its proper place and prevents excess from spoiling it or

displacing something with a stronger claim. One person may need to increase effort, another to organise effort already being made, and a third to stop imposing an unrequired burden on the self. An educator cannot choose well without knowing the circumstances, rather than bringing everyone the same prescription: do more.

Three resolutions corrected by Prophetic guidance

«جَاءَ ثَلَاثَةٌ رَهْطٍ إِلَى بُيُوتِ أَزْوَاجِ النَّبِيِّ ﷺ يَسْأَلُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَةِ النَّبِيِّ ﷺ، فَلَمَّا أُخْبِرُوا كَانَهُمْ تَقَالُوهَا، فَقَالُوا: وَإَيْنَ نَحْنُ مِنَ النَّبِيِّ ﷺ؟ قَدْ غُفِرَ لَهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِهِ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ. قَالَ أَحَدُهُمْ: أَمَا أَنَا فَإِنِّي أَصَلِّي اللَّيْلَ أَبَدًا. وَقَالَ آخَرُ: أَنَا أَصُومُ الدَّهْرَ وَلَا أَفْطِرُ. وَقَالَ آخَرُ: أَنَا أَعْتَزِلُ النِّسَاءَ فَلَا أَتَزَوَّجُ أَبَدًا. فَجَاءَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ فَقَالَ: أَنْتُمْ الَّذِينَ قُلْتُمْ كَذَا وَكَذَا؟ أَمَا وَاللَّهِ إِنِّي لَأَخْشَاكُمْ لِلَّهِ وَأَتْقَاكُمْ لَهُ، لَكِنِّي أَصُومُ وَأَفْطِرُ، وَأُصَلِّي وَأَرْقُدُ، وَأَتَزَوَّجُ النِّسَاءَ، فَمَنْ رَغِبَ عَنْ سُنَّتِي فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي»

Anas ibn Malik, may Allah be pleased with him, said.

Translation: ‘Three men came to the homes of the Prophet’s wives to ask about the worship of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. When told, they seemed to consider it little. They said, “Where are we in comparison with the Prophet? His past and future sins have been forgiven.” One said, “As for me, I will pray throughout every night.” Another said,

“I will fast continually and never leave a day without fasting.” Another said, “I will keep away from women and never marry.” The Messenger of Allah came and said, “Are you the ones who said such and such? By Allah, I fear Allah more than you and am more mindful of Him. Yet I fast and break my fast, pray and sleep, and marry women. Whoever turns away from my Sunnah is not of me.”⁹⁶

The difficulty in this incident was not a lack of desire for good. It lay in the standard by which good was assessed. Those making these resolutions thought that greater deprivation and exertion would bring them nearer, and the teaching returned them to guidance that brings worship and life together. This protects us from a serious educational mistake: praising every severe plan because its author is enthusiastic, then postponing questions about its legitimacy and effects until it collapses.

The correction did not add to these resolutions; it returned them to the Sunnah. Following the Sunnah therefore governs resolve. It must not become a secondary consideration we seek only after choosing a form of effort that pleases us.

A contemporary plan may reveal a similar pattern of thinking without sharing the incident’s legal ruling. An employee trying to make up for earlier shortcomings promises to work every night. A student removes every rest from the day. A parent turns

96 Anas ibn Malik; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Marriage, chapter encouraging marriage, no. 5063.

family time into an endless sequence of programmes. These are hypothetical comparisons in ways of thinking, not a legal analogy equating their rulings with that incident. The common question is: Do we consider only the claim of the work, or also the rights that will bear the cost of the increase?

Hanzalah and the fear of a changing inward state

«لَقِينِي أَبُو بَكْرٍ فَقَالَ: كَيْفَ أَنْتَ يَا حَنْظَلَةُ؟ قَالَ: قُلْتُ: نَافَقَ حَنْظَلَةُ. قَالَ: سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ، مَا تَقُولُ؟ قَالَ: قُلْتُ: نَكُونُ عِنْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ يُذَكِّرُنَا بِالنَّارِ وَالْجَنَّةِ حَتَّى كَأَنَّا رَأَى عَيْنٍ، فَإِذَا خَرَجْنَا مِنْ عِنْدِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ عَافَسْنَا الْأَزْوَاجَ وَالْأَوْلَادَ وَالضَّيْعَاتِ فَنَسِينَا كَثِيرًا. قَالَ أَبُو بَكْرٍ: فَوَاللَّهِ إِنَّا لَنَلْقَى مِثْلَ هَذَا. فَأَنْطَلَقْتُ أَنَا وَأَبُو بَكْرٍ حَتَّى دَخَلْنَا عَلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ. قُلْتُ: نَافَقَ حَنْظَلَةُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ. فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: وَمَا ذَاكَ؟ قُلْتُ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، نَكُونُ عِنْدَكَ تُذَكِّرُنَا بِالنَّارِ وَالْجَنَّةِ حَتَّى كَأَنَّا رَأَى عَيْنٍ، فَإِذَا خَرَجْنَا مِنْ عِنْدِكَ عَافَسْنَا الْأَزْوَاجَ وَالْأَوْلَادَ وَالضَّيْعَاتِ نَسِينَا كَثِيرًا. فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: وَالَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ، إِنْ لَوْ تَدُومُونَ عَلَى مَا تَكُونُونَ عِنْدِي وَفِي الذِّكْرِ لَصَافَحْتُكُمْ الْمَلَائِكَةَ عَلَى فُرُشِكُمْ وَفِي طُرُقِكُمْ، وَلَكِنْ يَا حَنْظَلَةُ سَاعَةً وَسَاعَةً ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ»

Hanzalah al-Usayyidi, may Allah be pleased with him, one of the scribes of the Messenger of Allah, said. Translation: ‘Abu Bakr met me and asked, “How are you, Hanzalah?” I said,

“Hanzalah has become a hypocrite.” He said, “Glory be to Allah! What are you saying?” I said, “When we are with the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, he reminds us of the Fire and Paradise until it is as though we see them with our own eyes. When we leave him, we become occupied with spouses, children and livelihoods, and forget much.” Abu Bakr said, “By Allah, we experience the same.” Abu Bakr and I went to the Messenger of Allah. I said, “Hanzalah has become a hypocrite, Messenger of Allah.” He asked, “How is that?” I said, “Messenger of Allah, when we are with you, you remind us of the Fire and Paradise until it is as though we see them with our own eyes. When we leave you and become occupied with spouses, children and livelihoods, we forget much.” The Messenger of Allah said, “By Him in whose hand is my soul, if you remained as you are with me and in remembrance, the angels would shake hands with you on your beds and in your streets. But, Hanzalah, a time for this and a time for that.” He said it three times.’⁹⁷

This hadith does not grant a time for sin as it grants a time for obedience. Its subject is the changing attentiveness of the heart when a person moves from a gathering of reminders to family, property and daily affairs, while the foundation of faith and

97 Hanzalah al-Usayyidi; Sahih Muslim, Book of Repentance, chapter on the virtue of continued remembrance, reflection on the Hereafter and watchfulness, and the permissibility of sometimes attending to worldly affairs, no. 2750a.

action remains. That distinction matters: a short phrase separated from its story can be used to mean something it does not say.

Hanzalah's response teaches honest observation and seeking an explanation. He did not turn his feeling into a final judgement on himself or conceal his question for fear of seeming inferior. He returned to someone who could teach him. A reader may experience something similar: an admonition softens the heart, then caring for children or attending to work does not bring the same intensity of feeling. Correction does not mean calling every ordinary state hypocrisy, nor using changing feelings as an excuse to neglect prayer and rights. It means learning what is required in each setting.

Expecting a heightened feeling at all times may cut a person off from quiet good deeds. Someone serves a father without visible emotion, restrains a word in an argument, or checks an account involving an entrusted responsibility. We cannot judge that person's inner state, but we know these deeds do not lose their meaning because they occurred on an ordinary day. Consistency is broader than uninterrupted emotional momentum.

Distinguish the foundation of commitment from the amount of voluntary worship

«يَا عَبْدَ اللَّهِ، أَلَمْ أُخْبِرْ أَنَّكَ تَصُومُ النَّهَارَ وَتَقُومُ اللَّيْلَ؟»

«فَلَا تَفْعَلْ، صُمْ وَأَفْطِرْ، وَقُمْ وَنَمْ، فَإِنَّ لِحَسَدِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا، وَإِنَّ لِعَيْنِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا، وَإِنَّ لِرِزْوَاجِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا، وَإِنَّ لِمُزَوْرِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا، وَإِنَّ بِحَسْبِكَ أَنْ تَصُومَ كُلَّ شَهْرٍ ثَلَاثَةَ أَيَّامٍ، فَإِنَّ لَكَ بِكُلِّ حَسَنَةٍ عَشْرَ أَمْثَالِهَا، فَإِنَّ ذَلِكَ صِيَامُ الدَّهْرِ كُلِّهِ»

«فَصُمْ صِيَامَ نَبِيِّ اللَّهِ دَاوُدَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ، وَلَا تَزِدْ عَلَيْهِ»

«نِصْفَ الدَّهْرِ»

‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘As, may Allah be pleased with them both, said. Translation: ‘The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said to me, “‘Abd Allah, have I not been told that you fast by day and stand in prayer by night?” I replied, “Yes, Messenger of Allah.” He said, “Do not do that. Fast and break your fast; stand in prayer and sleep. Your body has a right over you, your eyes have a right over you, your wife has a right over you, and your visitors have a right over you. It is enough for you to fast three days each month, for every good deed is multiplied tenfold: that is like fasting for all time.” I pressed for more, so more was required of me. I said, “Messenger of Allah, I have strength.” He said, “Then observe the fast of Allah’s Prophet Dawud, peace be upon him, and do not exceed it.” I asked, “What was the fast of Allah’s Prophet Dawud?” He said, “Half the time.” When he

grew old, ‘Abd Allah would say, ‘If only I had accepted the Prophet’s concession.’⁹⁸

The point we need here is that capacity cannot be assessed at just one moment. What someone can carry in youth with few commitments may differ from what they can carry in old age or as responsibilities expand.

This does not turn every obligation into an amount a person chooses individually. Obligatory prayer is no experimental project to increase or decrease according to enthusiasm. Established rights do not disappear because someone wants an easier programme. We are discussing the amount of voluntary worship, the means used and other optional activities, while learning the lawful concessions where their conditions apply.

When changing a plan, therefore, ask exactly what is being changed. Is it an optional reading period, or a promise on which another person relies? The number of voluntary acts, or an obligatory right itself? The method of performing a task, or the responsibility itself? Naming the matter precisely prevents flexibility from concealing neglect and prevents steadfastness from concealing a burden the self was never required to carry.

«أَخَى النَّبِيِّ ﷺ بَيْنَ سَلَمَانَ وَأَبِي الدَّرْدَاءِ، فَرَارَ سَلَمَانُ أَبَا الدَّرْدَاءِ، فَرَأَى أَنَّ الدَّرْدَاءِ مُتَبَدِّلَةً، فَقَالَ لَهَا: مَا شَأْنُكَ؟ قَالَتْ:

98 ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘As; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Fasting, chapter on the body’s right during fasting, no. 1975.

أَخُوكَ أَبُو الدَّرْدَاءِ لَيْسَ لَهُ حَاجَةٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا. فَجَاءَ أَبُو الدَّرْدَاءِ،
 فَصَنَعَ لَهُ طَعَامًا، فَقَالَ: كُلْ. قَالَ: فَإِنِّي صَائِمٌ. قَالَ: مَا أَنَا بِأَكِلٍ
 حَتَّى تَأْكُلَ. قَالَ: فَأَكَلَ. فَلَمَّا كَانَ اللَّيْلُ ذَهَبَ أَبُو الدَّرْدَاءِ يَقُومُ،
 قَالَ: نَمْ. فَنَامَ، ثُمَّ ذَهَبَ يَقُومُ، فَقَالَ: نَمْ. فَلَمَّا كَانَ مِنْ آخِرِ اللَّيْلِ
 قَالَ سَلْمَانُ: فَمِ الْآنَ. فَصَلَّيَا، فَقَالَ لَهُ سَلْمَانُ: إِنَّ لِرَبِّكَ عَلَيْكَ
 حَقًّا، وَلِنَفْسِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا، وَلِأَهْلِكَ عَلَيْكَ حَقًّا، فَأَعْطِ كُلَّ ذِي
 حَقٍّ حَقَّهُ. فَأَتَى النَّبِيَّ ﷺ فَذَكَرَ ذَلِكَ لَهُ، فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ: صَدَقَ
 سَلْمَانُ

Abu Juhayfah, may Allah be pleased with him, said.

Translation: ‘The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, established brotherhood between Salman and Abu al-Darda’. Salman visited Abu al-Darda’ and saw Umm al-Darda’ in plain, unadorned dress. He asked, “What is the matter?” She said, “Your brother Abu al-Darda’ has no desire for worldly life.” Abu al-Darda’ came and prepared food for him. Salman said, “Eat.” He replied, “I am fasting.” Salman said, “I will not eat until you eat,” so he ate. When night came, Abu al-Darda’ went to rise for prayer. Salman said, “Sleep,” and he slept. Then he went to rise again, and Salman said, “Sleep.” When the latter part of the night came, Salman said, “Rise now,” and they both prayed. Salman told him, “Your Lord has a right over you, your self has a right over you, and your family has a right over you. Give everyone with a right their due.” He came to the Prophet

and mentioned this to him. The Prophet said, “Salman has spoken the truth.”⁹⁹

The meaning of this report gathers together what has preceded it: much work in one area does not give a general licence to neglect the rest. Fulfilling another person’s right is not an obstacle outside the path of purifying the soul. It may belong at the very heart of that path.

Comparisons that help and comparisons that hurt

The life of someone diligent can move us towards good. We learn from sincerity and see that the self can overcome some of its imagined incapacity. Comparison loses its usefulness, however, when it erases different circumstances. We read about a scholar free to devote himself to study, then judge by his day someone combining earning, caregiving and learning. We see a public achievement without seeing the support that made it possible or the other activities its author set aside.

A helpful example leads us to ask what meaning we can learn from it: making a good start, being patient with correction, protecting time from waste, or giving money where it belongs. Copying an amount without understanding may produce a promise that does not last. It is unfair to ask readers to imitate

99 Abu Juhayfah; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Fasting, chapter on asking a brother under oath to break a voluntary fast when that is more suitable, without requiring him to make it up, no. 1968.

every quality in every person they read about, until they carry a combination that never existed in any one life.

This does not require accepting every low estimate of our capacity. Some people need a serious attempt that reveals they can do more. The difference is to attempt a lawful activity with a defined increase and an honest review, rather than an exaggerated pledge that makes a safe reduction shameful. If the increase proves beneficial and manageable, we maintain it. If it harms another duty, we correct it.

A hypothetical example: two commitments that numbers cannot compare

Imagine two readers choosing the same learning programme. One has predictable time and a quiet place; the other's evenings are interrupted by caring for a relative. The first completes four long sessions, the second three shorter ones. The numbers alone cannot tell us who better fulfilled what was required. The first may have wasted available hours, while the second used what was possible and preserved the right of care. The reverse could also be true. We need the facts, not praise awarded in advance.

Each considers two things: the sincerity of effort within available means, and the suitability of the plan for actual life. The first may need a steady starting time and fewer distractions; the second may need smaller portions of material and available support. Both are responsible, but responsibility does not require identical quantities. The aim is actual improvement in the work, rather than matching records.

Review should ask more than how many sessions occurred. What was understood? What remains? Did the learning prove useful where needed? Was anything neglected that needs repair? In this way, an example works within real life, and resolve remains a strength for fulfilling rights rather than pressure to produce one uniform kind of person.

What these Companions leave with us

These accounts give the reader two kinds of courage: to press the self towards what benefits it, and to correct a severe idea once imagined to be nearer to good. A person may need to begin despite heaviness, to reduce an excess so an obligation can be fulfilled properly, or to ask a question that removes a fear founded on misunderstanding.

The question that accompanies us is not how to appear more enduring than others. It is how to be more faithful to what Allah has taught us, more truthful about what we can carry, and better at honouring those who live with us. In this direction, seriousness and gentleness meet, resolve becomes sustainable, and moderation gives no excuse for abandoning the path.

Chapter Twelve: The Successors and the Safeguarding of Knowledge

What enters the mind becomes part of a decision

Disorder does not always appear in schedules and possessions.

A person may keep a tidy desk and arrive on time, yet base judgements on a report of unknown origin or repeat advice without distinguishing its evidence from its popularity.

Discipline has failed at a point before action: the source from which knowledge was received. Later improvements to procedures may still be governed by false information.

The Successors' care with narration shows a form of education concerned with more than memorising large amounts. It teaches us to ask: From whom did you receive this? What exactly did you hear? Is this transmitter qualified for this kind of knowledge? We are not transferring the technical system of chains of transmission to every modern report. We recognise in it that knowledge is a trust with conditions, and that a good intention cannot compensate for an unreliable route by which information reached us.

The introduction to Sahih Muslim preserves three reports that illuminate this meaning: two statements by Ibn Sirin and one by Abu al-Zinad.

Ibn Sirin: asking who provides the knowledge

«إِنَّ هَذَا الْعِلْمَ دِينٌ، فَانْظُرُوا عَمَّنْ تَأْخُذُونَ دِينَكُمْ»

Muhammad ibn Sirin said. Translation: ‘This knowledge is religion, so consider from whom you take your religion.’¹⁰⁰

This statement does not invite beginners to judge scholars by whim. Nor does it permit choosing whoever agrees with one’s wishes and calling that person more reliable. It places responsibility for receiving knowledge alongside responsibility for speaking: Where did the idea come from by which I intend to worship Allah or which I intend to attribute to His law?

«لَمْ يَكُونُوا يَسْأَلُونَ عَنِ الْإِسْنَادِ، فَلَمَّا وَقَعَتِ الْفِتْنَةُ قَالُوا: سَمُّوا لَنَا رِجَالَكُمْ، فَيُنْظَرُ إِلَى أَهْلِ السُّنَّةِ فَيُؤْخَذُ حَدِيثُهُمْ، وَيُنْظَرُ إِلَى أَهْلِ الْبِدْعِ فَلَا يُؤْخَذُ حَدِيثُهُمْ»

Ibn Sirin also said. Translation: ‘They did not used to ask about the chain of transmission. When the turmoil occurred, they said, “Name your transmitters for us.” Those of the Sunnah would be

100 Muhammad ibn Sirin; Introduction to Sahih Muslim, chapter explaining that the chain of transmission is part of religion, that narration is accepted only from trustworthy transmitters, and that justified criticism of narrators protects the Sacred Law rather than constituting forbidden backbiting, report 26.

examined and their hadith accepted; those of innovation would be examined and their hadith not accepted.’¹⁰¹

The statement joins inquiry into the route of transmission with consideration of those carrying religious knowledge. An appealing report is insufficient. An attractive presentation cannot replace knowing where a statement comes from when belief or action will be built upon it.

Our reader needs to recognise that trust is more than a feeling created by good presentation. We may admire a speaker’s voice, enjoy a story or find a conclusion comforting. Admiration does not tell us whether the report is accurate. Discipline includes bearing a pause before making an attribution, especially when a hadith, a ruling or an accusation against someone is involved.

This pause differs from permanent doubt that prevents learning. Not every reader must become a critic of chains of transmission. The reader should know the limits of personal knowledge and consult sources and specialists where needed. Someone unable to assess a narration must not invent a grading for it. Someone unaware of scholarly disagreement must not announce a consensus merely because no other view has reached them. A suitable question may be more truthful than a sweeping answer we lack the means to give.

101 Muhammad ibn Sirin; Introduction to Sahih Muslim, chapter on the chain of transmission and trustworthy narrators, report 27.

Uprightness alone does not confer every skill

«أَدْرَكْتُ بِالْمَدِينَةِ مِائَةً، كُلُّهُمْ مَأْمُونٌ، مَا يُؤْخَذُ عَنْهُمْ الْحَدِيثُ،
يُقَالُ: لَيْسَ مِنْ أَهْلِهِ»

Abu al-Zinad said. Translation: ‘I encountered a hundred people in Madinah, all trustworthy, from whom hadith was not taken. It would be said, “He is not qualified for it.”’¹⁰²

This report concerns a particular field. It draws attention to the distinction between a person’s trustworthiness and the technical qualification to transmit narration. Righteousness is a great virtue, but it does not make memory accurate in every discipline or supply knowledge never learnt.

The connection with discipline becomes clear here. Respect for someone may prevent a necessary question about expertise. We give that person a responsibility beyond their ability and imagine we are honouring them. Or we may respond hurtfully to an error, as though weakness in one field cancelled every virtue. Between these extremes, we can preserve respect while recognising the limits of what may be taken from that person on a particular matter.

Medicine, engineering, education and finance offer different forms of this distinction. We choose a person according to the task and seek the evidence appropriate to it. Success in one field

102 Abu al-Zinad; Introduction to Sahih Muslim, chapter on the chain of transmission and trustworthy narrators, report 30.

does not certify everything that person says. These are approximate contemporary examples, not a transfer of every detailed ruling of hadith scholarship to other professions. The shared point is that moral trustworthiness and competence each require consideration.

When we are the speaker, the question comes closer: Am I answering because I know, or because I am accustomed to being asked? Do I explain that this is an opinion or a limited experience, or allow it to grow in the listener's mind into a general truth? Claiming what we do not know cannot preserve our standing. A clear acknowledgement of our limits may preserve it better.

Verify before passing a word on

A report passes through stages: someone hears it, understands it, remembers or records it, then passes it on; another person uses it in a decision. Error can enter at any stage. A transmitter hears only part and omits its qualification, understands an example as a general ruling, remembers a meaning but presents it as the speaker's exact words, or applies a true statement to a situation it does not cover.

We therefore cannot reduce care with knowledge to placing a reference at the foot of a page. A reference makes verification possible; it does not automatically prove that the author used the source well. The reader needs to know which passage supports which claim and to distinguish the text from the author's interpretation. A citation may exist while the claim exceeds its

source. The fault then lies in the use of the book, not its existence.

We suggest two linked questions whenever a meaning is conveyed: Is this what the source said? And is this what we are trying to establish? If a study found an association between two factors, do not report that one caused the other. If a historian described an individual's circumstances, do not turn them into the custom of an entire age. If a scholar answered a question with particular circumstances, do not remove those circumstances and apply the answer everywhere.

Ibn Sirin's statement teaches that responsibility for receiving information does not end by assigning blame to the first transmitter. We cannot examine every report to the same depth, but we can reduce what we assert with certainty and distinguish what we know from what we have merely heard. When reports affect people's rights, this duty gains weight because the cost of error extends beyond the reader.

Correction is not defeat in a gathering of knowledge

One of the harder forms of striving against the self is withdrawing a piece of information once trusted. A person may have shared it among friends or built a long argument upon it, and feel that admitting error will weaken their image. Defending it after the fault becomes clear, however, turns an error of knowledge into a failure of trustworthiness. Clear correction preserves people's ability to return to what is right.

A useful correction states what changed. ‘There was a misunderstanding’ is insufficient if an author attributed to a source something it did not say. The author can explain: I reported the statement this way, then found that a qualification had been omitted; the correct account is this. If the entire conclusion is unsupported, say so. Changing a small word must not conceal the underlying problem.

At the same time, every correction need not overturn all of someone’s work. Most of a study may be sound while one passage needs repair. A fair method distinguishes, avoiding praise blind to errors and criticism blind to what is correct. This is discipline in judgement itself: the size of the conclusion should fit the size of the evidence.

A hypothetical case: advice passed on to a school

Imagine a teacher reading a post claiming that a short exercise greatly improves every child’s attention. The teacher forwards it to colleagues and proposes using it throughout the school.

Asked about the research, the teacher finds that the post cited a small study measuring performance on a particular task, rather than school achievement or general discipline. The research was not necessarily useless, but a wide gap separated its findings from the claim made about them.

A disciplined response goes beyond blaming the post’s author. The teacher restates what is known: this was a research task involving a particular sample, and it gives us no universal promise. The next question is whether the exercise has a

plausible educational benefit that can be explored safely without wasting students' time. If a limited trial is chosen, the teacher defines what it will measure, protects the rights of children and families, and avoids calling it a proven programme before it is one.

The incident can become useful learning among the teachers. What questions should have preceded enthusiasm? Who participated? What was the comparison? What was the actual result? Did it last? Were there unwanted effects? These are contemporary questions specific to empirical research. We do not attribute their wording to Ibn Sirin. They serve a shared purpose: preventing a desire for good from producing an inaccurate claim about knowledge.

Discipline whose effects reach into life

This subject reaches beyond the gathering of narrators. Someone who learns to say 'I do not know' where appropriate makes fewer promises beyond their power. Someone who distinguishes trustworthiness from expertise allocates responsibilities more soundly. Someone who corrects a report learns that returning to what is right matters more than preserving an old image.

The fruit should not be so many qualifications that the meaning disappears. We need clear speech with clear boundaries: state what has been established, identify what is an inference, and leave what we do not know. Knowledge can then help

uprightness instead of becoming noise that adds little understanding to abundant information.

When carrying a word to another person, let us ask what right we carry with it. The sentence may remain in that person's memory for years, entering worship, judgements about others or the upbringing of a child. Safeguarding the route by which knowledge reached us is a form of faithfulness to whoever receives it next, even if we never know their name.

Chapter Thirteen: Schools of Learning in the Second Century

From hearing much to building understanding well

A student may imagine that growth is measured by how much is collected: book titles, hours of lessons and the many useful points that can be repeated. Gathering has its place, but it does not by itself turn knowledge into a structure a person can return to and act upon. Pages may fill with scattered information while their owner cannot distinguish foundation from detail, a text from a transmitter's explanation, or an established statement from an opinion requiring examination.

Between hearing knowledge and benefiting from it lies a distance crossed through selection, questions and review. Malik's words and the opening of his Muwatta' bring these meanings closer: What should we pass on? How do we connect a question to its foundation? When should we ask so that what we intend to act upon becomes clear?

A living school of learning brings together knowledge, people, differences and review. A distant image may reduce it to a teacher speaking and students memorising. We seek what makes knowledge more accurate, clearer and more beneficial, rather than merely the outward appearance of a gathering.

Do not relate everything you hear

Malik said to Ibn Wahb:

«اعلم أنه ليس يسلم رجل حدث بكل ما سمع ولا يكون إماماً
أبداً وهو يحدث بكل ما سمع»

Translation: ‘Know that a man who relates everything he hears will not remain free of error, and he will never become an imam while relating everything he hears.’¹⁰³

Between hearing and relating lies a responsibility to sift, especially when what is conveyed concerns religion. Not everything reaching your ears is fit to pass to others. An error may lie in wording you did not notice or an attribution whose route you do not know.

Refraining from transmission may be harder on the self than passing something on. A learner finds a moving phrase, an engaging story or a convenient answer, then discovers that its source is unknown. The learner must give up something that would have increased an audience’s admiration. This is a struggle in the handling of knowledge. Its exertion is not bodily, but it puts trustworthiness before the pleasure of making an impression.

Selection does not mean concealing whatever disagrees with one’s opinion. Leaving out what is unestablished differs from

103 Malik ibn Anas; Introduction to Sahih Muslim, chapter prohibiting the narration of everything one hears, report 10.

choosing evidence to defend a predetermined conclusion. The first improves knowledge; the second narrows the picture until it deceives its owner. A report may be sound without serving the view we prefer. We should then reconsider our view or explain differences in interpretation, rather than remove the report from the picture.

Digital life has made collecting easier than ever: copying a text puts it in our collection. Easy collection gives neither understanding nor a right to make an attribution. Readers may keep material they intend to review, provided they distinguish, in mind and notes, material already read and understood from material still unopened. A reference list is no certificate of having entered its authors' minds.

The Muwatta': a subject that joins text and inquiry

Ibn Shihab reported:

«أن عمر بن عبد العزيز أخر الصلاة يومًا فدخل عليه عروة بن الزبير فأخبره أن المغيرة بن شعبة أخر الصلاة يومًا وهو بالكوفة فدخل عليه أبو مسعود الأنصاري فقال ما هذا يا مغيرة أليس قد علمت أن جبريل نزل فصلى فصلى رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ثم صلى فصلى رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ثم صلى فصلى رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ثم صلى فصلى رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ثم صلى

فصلى رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ثم قال: بهذا أمرت.
 فقال عمر بن عبد العزيز اعلم ما تحدث به يا عروة أو إن
 جبريل هو الذي أقام لرسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم وقت
 الصلاة قال عروة كذلك كان بشير بن أبي مسعود الأنصاري
 يحدث عن أبيه»

Translation: ‘One day ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Aziz delayed the prayer. ‘Urwah ibn al-Zubayr entered and told him that al-Mughirah ibn Shu‘bah had once delayed the prayer while in Kufah. Abu Mas‘ud al-Ansari entered upon him and said, “What is this, Mughirah? Do you not know that Jibril descended and prayed, and the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, prayed; then he prayed and the Messenger of Allah prayed; then he prayed and the Messenger of Allah prayed; then he prayed and the Messenger of Allah prayed; then he prayed and the Messenger of Allah prayed? Then he said, ‘This is what you have been commanded to do.’” ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Aziz said, “Be sure of what you are relating, ‘Urwah. Was it Jibril who established the prayer times for the Messenger of Allah?” ‘Urwah said, “That is how Bashir ibn Abi Mas‘ud al-Ansari used to relate it from his father.””¹⁰⁴

104 Abu Mas‘ud al-Ansari and ‘A’ishah, Mother of the Believers; Malik, *Al-Muwatta’*, Book of Prayer Times, chapter on prayer times, reports 1 and 2. This passage is from report 1.

«قال عروة ولقد حدثتني عائشة زوج النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم كان يصلي العصر والشمس في حجرتها قبل أن تظهر»

Translation: “‘Urwah said, “‘A’ishah, the Prophet’s wife, also told me that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, would pray ‘Asr while the sun was still within her chamber, before it rose clear of it.””¹⁰⁵

Prayer here is an act to be performed at its proper time, and knowledge helps correct its performance. ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Aziz’s position did not prevent ‘Urwah from drawing his attention to the matter; the reminder did not prevent ‘Umar from asking a question. Learning advances when a gathering has room for both correction and clarification, with reaching the truth remaining its purpose.

A learner may hear a text and its explanation in the same session, then later confuse the source’s words with the teacher’s account. Distinguishing them at the time helps. On returning to notes, the learner can identify the original source without giving an explanation the same standing as the text itself.

Organising knowledge around a question makes inquiry easier. What is the foundation we return to? How is the action currently

105 ‘A’ishah, Mother of the Believers; Malik, Al-Muwatta’, Book of Prayer Times, chapter on prayer times, report 2; see also the preceding report 1 from Abu Mas‘ud al-Ansari.

performed? What needs explanation or a comparison of supporting texts? The better learners know where their question lies, the more useful their consultation with scholars becomes.

Do not move to a branch whose foundation is missing

Order is more than decoration for a library. Someone who learns a ruling but loses the question it answered may apply it in the wrong place. Someone who memorises a legal conclusion without knowing it arose through scholarly reasoning across several texts may treat it as a single text allowing no interpretation. Learning needs connections that show the different levels of knowledge, rather than piles of adjacent pages.

Imagine a student collecting reading under four clear headings: the text relied upon, the meaning understood, the question still open, and the application within reach. This prevents what remains unclear from hiding among memorised items. On returning to the teacher, the student brings a specific question instead of the sweeping statement, ‘I understood nothing.’

Review reveals the difference between rereading and reconstructing understanding. Eyes can pass over a page many times, yet once it is closed the learner may be unable to explain the idea. Let us test our understanding: Can we connect the matter to its foundation? Do we know where our certainty ends? Can we distinguish the text we read from a comment we added?

Good manners towards knowledge include refusing to let a great name conceal our lack of understanding. Someone may repeatedly say, ‘Malik said,’ or cite another imam, without knowing the matter addressed or the qualification given. A report becomes more trustworthy by recovering its context, not by multiplying names.

Respect for the teacher leaves room for questions

A question that protects accurate understanding is part of respect for knowledge. The earlier account showed that clarification remained possible after a reminder. A learner needs the reassurance to state what remains unclear without shame and to receive an explanation without stubbornness.

In practice, a question needs manners just as an answer needs truthfulness. We ask about what we do not understand, distinguishing a request for explanation from a wish to embarrass the teacher. If a matter exceeds our knowledge, we must not use half a fact to judge someone else’s entire learning. Equally, a teacher should not treat every request for clarification as rebellion, teaching students silence instead of understanding.

Learning to ask also helps beyond the study gathering. An employee who seeks a clear specification before acting may prevent a costly mistake rather than obstruct work. A doctor who requests necessary information is not less expert than someone confident without evidence. Yet questioning itself can become delay when repeated after sufficient explanation. We need sound judgement: Which information would actually

change the action, and what are we collecting to escape making a start?

Knowledge that passes from its holder to others

Orderly learning is not an end apart from benefit. The Muwatta's discussion of prayer times concerns prayer actually performed, not a question living only on paper. We can carry this meaning into our learning: What has become clearer in our worship, dealings or responsibilities after reading? Not every page must yield an immediate visible result; some learning accumulates. Yet a long absence of any connection with action deserves a question about our direction.

Acting upon knowledge may mean correcting a ruling previously attributed without verification, ceasing to issue a fatwa beyond one's ability, or teaching a matter properly understood. It may mean relinquishing excessive confidence in an old piece of information and asking again. These are quiet actions, but they show that knowledge has become more than phrases displaying the owner's education.

Understanding one lesson does not oblige readers to become public teachers. Passing on a known amount differs from taking authority in what remains unlearned. Discipline includes knowing the extent of what one can explain and acknowledging the need to consult on other matters. This preserves both one's path of growth and a questioner's right to a reliable answer.

A hypothetical experience in a reading group

Three readers meet to study a short chapter of a scholarly book. The first proposes more pages each week, the second memorises definitions, and the third asks many questions. These roles may appear opposed but can complement one another if the readers agree on a clear purpose. They read a defined amount, each explains an idea understood, and together they identify what requires a teacher or another source.

At their first review, they discover that they keep repeating a term whose meaning they do not agree on. If success meant only finishing pages, they would carry the misunderstanding into later chapters. They pause, clarify it and then resume. This does not prescribe permanent slowness for every subject. It shows how adjusting pace can protect learning from merely formal completion.

They then distinguish in their notes between what the book said and the applications they proposed. This small step makes discussion calmer: disagreeing with an application no longer sounds like disagreeing with the author. Organising knowledge also improves their relationship, because they know what they disagree about instead of arguing over overlapping statements.

Abundance needs sound connections before it can build

Good learning involves selection, structure and action. Choose faithfully what you pass on, connect a matter to its foundation, and review your understanding until it is sound. When

knowledge enters action, its order shows in a better decision, improved worship or a right faithfully fulfilled.

A review session may add no book to your list yet make one book more useful. Leaving an unestablished story untold may win no admiration in a gathering, yet preserve a listener's right. With a sound foundation, the abundance that follows can add to knowledge rather than to confusion bearing knowledge's name.

Chapter Fourteen: Ibn al-Mubarak — Balanced Endeavours and a Lasting Benefit

Beyond the image of a scholar who does everything

A life of wide-ranging endeavour draws us in. We sometimes read it like a list of achievements: knowledge, worship, earning, generosity and travel. Then we close the book feeling that a righteous person must combine all these in the same quantities. A useful biography does not ask us to copy the scale of another life. It helps us understand the direction that joined its activities and the boundaries that preserved faithfulness among them.

Al-Dhahabi transmitted from al-‘Abbas ibn Mus‘ab:

«جمع عبد الله الحديث، والفقه، والعربية، وأيام الناس،
والشجاعة، والسخاء، والتجارة، والمحبة عند الفرق»

Translation: “‘Abd Allah combined hadith, jurisprudence, Arabic, knowledge of people’s histories, courage, generosity, trade and affection among different groups.”¹⁰⁶

106 Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Dhahabi, *Siyar A‘lam al-Nubala’*, biography of ‘Abd Allah ibn al-Mubarak, 8:379–383: the opening biographical account and his fields of endeavour.

The fields are many; the person remains one. What benefits us in this company is to ask about the connections among knowledge, action and giving, and the trustworthiness that preserves them when they compete.

His positions in the criticism of narration bring that trustworthiness closer. Caring about the accuracy of what he transmits is part of benefiting people. It is not enough for words to please them; reliable knowledge should stand behind those words.

Before admiring the meaning, ask about its route to the Prophet

‘Abd Allah ibn al-Mubarak said:

«الإِسْنَادُ مِنَ الدِّينِ وَلَوْ لَا الْإِسْنَادُ لَقَالَ مَنْ شَاءَ مَا شَاءَ»

Translation: ‘The chain of transmission is part of religion. Without the chain of transmission, anyone could say whatever they wished.’¹⁰⁷

Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn ‘Isa al-Talaqani said:

«قُلْتُ لِعَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ الْمُبَارَكِ يَا أَبَا عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ الْحَدِيثَ الَّذِي جَاءَ: إِنْ مِنَ الْبَرِّ بَعْدَ الْبَرِّ أَنْ تَصْلِيَ لِأَبُويكَ مَعَ صَلَاتِكَ وَتَصُومَ

107 ‘Abd Allah ibn al-Mubarak; Introduction to Sahih Muslim, chapter on the chain of transmission being part of religion and the scrutiny of trustworthy narrators, report 32.

لهما مع صومك. قال فقال عبد الله يا أبا إسحاق عمن هذا قال قلت له هذا من حديث شهاب بن خراش. فقال ثقة عمن قال قلت عن الحجاج بن دينار. قال ثقة عمن قال قلت قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم. قال يا أبا إسحاق إن بين الحجاج بن دينار وبين النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم مفاوز تنقطع فيها أعناق المطي ولكن ليس في الصدقة اختلاف»

Translation: 'I said to 'Abd Allah ibn al-Mubarak, "Abu 'Abd al-Rahman, what about the report that has come: 'A further act of dutifulness is to pray for your parents alongside your own prayer and fast for them alongside your own fasting'?" 'Abd Allah asked, "Abu Ishaq, from whom is this?" I said, "It is a report from Shihab ibn Khirash." He said, "Trustworthy. From whom?" I said, "From al-Hajjaj ibn Dinar." He said, "Trustworthy. From whom?" I said, "He said: The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said." He replied, "Abu Ishaq, between al-Hajjaj ibn Dinar and the Prophet lie deserts so vast that the necks of riding animals

would break in crossing them. But there is no disagreement concerning charity.””¹⁰⁸

An attractive meaning was not enough to bypass inquiry. Ibn al-Mubarak follows the route link by link until he exposes what is missing. Love of dutifulness to parents does not permit attributing an unestablished statement to the Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. Sincere love also appears in safeguarding his words.

Such precision requires a patience different from enduring physical effort. A critic could accept a report that pleases people and encourages dutifulness, yet chooses to ask until its standing is clear. The question may seem to complicate a good idea, but it protects a greater principle: a worthy aim must not license an attribution we do not know to be sound.

Contemporary research offers an approximate parallel, not a technical equivalent. A writer possesses a study title, journal name and statistic, yet leaves out the link connecting them to the announced claim. The study may genuinely be published, but did it measure that outcome? Did it involve the population

108 ‘Abd Allah ibn al-Mubarak; Introduction to Sahih Muslim, chapter on the chain of transmission being part of religion and the scrutiny of trustworthy narrators, report 32. The statement about praying and fasting for parents is quoted within an account criticising its disconnected attribution; it is not presented here as an established Prophetic hadith.

under discussion? Does it establish causation or association? The issue is the soundness of the route from source to statement, not merely the presence of a reference.

Fairness when criticising someone devoted to worship

‘Abd Allah ibn al-Mubarak said:

«قلت لسفيان الثوري إن عباد بن كثير من تعرف حاله. وإذا حدث جاء بأمر عظيم فترى أن أقول للناس لا تأخذوا عنه قال سفيان بلى. قال عبد الله فكنت إذا كنت في مجلس ذكر فيه عباد أثنت عليه في دينه وأقول لا تأخذوا عنه»

Translation: ‘I said to Sufyan al-Thawri, “You know the condition of ‘Abbad ibn Kathir. When he narrates, he brings very grave matters. Do you think I should tell people not to take from him?” Sufyan said, “Yes.” ‘Abd Allah said, “Whenever I was in a gathering where ‘Abbad was mentioned, I would praise his religious devotion and say, ‘Do not take from him.’”¹⁰⁹

Two compatible things stand together here: acknowledging visible virtue and refusing to accept narration its transmitter cannot handle accurately. Trustworthiness does not require erasing his worship before criticising his narration. Love for

109 ‘Abd Allah ibn al-Mubarak; Introduction to Sahih Muslim, chapter on identifying defects in hadith transmitters and the imams’ statements about them, report 38.

him does not require silence about a fault whose effects reach other people.

We need this capacity in our disagreements. Someone we respect may err in a statement or task, and we feel forced to choose between defending everything and condemning everything. The report teaches a more precise judgement: preserve what is sound in the person's merit, specify the objection and its evidence, and avoid substituting broad labels for careful distinctions.

A colleague may be trustworthy and diligent yet lack skill in checking figures. Respect does not require assigning a responsibility the colleague cannot perform, and transferring it to a specialist need not diminish the colleague's worth. In teaching, someone may offer moving encouragement without knowing how to trace and assess religious texts. People may benefit from that person's strength while consulting others where it ends. An all-embracing image of authority in every field may harm both speaker and audience.

Different endeavours need a connecting purpose

Different activities can support one another: learning improves action, earning enables giving, and service reveals what more we need to learn. Many fields do not remove the need to order rights, however. Someone may perform a limited task well and benefit others more through it than through scattering effort across unfinished activities.

A useful question follows: Do our varied activities serve clear purposes, or scatter us among images we want to possess? Earning may support independence and generosity, or become endless absorption. Learning may prepare us for service, or accumulate status without action. The connection between activities and their aims needs review. Variety is not always balance, and leaving some fields aside is not always a deficiency.

Balance does not mean equal divisions of time. An urgent right may occupy most of a day. A stage of learning may require concentration, followed by a stage of service from which others benefit. Uprightness is preserved by keeping fundamental duties and rights visible beneath enthusiasm for a favoured activity. A person may then have a narrow specialism and a wide benefit, by performing it well and connecting with those whose work completes it.

It would be wrong to read historical generosity as a promise that successful trade automatically follows righteousness, or that someone with little money has less discipline. Biography is no experiment isolating the causes of wealth and poverty. It is enough to see some available means used beneficially, then ask what is available to us: money, knowledge, time, expertise or support that preserves a right.

A lasting benefit reaches beyond its author's name

What lasts most powerfully from a scholar may be a sentence that teaches us to review our knowledge, rather than an

astonishing report about abundant deeds. When Ibn al-Mubarak stops a disconnected attribution, he protects the right to accurate knowledge of a recipient not yet born. When he distinguishes a narrator's righteousness from accuracy, he leaves a means of fairness reaching beyond the particular individual discussed.

This benefit cannot be measured only by the number who hear the story. It may prevent a false report, change an author's method or teach a reader that a distinguished name in a chain does not dispense with the rest of the route. Anyone working on a beneficial project can ask: What will remain usable after I am absent? Have I left information that can be checked, or only dependence on people's trust in me?

In scholarship and education, documentation is part of giving. It lets those who follow review, correct and continue. Concealing sources or confusing what we have read with what we have merely heard about makes our work harder for others, however good our intentions. We need not claim that earlier generations had our tools. We can use the means available to us well in preserving the same trust.

A hypothetical case: a useful project refuses a tempting shortcut

A reader is preparing educational material for family and colleagues. A moving story of sacrifice seems likely to bring the idea closer. On consulting its source, the reader finds that it is a story told for admonition. The source's form and wording are preserved, with a brief note in the footnote. The reader explains

the sound meaning it illustrates, without building a ruling upon it or adding details absent from the account.

Another message attributes a statement to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, but the reader finds no verified source. That statement is set aside pending clarification and replaced with a sound supporting text. The admonition remains moving, and the distinction remains clear between a story whose lesson is useful and evidence on which we rely.

The reader then discovers a small error in a previously published reference, corrects the original and informs recipients when the error matters. This is practical trustworthiness, not a heroic feat calling for praise. Leaving the error to protect an image would increase its audience and make it harder to distinguish the correct text from the familiar version.

Company that raises aspiration and gives it bounds

This company yields three meanings close to action: faithful attribution, fairness in criticism, and connecting varied activities to the rights they serve. Readers can begin with what is at hand and master their own role without imposing the scale of another person's life upon themselves.

These standards may seem less exciting than figures for spending, travel and night prayer, yet they are closer to making a difference in a reader's life. They can be practised today while checking a report, choosing someone for a task or writing

something others will use. Biography then becomes a companion in learning, rather than a measure before which a person feels powerless and closes the book.

Chapter Fifteen: The Third Century and Responsibility in Teaching

From the manners of a gathering to the duties of a profession

A discussion of learner discipline is incomplete if the teacher escapes accountability. We may require a child to attend, pay attention and finish assignments while leaving the adult's obligations vague. Was the lesson prepared? Was the promised time honoured? Did repetition help understanding? Were students treated fairly despite differences in family background and ability? Education is not a series of demands moving in only one direction.

Teaching places duties on the teacher before giving the teacher claims upon students. The teacher chooses what makes the meaning accessible, makes time for those who need it, and practises the trustworthiness expected of learners. With this direction, the profession becomes a service developed through knowledge and justice.

Repetition that seeks understanding

Anas reported about the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace:

«أنه كان إذا تكلم بكلمة أعادها ثلاثًا حتى تفهم عنه، وإذا أتى على قوم فسلم عليهم سلم عليهم ثلاثًا»

Translation: ‘When he spoke a statement, he would repeat it three times so that it would be understood from him. When he came to people and greeted them, he would greet them three times.’¹¹⁰

Understanding is the purpose of repetition. The repetition we seek to learn is a means of conveying meaning, rather than a verbal routine that allows us to say we have explained.

A teacher may repeat a sentence more loudly while leaving unchanged the word the student does not understand. A parent may repeat a broad instruction ten times without discovering whether the child knows its first step. The hadith does not establish one method for explaining every matter. Its purpose of understanding brings us to a practical question: What became clearer to the recipient after the repetition?

One application is to ask learners to explain the meaning in their own words or perform the step they have learnt, then identify

110 Anas ibn Malik; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Knowledge, chapter on repeating a statement three times so that it is understood, no. 95.

what needs correction. It is a mistake to let abundant explanation excuse never examining its result: ‘I told them, so my responsibility is over.’

Time for those who have not had access

Abu Sa‘id al-Khudri reported:

«قالت النساء للنبي صلى الله عليه وسلم غلبنا عليك الرجال، فاجعل لنا يومًا من نفسك. فوعدهن يومًا لقيهن فيه، فوعظهن وأمرهن، فكان فيما قال لهن: ما منكن امرأة تقدم ثلاثة من ولدها إلا كان لها حجابًا من النار. فقالت امرأة واثنين فقال: واثنين»

Translation: ‘The women said to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, “The men have taken up your time, so set aside a day for us.” He promised them a day on which he met them, admonished them and instructed them. Among what he said was, “No woman among you loses three of her children before her but they will be a barrier for her against the Fire.” A woman asked, “And two?” He said, “And two.”’¹¹¹

They asked for an opportunity to learn and received an appointment for instruction and admonition. A defined time met

111 Abu Sa‘id al-Khudri; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Knowledge, chapter on setting aside a day specifically for women’s learning, no. 101.

the needs of those who had not enjoyed the same opportunity, showing the teacher's care for those seeking access.

This evidence broadens our understanding of discipline in education. A lecture being on time is insufficient if its arrangements prevent some intended learners from benefiting. A programme may need another time, a means of communication or a different explanation. The means vary with learners' needs and circumstances.

When an appointment serves learning, honouring it becomes a mutual right. Learners expect suitable instruction and arrive as prepared as they can. Teachers keep their commitments and do not treat the time as private property to rearrange freely after others have planned their day around it. An orderly institution begins with this relationship before it begins with an attractive attendance chart.

Ibn Sahnun: what does the teacher owe the students?

Adab al-Mu'allimin states:

«قلت: فهل ترى للمُعلم أن يكتب لنفسه كتب الفقه أو لغيره؟ قال: أما في وقت فراغه من الصبيان فلا بأس أن يكتب لنفسه وللناس، مثل أن يأذن لهم في الانقلاب، وأما ما داموا حوله فلا، ولا يجوز له ذلك؛ وكيف يجوز له أن يخرج مما يلزمه

النَّظَرُ فِيهِ لَمَّا لَا يَلْزِمُهُ؟ أَلَا تَرَى أَنَّهُ لَا يَجُوزُ لَهُ أَنْ يُوَكِّلَ تَعْلِيمَ
بَعْضِهِمْ إِلَى بَعْضٍ، فَكَيْفَ يَشْتَغَلُ بغيرهم؟»

Translation: ‘I asked, “Do you consider it permissible for a teacher to copy books of jurisprudence for himself or for someone else?” He answered, “When free of the children, there is no harm in copying for himself or others, as when he has permitted them to leave. But while they are around him, no: that is not permissible. How could he leave what he is obliged to attend to for what is not obligatory upon him? Do you not see that he may not entrust the teaching of some of them to others? How, then, could he occupy himself with something other than them?”’¹¹²

Here teaching is viewed as a trust and work owed to people with rights, rather than merely an occasion for exhorting diligence. A teacher’s pay is not payment for bodily presence alone. A student’s right does not end because the teacher is doing something personally useful. The competing activity may be good in itself, yet it does not automatically take priority over time committed to another person.

112 Muhammad ibn Sahnun, *Adab al-Mu‘allimin*, the treatise appended to Ahmad Fu‘ad al-Ahwani’s *Al-Tarbiyah fi al-Islam*; sections on Qur’an teaching, teachers’ remuneration, instruction and supervision.

This deserves reflection in our lives. An employee extending voluntary activity into time contracted for a service, or a teacher using a lesson for personal affairs, cannot justify it merely by calling the activity beneficial. They must ask which rights they may dispose of and which they may not. Discipline concerns what we preserve for those who entrusted us with part of our day, as well as what we add to it.

The learner before you is a present trust. Preparing useful future work does not justify neglecting those awaiting your explanation now. Arrange preparation and teaching so neither consumes the other's rights, and seek complementary help when needed.

Fairness and actual learning, beyond the appearance of completion

Adab al-Mu'allimin also states:

«وليعلمهم الأدب فإنه من الواجب لله عليه النصيحة وحفظهم ورعايتهم»

Translation: 'Let him teach them good conduct, for sincere care for them, their protection and their supervision are among his duties owed to Allah.'¹¹³

113 Muhammad ibn Sahnun, Adab al-Mu'allimin, the treatise appended to Ahmad Fu'ad al-Ahwani's Al-Tarbiyah fi al-Islam; sections on Qur'an teaching, teachers' remuneration, instruction and supervision.

Every learner has a right to care. Do not let a family's standing or a child's ease of learning monopolise your attention; do not abandon someone struggling because more patience is required. Fairness begins with seeing everyone in the gathering and asking what helps each person learn.

Fairness does not mean giving each student the same amount of speech and moving on. One may need repetition and an aid, another a more demanding task. Rights, dignity and freedom from favouritism should be equally protected; the form of support follows need and ability.

Some contemporary programmes count success by completing the advertised content, even when students cannot use it. We need another question: What can the learner now understand or do? This preserves the importance of completing the syllabus while preventing completion from becoming a number that excuses ignoring learning.

Firmness that preserves a learner's dignity

Firmness may become entangled with a teacher's desire for immediate obedience. When understanding is slow or a mistake recurs, irritation replaces inquiry into the cause. Responsible teaching separates the error from the person: correct the performance, clarify the requirement and preserve another opportunity to learn without fear of humiliation.

Such firmness requires neither harm, withholding water nor denying the body its rights. It begins with an understandable

rule, fair follow-up and suitable support. When an error involves hurting a classmate, repair includes stopping the harm, restoring the right and teaching a better response next time. Making pain an end in itself does not build an understanding of responsibility.

Discipline also includes the adult's self-review. Was the demand excessive? Was it explained clearly? Was someone punished for something never taught? A teacher who can correct personal mistakes gives students a practical route to admitting and repairing theirs.

Review and agreement: organisation, not a new religious prescription

Adab al-Mu'allimin states:

«وليجعل الكتّاب من الضحى إلى وقت الانقلاب. ولا بأس أن يجعلهم يُملّي بعضهم على بعض؛ لأن ذلك منفعة لهم، وليتفقد إملاءهم. ولا يجوز أن ينقلهم من سورة إلى سورة، حتى يحفظوها بإعرابها وكتابتها، إلا أن يُسهّل له الآباء. فإن لم يكن لهم آباء وكان لهم أولياء أو وصيّ، فإن كان دفع أجر المعلم من غير مال الصبي إنما هو من عنده، فله أن يُسهّل للمعلم كما للأب، وإن كان من مال الصبي يُعطي الأجرة، لم يجز أن يُسهّل للمعلم أن يُخرجه من السورة حتى يحفظها كما علمت، وكذلك

إن كان الأب يُعطي من مال الصبي؛ قال وأرى ما يلزم الصبي من مؤنة المُعلم في ماله إن كان له مال بمنزلة كسوته ونفقته»

Translation: ‘Let the school session run from mid-morning until the time for dismissal. There is no harm in having them dictate to one another, since it benefits them, and he should check their dictation. He may not move them from one surah to another until they have memorised it with its grammatical inflections and writing, unless the fathers grant him latitude.

‘If they have no fathers but have guardians or an executor, and the person pays the teacher from his own funds rather than the child’s property, he may grant the teacher latitude as a father may. If the fee is paid from the child’s property, he may not permit the teacher to move the child on from the surah before the child has learnt it as described. The same applies if the father pays from the child’s property. He said: I consider the expense of the teacher required for the child to be payable from the child’s property, if the child has property, like clothing and maintenance.’¹¹⁴

The text includes teaching time, supervision and securing what a child has learnt before moving on. It helps us consider the

114 Muhammad ibn Sahnun, *Adab al-Mu‘allimin*, the treatise appended to Ahmad Fu‘ad al-Ahwani’s *Al-Tarbiyah fi al-Islam*; sections on Qur’an teaching, teachers’ remuneration, instruction and supervision.

value of time set aside for learning: What has the student actually completed, and what still needs review?

A teacher today may organise weekly review, a short assessment or time for questions according to the subject and learners' capacities. Those concerned should know what was agreed, what changed and why, and the allocated learning time should be useful. Clear agreement reduces disputes without giving a teacher permission to abandon required explanation and care.

If a review schedule conflicts with a real need, it may be reconsidered within the relevant authority and rights. Change is not always disorder. Disorder arises when rules shift without explanation until no one can rely on them. An announced adjustment based on a reason belongs to discipline: it preserves the purpose instead of treating the procedure's form as an object of devotion.

A hypothetical case: the lesson ended, but some had not learnt

A teacher finishes explaining a skill on time. Most students complete the practice, but some do not know where to begin. The teacher could record the lesson as 'completed' and move on, yet chooses to distinguish the end of the presentation from everyone's learning. A short task identifies the difficulty: some students have not understood an earlier term, rather than the new skill itself.

The teacher arranges a limited review of that term and gives students who have mastered the task a suitable activity, without making them responsible for disciplining classmates or carrying the teacher's burden. The teacher then explains what the students will do at the next meeting.

At the week's end, the teacher reviews the work. Were expectations clear? Did difficulty become visible early? Did review help? Was students' privacy preserved? An institution becomes more disciplined when it also examines adults' performance, rather than allowing responsibility to appear only in a register of student offences.

What this century leaves in our way of reading

These hadiths show that repeating an explanation and making time available to receive it belong within the consideration of knowledge. Ibn Sahnun's work shows that the teaching profession was discussed early in terms of the teacher's commitments, fairness and performance. The evidence differs in standing, but its questions return us to one principle: do not demand discipline from a learner while leaving teaching without standards.

What we want to retain is this awareness of rights. A child or adult enters learning to leave with something useful, not to add a number to a programme. Preserving that meaning in preparation, explanation, timing and assessment is a profound form of discipline. It places the strength of the system at

people's service, instead of making people material with which the system proves its success.

Chapter Sixteen: Reading Accounts of Asceticism with Sound Judgement

A moving story is not the same as evidence

A reader may take from a short story what a long chapter did not convey. Seeing someone choose what is right over a desire or remain firm on a difficult path can make a burden feel bearable. That benefit should not be denied. Yet a story's emotional power does not establish its authenticity, just as the soundness of a general meaning does not establish that a particular person spoke the words attributed to them.

This distinction matters especially in accounts of asceticism and striving against the self. A story told for admonition may illustrate a sound meaning without our asserting that it occurred or building a ruling or belief upon it. An action may be established from an individual without becoming a general Sunnah or a required exercise for every reader. Benefiting from a story differs from obliging people to follow its contents.

This chapter does not seek to remove feeling from reading. We want feeling accompanied by knowledge that prevents a rush towards what is unestablished or unsuitable. Readers who distinguish the standing of reports can benefit without making texts bear more than they support, and can respect a person without attributing an imagined life to them.

Three questions to keep distinct

First: Is the report established from the person concerned? This concerns transmission, its source, route and wording, and may require investigation beyond an ordinary reader. Second: What does the report mean if established? It may describe particular circumstances or personal judgement rather than a universal rule. Third: Is the application we propose for our own lives sound? Here we consider lawfulness, capacity, rights and safety.

An author may answer the third question by saying an idea is useful, then behave as though the first has been answered.

Another may note that a narration appears in a famous book and bypass its meaning. Another establishes a report about a scholar, then turns that scholar's judgement into a demand upon everyone. These are different moves, but all shorten the route between admiration and action.

When reading, identify what is before you: evidence to act upon, a story whose meaning offers a lesson, or an individual judgement whose suitability needs consideration. Detailed transmission routes and variant wording belong to their specialists and references. Not every reader must become a textual investigator, but no reader should turn admiration for a story into an obligation for the self or others.

Take the lesson that is right for you

A good outcome of useful reading is a sound step you can actually take. Chapter Four of Volume One discussed gentleness with the self and learning patience. One application

is to divide a difficult task, begin with a defined amount and review capacity before increasing it. Do not let enthusiasm drive you to harm your body or neglect the rights of those around you.

Begin with a difficulty serving a sound aim: completing promised work, apologising to someone you wronged or revisiting a lesson you struggled with. Such actions need patience without invented pain to make them harder. Choosing well what to endure makes striving against the self a help in fulfilling rights.

There is room on the way for rest and help. You may complete a task after a break, need someone to teach you, or have to adjust its size. Review the means while preserving the aim. Do not turn the initial arrangement into a pledge that prevents correcting the course.

An exceptional account does not become a universal standard

Reports may describe abundant worship or remarkable endurance. Even when established, they do not mean that every reader shares the person's capacity or circumstances. The action may have been a personal voluntary practice, belonged to one stage of life, or been disputed in its lawfulness by scholars. Making it a standard for judging everyone requires additional evidence, not additional enthusiasm.

Prophetic guidance is the measure to which we return. The texts on resolve and moderation appeared in full in Chapter Eleven. Do not put sheer severity ahead of following that guidance, or use a story about someone other than the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, to exceed its limits.

A report of someone's endurance does not establish that pain produced their virtue. That is a causal leap resembling errors in reading research: we see two features together in a life and assume one caused the other. The person may have had knowledge, surroundings, support and activities we know nothing about. We stay within what the report supports and do not turn it into a therapeutic or educational experiment.

Fairness is broader than blanket approval or rejection

You can respect a scholar while examining a report the scholar included, benefit from a sound point and leave what remains unclear. Chapter Fourteen discussed fairness in criticism. This capacity preserves people's standing and the reader's right to accurate knowledge, without requiring either approval of everything or rejection of everything.

A researcher's statement that a report is unestablished does not automatically judge the intention of whoever included it or the righteousness of whoever it concerns. Saying a meaning in a text is good does not authenticate its chain of transmission. The boundaries of such statements must be clear so readers do not use them beyond their scope.

Fairness also distinguishes historical reading from practical imitation. We can study a group's understanding of striving against the self to understand its period without adopting all its methods. We must state when we are describing and when we are recommending. Readers should not assume that everything narrated in a historical chapter is something we invite them to try.

Do not use stories to judge people's hidden states

An admonitory story can become a stick: 'That person endured so much, and you cannot endure this small thing; therefore your faith is weak.' Such speech exceeds what we know about those being compared and confuses physical capacity, psychological circumstances and judgement of the heart. Someone may indeed neglect what lies within their ability, but establishing that neglect requires their actual circumstances, not a selected story about somebody else.

More truthful education asks what the person has now. Do they understand the requirement? Are the means available? Did they choose to leave it, or were they unable? Do they need learning, support or treatment? A general demand for more endurance cannot answer every question, just as difficulty alone does not cancel responsibility.

The best lesson from someone who strove against the self may be the sincerity of returning to what is right, rather than the amount of hunger or sleeplessness in an account. Our lives offer many chances to learn patience without harm: accepting

correction, returning money, guarding speech or relearning a skill. These are real rights that slogans cannot fulfil, not inferior substitutes for heroic deeds.

When sharing what benefited you

You may want to share a story with family or students. Return to its text first. If you convey it, preserve it in full as it appeared, then add your comment afterwards. Do not invent dialogue to improve the scene or turn your inference into a character's speech. A clear, truthful lesson is enough to find its way to hearts.

If it is an admonitory story whose authenticity has not been established, preserve its source's form and give a brief qualification in a footnote when writing. Do not use it to establish a ruling, belief or specific reward, and do not transmit fabricated or denounced reports. A Prophetic hadith still requires its particular verification. Do not attribute wording to the Prophet merely because its meaning appeals to you.

Then consider the benefit you are inviting people towards. Does it preserve rights? Does it suit the listener's circumstances? Can the person review the step if difficulties arise? Do not promise the same result as the story's subject for copying an action: circumstances and abilities differ. Let the lesson open a door to good without constraining someone by what was never required.

A hypothetical example: from a forwarded message to a faithful lesson

A teacher receives a message claiming that a scholar slept very little for decades, ending with the claim that ordinary sleepers are not sincere seekers of knowledge. The teacher searches the named source and finds no such wording, only a general description of the scholar's diligence. Rather than add another book title to improve the message's appearance, the teacher stops both the attribution and the conclusion.

A different lesson is possible. The teacher cites a sound report about consistency or preserving rights, asks students about a known distraction that wastes their time, and explains the difference between abandoning waste and denying the body its due. Any account of the scholar stays within what is established; uncertainty about quantities becomes no opportunity for exaggeration.

The original message may spread faster, but the corrected lesson is more faithful to its hearers. It gives learners a distinction they can understand and a step they can review, instead of demanding an undefined heroism. Over time, students may learn to ask about the sources of what they share. One lesson in asceticism then becomes a lesson in trustworthy knowledge as well.

Closing our study of the early generations' guidance

This volume has taken us from the boundaries and times of worship to examples of teaching, responsibility and the scrutiny of reports. Its purpose was not to invent an ideal past before which we feel ashamed of our lives. It was to learn meanings that can guide action: preparation, following revealed guidance, preserving rights, safeguarding knowledge, gentleness that does not neglect duty, and resolve that stays within its bounds.

Held together, these meanings make discipline more than an ability to endure hardship. It becomes an ability to know why we act, what we may rightly attribute, and where our right to obligate another person ends. From here, the inquiry moves towards dealings and society: a promise that enters another person's day, money for which someone is accountable, and an institution that should help people fulfil commitments rather than consume their capacity and blame them when it is gone.

Sources and References

This list brings together the volume's sources. Footnotes identify the specific passages quoted. Statements about consultation describe the source work recorded in the Arabic edition; they do not claim a new independent examination of every source for this translation.

Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari, Jami' al-Bayan 'an Ta'wil Ay al-Qur'an. Commentary on Al-Nisa' 4:103: the meaning of 'an obligation at appointed times' and the preferred interpretation of a duty with prescribed times. Used to clarify the verse's reference to appointed times. This does not represent an independent judgement by the book's team authenticating every chain of transmission for the reports at that location.

Hadith of 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud. 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Prayer Times, chapter on the virtue of prayer at its appointed time, no. 527. Establishes the virtue of praying on time. It does not by itself establish that the first minute is best for every prayer in every circumstance.

Hadith of Abu Hurayrah. Abu Hurayrah; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Adhan, chapter on coming to prayer with tranquillity and dignity rather than running, no. 636. Concerns coming to prayer when the iqamah is given and completing what was missed. Applying it to early preparation is an organisational inference, not a new legal ruling.

Hadith of 'A'ishah, Mother of the Believers. 'A'ishah; Sahih Muslim, Book of Mosques and Places of Prayer, chapter on the dislike of praying in the presence of food one wants to eat immediately, or while resisting the need to relieve oneself, no. 560a.

Used to establish consideration for certain strong bodily distractions during prayer. It does not make every desire for food an excuse or supply detailed rulings for every case.

Hadith of Malik ibn al-Huwayrith. Malik ibn al-Huwayrith; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Adhan, chapter on the adhan and iqamah for travellers in a group, and likewise at ‘Arafah and Jam‘, no. 631. Establishes the principle of learning how to pray and following the Prophetic example. It does not replace works of jurisprudence detailing the pillars, obligations and recommended acts.

Hadith of Abu Hurayrah. Abu Hurayrah; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Adhan, chapter on the obligation of recitation for the imam and follower in every prayer, at home and while travelling, whether audible or quiet, no. 757. A foundational text for teaching prayer and stillness within it. This chapter does not independently detail all the legal rulings derived from it or define the minimum stillness according to every legal school.

Hadith of ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab. ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab; Sahih Muslim, Book of Travellers’ Prayer and Its Shortening, chapter on travellers’ prayer and its shortening, no. 686a. Establishes shortening prayer while travelling and accepting a textually granted concession. The chapter does not specify all questions of distance, duration or combining prayers, or apply the ruling to an individual journey.

The Qur’an. Al-Ma’idah 5:6: ablution, full washing, dry purification, and the concluding reference to removing hardship and willing purification. A foundational verse on purification, tayammum and removal of hardship in its context. Details of invalidating causes, concessions and harmful circumstances must be gathered from other

evidence and jurisprudence. Purification is not reduced to hygienic cleanliness.

Hadith of ‘Uthman ibn ‘Affan. ‘Uthman ibn ‘Affan; Sahih Muslim, Book of Purification, chapter describing ablution and its completion, no. 226a. Learning the form of ablution and completing it. An educational application does not make repetitions or water quantities a judgement on a person’s righteousness.

Hadith of Abu Hurayrah. Abu Hurayrah; Sahih Muslim, Book of Purification, chapter on the obligation to wash the feet completely, no. 242a. Establishes complete washing where required. It does not justify unlimited repetition after the limb has been covered or make intense fear a criterion for valid ablution.

Hadith of Anas ibn Malik. Anas ibn Malik; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Ablution, chapter on ablution with a mudd, no. 201. Shows that purification can be completed with limited water. It does not turn the mudd into a compulsory modern test measured in litres, nor supply every ruling about waste by itself.

Hadith of ‘Abd Allah ibn Zayd ibn ‘Asim. ‘Abd Allah ibn Zayd ibn ‘Asim; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Ablution, chapter on not renewing ablution because of doubt until certain, no. 137. Concerns doubt about losing ritual purity within the text’s context. Repetition is not always a diagnosis of a disorder, and this principle does not replace detailed consultation with scholars.

National Institute of Mental Health. Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder. Official information page: definitions of obsessions and compulsions, and symptoms that may consume time, cause distress or interfere with daily life. A general health source for definition and the boundary for referral. It is not used to diagnose a reader from one

behaviour, determine a religious ruling or turn a legal concession into psychological treatment.

The Qur'an. Al-Baqarah 2:183: the obligation of fasting and its stated aim of taqwa. The verse names mindfulness of Allah as an aim of fasting. It does not make taqwa a numerical behavioural measure or independently detail the rulings of fasting.

Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari, Jami' al-Bayan 'an Ta'wil Ay al-Qur'an. Commentary on Al-Baqarah 2:183: the meaning of fasting being prescribed and the basic meaning of fasting. Used only to explain the wording and immediate meaning. No complete review of exegetical or legal disagreements about fasting is claimed.

The Qur'an. Al-Baqarah 2:187: eating and drinking until dawn, completing the fast until night, and Allah's limits. The boundaries for beginning and ending a fast. Reminders serve the religiously prescribed time; they do not create a substitute time.

Hadith of Anas ibn Malik. Anas ibn Malik; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Fasting, chapter on the blessing of suhur without making it obligatory, no. 1923. Concerns the virtue of the pre-dawn meal. It supplies no universal nutritional or medical prescription and does not remove the need to consider health circumstances.

Hadith of Abu Hurayrah. Abu Hurayrah; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Fasting, chapter on one who does not abandon false speech and acting upon it during fasting, no. 1903. Shows the gravity of false speech and conduct while fasting. It does not alone determine the validity or invalidity of fasting in every instance of sin.

Hadith of Abu Hurayrah. Abu Hurayrah; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Fasting, chapter on saying 'I am fasting' when insulted, no. 1904.

Fasting and abstaining from obscene speech and quarrelling. Worship is not reduced to a behavioural exercise or a numerical result.

Hadith of Abu Hurayrah. Abu Hurayrah; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Fasting, chapter on a fasting person eating or drinking forgetfully, no. 1933. Concerns forgetfulness specifically. Its rulings must not be generalised to deliberate action, ignorance, error or other invalidating acts without jurisprudential understanding.

The Qur'an. Al-Baqarah 2:185: Ramadan fasting, illness and travel, making up missed days, ease and completing the required number. Concessions for illness and travel and ease in fasting. The programme issues no individual ruling for a reader's health condition.

Hadith of Jabir ibn 'Abd Allah. Jabir ibn 'Abd Allah; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Fasting, chapter on the Prophet's statement concerning someone shaded in severe heat, 'Fasting while travelling is not righteousness,' no. 1946. Connected to evident hardship while travelling. It must not be generalised into a prohibition on every traveller fasting when other texts also address the subject.

Mostafa Salari Rad. Self-deprivation and cognition in Ramadan: could fasting practice improve inhibitory control? Religion, Brain & Behavior 16(3):234–259 (2026); first published online 16 June 2025. A non-randomised study of fasting measuring a specific inhibition task. It does not establish taqwa or automatic transfer to other behaviour. Persistence of the effect remains unresolved.

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specified circumstances. It does not establish that fasting is generally harmful or measure the value of worship or taqwa.

The Qur'an. Al-Ahzab 33:41–42: the command to remember Allah abundantly and glorify Him morning and evening. Establishes abundant remembrance and remembrance morning and evening. It does not itself prescribe a particular count for every unrestricted form of remembrance or make quantity a measure of taqwa.

Hadith of Abu Hurayrah. Abu Hurayrah; Sahih Muslim, Book of Mosques and Places of Prayer, chapter on the recommendation and form of remembrance after prayer, no. 597a. A prescribed remembrance whose count is established in the text. A personal reading target or programme review schedule does not acquire that religious status.

Hadith of Abu Umamah al-Bahili. Abu Umamah al-Bahili; Sahih Muslim, Book of Travellers' Prayer and Its Shortening, chapter on the virtue of reciting the Qur'an and Surat al-Baqarah, no. 804a. Establishes the virtue of reciting the Qur'an and the merits of the surahs mentioned in the hadith. It does not itself prescribe one daily amount for everyone.

Hadith of 'Abd Allah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'As. 'Abd Allah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'As; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Virtues of the Qur'an, chapter on the time taken to read the Qur'an, no. 5054. Other versions of this account give different wording concerning the time taken to complete the Qur'an. This wording alone should not be made a universal legal limit for every reader without considering the other texts and scholarly discussion.

Hadith of 'Umar ibn al-Khattab. 'Umar ibn al-Khattab; Sahih Muslim, Book of Travellers' Prayer and Its Shortening, chapter

bringing together reports on night prayer and missing it through sleep or illness, no. 747. Concerns making up a regular portion missed through sleep within the stated period. Its scope should not be extended to every ruling on making up missed worship without evidence.

Hadith of ‘A’ishah, Mother of the Believers. ‘A’ishah; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Heart-Softening Narrations, chapter on moderation and constancy in deeds, no. 6464. Establishes moderation and constancy. The hadith specifies neither a twelve-week duration nor a numerical success rate.

The Noble Qur’an. Al-Muzzammil 73:1–4: the command to stand in prayer at night and recite the Qur’an with measured care. Used for the foundations of night prayer and striving, not to establish that the amount stated at the beginning of the surah remains obligatory for every Muslim.

The Noble Qur’an. Al-Muzzammil 73:20: the easing of the requirement, the mention of illness and travel, and reciting what is manageable. Used to show consideration of ability and circumstances within the surah’s context, not to cancel prescribed amounts in other areas of worship.

The Noble Qur’an. Al-Furqan 25:64: spending the night before their Lord, prostrating and standing. Establishes this description of night worship, without specifying one number of units or hours for everyone.

Hadith of ‘A’ishah, Mother of the Believers. ‘A’ishah; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Ablution, chapter on ablution after sleep and the view that one or two brief dozes do not require it, no. 212. Concerns

overwhelming drowsiness and impaired awareness. It does not make every feeling of reluctance an excuse to abandon night prayer.

Hadith of Anas ibn Malik. Anas ibn Malik; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Night Prayer, chapter on the dislike of excessive strain in worship, no. 1150. Rules out forcing the body to continue voluntary prayer in the manner described. It does not mean that every degree of tiredness requires stopping.

Hadith of ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘As. ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘As; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Night Prayer, chapter on sleeping in the period before dawn, no. 1131. Does not impose the stated division of the night on everyone.

Hadith of ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘As. ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘As; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Fasting, chapter on the body’s right in fasting, no. 1975. Concerns balancing voluntary worship with other rights; it is not a pretext for abandoning effort.

Hadith of ‘A’ishah, Mother of the Believers. ‘A’ishah; Sahih Muslim, Book of Travellers’ Prayer and Its Shortening, chapter on night prayer, the number of units the Prophet prayed at night, and the validity of a single unit of witr, no. 738a. Used to illustrate regular practice, not to settle juristic disagreement over the number of units in night prayer.

Hadith of ‘A’ishah, Mother of the Believers. ‘A’ishah; Sahih Muslim, Book of Travellers’ Prayer and Its Shortening, chapter on the virtue of consistent deeds, including night prayer, no. 783b. Concerns the principle of constancy; it does not give an unconditional preference to doing less over doing more.

Hadith of ‘A’ishah, Mother of the Believers. ‘A’ishah; Sahih Muslim, Book of Travellers’ Prayer and Its Shortening, chapter bringing together reports on night prayer and missing it through sleep or illness, no. 746e. A Prophetic example of making up missed worship. Its number of units is not generalised to every personal programme.

The Noble Qur’an. Al-Tawbah 9:103. Connects zakat with purification, without providing a measure of whether worship has been accepted.

The Noble Qur’an. Al-Tawbah 9:60. The categories of zakat recipients specified in the verse. A worksheet for gathering facts does not replace a fatwa or a specialist zakat calculation.

Hadith of ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Abbas. ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Abbas; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Zakat, chapter on the obligation of zakat, no. 1395; and Book of Zakat, chapter on not taking people’s finest possessions as zakat, no. 1458. The two versions were compared while keeping their wording distinct. The prohibition on taking the finest possessions appears in no. 1458.

Hadith of Abu Sa‘id al-Khudri. Abu Sa‘id al-Khudri; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Zakat, chapter on zakat on silver, no. 1447. The Arabic source record documents direct checking of al-Bukhari no. 1447. Its additional Muslim reference could not be opened; independent verification of that reference is not claimed.

Hadith of Anas ibn Malik. Anas ibn Malik; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Zakat, chapter on zakat on sheep, no. 1454. The rate of one quarter of a tenth applies to silver in its stated context. It is not independently generalised to every contemporary financial instrument.

The Noble Qur'an. Al-An'am 6:141. The verse establishes the due on produce at harvest; it does not set out every condition of agricultural zakat.

Hadith of 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar. 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Zakat, chapter on the tenth due on crops watered by rain or running water, no. 1483. A tenth or half a tenth, according to the method of irrigation described in the hadith.

Hadith of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib. 'Ali ibn Abi Talib; Sunan Abi Dawud, Book of Zakat, chapter on zakat on grazing livestock, no. 1573. The transmission differs over the attribution of some wording to the Prophet. The source draft's qualifications are retained; no independent judgement on the chain of transmission is claimed.

The Noble Qur'an. Al-Baqarah 2:267. Spending from what is good; it does not detail every ruling on payment in goods or their monetary value.

The Noble Qur'an. Al-Hajj 22:27–32, especially verses 27 and 32. Honouring Allah's sacred rites without reducing piety to outward appearances.

The Noble Qur'an. Al-Baqarah 2:196. Completing Hajj and 'umrah for Allah; the discussion does not cover all the other rulings in the verse.

The Noble Qur'an. Al-Baqarah 2:197. The appointed time and the protection of conduct during Hajj.

The Noble Qur'an. Al-Hajj 22:36–37. Distinguishing the outward form of the rite from piety, without denying the importance of obedience.

Hadith of Jabir ibn ‘Abd Allah. Jabir ibn ‘Abd Allah; Sahih Muslim, Book of Hajj, chapter on the report that all of ‘Arafah is a place of standing, no. 1218c. The latitude concerning Mina, ‘Arafah and Jam‘ in the selected version; it does not cover all the rites of Hajj.

The Noble Qur’an. Al-Baqarah 2:198–199 and 203. The cited verses are reproduced in full; this does not constitute a complete guide to the rites.

Hadith of Abu Hurayrah. Abu Hurayrah; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Hajj, chapter on the virtue of an accepted Hajj, no. 1521. The merit of Hajj undertaken without sexual misconduct or sin; it does not decide whether a particular person’s Hajj has been accepted.

Hadith of Jabir ibn ‘Abd Allah. Jabir ibn ‘Abd Allah; Sahih Muslim, Book of Hajj, chapter on the recommendation to stone Jamrat al-‘Aqabah while riding on the Day of Sacrifice and the Prophet’s words, ‘Learn your rites from me’, no. 1297. Establishes learning the rites from the Prophet. Organising one’s preparation is neither a comprehensive legal guide nor a substitute for the instructions of the responsible authorities.

Hadith of ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘As. ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘As; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Hajj, chapter on giving legal answers while mounted near the jamrah, no. 1736. The selected version establishes latitude in the cases it describes, not in every possible ordering of the rites.

Hadith of Abu Hurayrah. Abu Hurayrah; Sahih Muslim, Book of Faith, chapter on the Prophet’s saying, ‘Whoever cheats us is not one of us’, no. 102. No particular location or unreported inward intention is ascribed to the food seller.

The Noble Qur'an. Al-‘Ankabut 29:45. The relationship between prayer and restraint from indecency and wrongdoing; it is not a judgement on particular individuals.

‘Abd al-Rahman al-Sa‘di, Taysir al-Karim al-Rahman fi Tafsir Kalam al-Mannan. Commentary on Al-‘Ankabut 29:45. A summary of his commentary, without importing disputed reports from another commentary.

The Noble Qur'an. Al-Baqarah 2:177. The joining of faith, worship, faithfulness to commitments and patience in the verse on righteousness.

Hadith of Abu Hurayrah. Abu Hurayrah; Sahih Muslim, Book of Virtue, Maintaining Family Ties and Manners, chapter on the prohibition of injustice, no. 2581. A warning against violating people’s rights, not a declaration of the final fate of particular people.

National Research Council. How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School: Expanded Edition. Chapter 3, ‘Learning and Transfer’, pp. 51–78, especially pp. 62–63 and 77–78 (2000). The source record reports consultation of the discussions of context and transfer and the chapter summary. Practice in a similar situation and then in a different one is an educational proposal informed by these principles, not evidence that the effects of worship transfer automatically or that this programme has been validated.

Wendy Wood; Leona Tam; Melissa Guerrero Witt. Changing Circumstances, Disrupting Habits. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 88(6), 918–933 (2005); method, p. 921, and discussion, pp. 929–931. An observational study based on reports from students transferring to a university. It does not establish definitive causation or measure the effects of worship.

Peter M. Gollwitzer; Veronika Brandstätter. Implementation Intentions and Effective Goal Pursuit. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 73(1), 186–199 (1997); Study 2, pp. 191–192. The method, results and discussion of Study 2 informed the account; the present programme was not tested. ‘If this happens, I will do that’ plans are proposed applications, not a guarantee of action in every context.

The Noble Qur’an. Al-Nisa’ 4:58. Returning trusts and judging fairly are governing principles. Programme indicators confer no right to act unjustly or reveal private information.

Hadith of Abu Hurayrah. Abu Hurayrah; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Manners, chapter on whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day not harming their neighbour, no. 6018. Speaking good or remaining silent. The exercise does not make silence about an obligatory duty or a present danger an unconditional virtue.

The Noble Qur’an. Al-Ma’idah 5:8. Justice even in the presence of dislike. Disagreement among participants does not justify selective reporting of results or neglect of anyone’s rights.

Hadith of Abu Hurayrah. Abu Hurayrah; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Wrongs, chapter on seeking release from a wrong done to another and whether to explain the wrong, no. 2449. Seeking release from wrongs. Restoring another person’s right takes priority over making a performance record look good; the details of restitution may require scholarly advice.

Hadith of Abu Hurayrah. Abu Hurayrah; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Loans, chapter on delay in repayment by someone able to pay being an injustice, no. 2400. This source alone does not establish every aspect of discipline.

The Noble Qur'an. Al-Baqarah 2:280. Giving respite to a debtor in difficulty. The general example does not direct participants to make harmful demands or issue an individual financial ruling.

The Noble Qur'an. Al-Ahzab 33:21: following the example of Allah's Messenger. The organisational or educational application is the author's inference. The text alone does not yield a modern programme or a detailed ruling for every situation.

Hadith of Jabir ibn Samurah. Jabir ibn Samurah; Sahih Muslim, Book of Mosques and Places of Prayer, chapter on the virtue of remaining in one's place of prayer after the dawn prayer and the virtue of mosques, no. 670a. The organisational or educational application is the author's inference. The text alone does not yield a modern programme or a detailed ruling for every situation.

Hadith of 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud. 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Knowledge, chapter on the Prophet choosing suitable times for exhortation and teaching so that people would not become averse, no. 68. The organisational or educational application is the author's inference. The text alone does not yield a modern programme or a detailed ruling for every situation.

Hadith of Anas ibn Malik. Anas ibn Malik; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Knowledge, chapter on the Prophet choosing suitable times for exhortation and teaching so that people would not become averse, no. 69. The organisational or educational application is the author's inference. The text alone does not yield a modern programme or a detailed ruling for every situation.

Hadith of Umm Salamah. Umm Salamah; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Wrongs, chapter on the sin of knowingly disputing a false claim, no. 2458. The organisational or educational application is the author's

inference. The text alone does not yield a modern programme or a detailed ruling for every situation.

Hadith of ‘A’ishah, Mother of the Believers. ‘A’ishah; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Manners, chapter on a man’s conduct with his family, no. 6039. The report describes the Prophet’s work at home and his going out to pray when prayer time came. The educational value of a child seeing this pattern is an applied inference, not the wording of the hadith.

Hadith of Anas ibn Malik. Anas ibn Malik; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Manners, chapter on good character, generosity and the dislike of miserliness, no. 6038. This source alone does not establish every aspect of discipline.

Hadith of ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab. ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Knowledge, chapter on taking turns in seeking knowledge, no. 89. This source alone does not establish every aspect of discipline.

The Noble Qur’an. Al-Qasas 28:26: strength and trustworthiness. The organisational or educational application is the author’s inference. The text alone does not yield a modern programme or a detailed ruling for every situation.

Hadith of Abu Dharr al-Ghifari. Abu Dharr al-Ghifari; Sahih Muslim, Book of Leadership, chapter on the dislike of accepting leadership without necessity, nos. 1825 and 1826. The organisational or educational application is the author’s inference. The text alone does not yield a modern programme or a detailed ruling for every situation.

Hadith of Abu Juhayfah. Abu Juhayfah; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Fasting, chapter on someone urging his brother under oath to break a voluntary fast when that is more appropriate for him and not requiring it to be made up, no. 1968. Preserving the rights of one's Lord, oneself and one's family. The programme may not displace obligatory rights.

Hadith of Anas ibn Malik. Anas ibn Malik; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Marriage, chapter encouraging marriage, no. 5063. The organisational or educational application is the author's inference. The text alone does not yield a modern programme or a detailed ruling for every situation.

Hadith of Hanzalah al-Usayyidi. Hanzalah al-Usayyidi; Sahih Muslim, Book of Repentance, chapter on the virtue of continual remembrance, reflection on the Hereafter and awareness of Allah, and the permissibility of sometimes turning to worldly affairs, no. 2750a. The organisational or educational application is the author's inference. The text alone does not yield a modern programme or a detailed ruling for every situation.

Hadith of 'Abd Allah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'As. 'Abd Allah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'As; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Fasting, chapter on the body's right in fasting, no. 1975. This source alone does not establish every aspect of discipline.

Muhammad ibn Sirin, Introduction to Sahih Muslim. Chapter on the chain of transmission being part of religion, accepting reports only from trustworthy narrators, and truthful criticism of narrators being permissible and indeed obligatory as a defence of the sacred law rather than prohibited backbiting; report no. 26. These are reports in Muslim's Introduction, not all Prophetic hadiths. The webpage and

report numbering differ by one at some locations on the site; the number given here is the report number.

Muhammad ibn Sirin, Introduction to Sahih Muslim. Chapter on the chain of transmission being part of religion, accepting reports only from trustworthy narrators, and truthful criticism of narrators being permissible and indeed obligatory as a defence of the sacred law rather than prohibited backbiting; report no. 27. These are reports in Muslim's Introduction, not all Prophetic hadiths. The webpage and report numbering differ by one at some locations on the site; the number given here is the report number.

Abu al-Zinad, Introduction to Sahih Muslim. Chapter on the chain of transmission being part of religion, accepting reports only from trustworthy narrators, and truthful criticism of narrators being permissible and indeed obligatory as a defence of the sacred law rather than prohibited backbiting; report no. 30. These are reports in Muslim's Introduction, not all Prophetic hadiths. The webpage and report numbering differ by one at some locations on the site; the number given here is the report number.

Malik ibn Anas, Introduction to Sahih Muslim. Chapter on the prohibition of relating everything one hears; report no. 10. A statement by Malik preserved in Muslim's Introduction. It is not attributed to the Prophet and does not constitute independent authentication of every source's chains of transmission.

Abu Mas'ud al-Ansari and 'A'ishah, Mother of the Believers, in al-Muwatta'. Book of Prayer Times, chapter on prayer times, reports 1 and 2. The work includes reports with connected chains, reports with a missing Companion link, and reports introduced without a complete chain. Their presence in al-Muwatta' does not establish that

all are authentic. The purpose here is to observe the organisation and precision of teaching, not to reconstruct an imagined historical day.

Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Dhahabi, Siyar A‘lam al-Nubala’.

Biography of ‘Abd Allah ibn al-Mubarak, 8:379–383: the opening of the biography and its account of his fields of activity. Al-Dhahabi is a later biographical source. His synthesised account is distinguished from individual reports with chains of transmission; unverified narrative details are not stated as certain facts.

‘Abd Allah ibn al-Mubarak, Introduction to Sahih Muslim.

Chapter on the chain of transmission being part of religion, accepting reports only from trustworthy narrators, and truthful criticism of narrators being permissible and indeed obligatory as a defence of the sacred law rather than prohibited backbiting; report no. 32. These are reports in Muslim’s Introduction, not all Prophetic hadiths. The webpage and report numbering differ by one at some locations on the site; the number given here is the report number.

‘Abd Allah ibn al-Mubarak, Introduction to Sahih Muslim.

Chapter on exposing the faults of hadith narrators and transmitters of reports and the leading scholars’ statements on this; report no. 38. These are reports in Muslim’s Introduction, not all Prophetic hadiths. The webpage and report numbering differ by one at some locations on the site; the number given here is the report number.

Hadith of Anas ibn Malik; hadith of Abu Sa‘id al-Khudri.

Anas ibn Malik; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Knowledge, chapter on repeating a statement three times to make it understood, no. 95; Abu Sa‘id al-Khudri; Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Knowledge, chapter on setting aside a separate day for teaching women, no. 101. The organisational or educational application is the author’s inference.

The text alone does not yield a modern programme or a detailed ruling for every situation.

Muhammad ibn Sahnun, Adab al-Mu'allimin. The treatise appended to Ahmad Fu'ad al-Ahwani's *Al-Tarbiyah fi al-Islam*; sections on teaching the Qur'an, teachers' remuneration, teaching and supervision. A historical educational source from the third Islamic century, not an empirical evaluation. Historical punishments, distinctions or reports in the text are not thereby endorsed or all authenticated. They have not been converted into training instructions in this series.