

# **The Afterlife Manual**

Every Muslim's Guide to Happily Ever Hereafter

Ousama Alshurafa

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May Allah ﷻ protect you all and secure your place in the highest abodes of Eden. Ameen ya Rabal 'Alameen. Please keep me in your du'as from time to time.

## About the Author

**O**usama Alshurafa is an unconventional motivational speaker specializing in talks that jolt the very fabric of one's *eman*. He's been active in the work of da'wah for over 25 years. His insights are unique and relatable and target, specifically, the Muslim demographic. He is the founder of an online Muslim networking platform called Muslim Hub, where he inspires, mentors, and uplifts the eman of over 150,000 Muslims.

Alshurafa's undergraduate studies are in the sciences, where he double majored in Electrical and Biomedical Engineering and carries a master's degree in the Liberal Arts from Harvard University.

## Dedication

I dedicate this manual to my late father, Iyad Yousef Alshurafa; Allah ﷻ have mercy on his soul. He was constantly on the lookout for me. He was always on my case and watched over me like an eagle. He wanted to ensure I never got off track or sidetracked in life. He did everything in his capacity and didn't stop at anything to make sure I got the most out of this life.

He always used to tell me, "There are two types of people in this life: Those who take it easy in the beginning and pay for it in the end, and those who work hard in the beginning and are then able to take it easy in the end. Which of those people do you want to be?"

I would like to now return the favor to him by watching out for his afterlife like he watched out for me in this life. I ask Allah ﷻ to make this manual a means for his salvation on the Day of Judgement and his admittance to Paradise. Ameen!

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## Introduction

**T**he Afterlife Manual is meant to help you achieve your ultimate goal: Success in both this life and the hereafter. It's not meant to be a casual read. You want to ensure that you're focused and have minimal to no distractions as you go through it.

It starts by clearly defining what success is. Allah ﷻ stipulates in the Qur'an that those who believe and perform righteous deeds will rule over the earth. It's evident that Muslims are far from that objective and hence there seems to be a lack of fulfillment in the conditions mentioned in the Qur'anic verse. Our *eman* is not at the level Allah ﷻ expects it to be, so our actions are weak as well. We need to strengthen our *eman* but in order to do so, we need a clear understanding of what *eman* is.

*Eman* is presented in this manual in a unique way. We look at it as a new perspective from which to see the phenomena of this world. A new way of seeing. When this light of *eman* overwhelms our hearts, we begin to see the world in a completely different way — a way that allows us to cut through the veils of apparent causes and effects that Allah ﷻ placed in this world as a test, and to get to the Source, to the One behind the many.

It's not that, when we intensify the light in our hearts through the remembrance of Allah ﷻ and righteous conduct, the world transforms and begins to shine with light or that you begin to see what others can't. Rather, it's a matter of insight. The way you perceive the world is transformed and everything in this life becomes a means for securing your Paradise in the afterlife. *Deen* is no longer just prayer and fasting. It's no longer separated from this life. The situations and circumstances in our lives are now messengers from Allah ﷻ that carry timely messages from Him. These messages are encrypted, and the key to understanding these messages lies in the purity of the light of *eman* in our hearts.

This manual is for those people who think they have *deen* all figured out but can't make out exactly why

they have so many problems in their lives. They see the lives they lead in their work, businesses, and homes as separate from their lives in the masjid and on the prayer mat. Deen and Dunya for them are like two separate entities that have little to do with each other. The reality is that time is Allah's simulation. It's Allah's ﷻ Divine Matrix. It's your entire realm of experience. It's His testing field.

Your time here on earth is critical. Every time a day passes, a piece of you passes with it. You have to learn the rules of the game — what Allah ﷻ is getting at every time He creates a situation and sends it your way. And here's the thing if you don't have a clear understanding of what Allah ﷻ is getting at: When you don't know the rules of the game, you risk losing yourself and your loved ones for eternity. That is the ultimate loss. It won't matter what you accomplished in this life if you don't secure your afterlife. This manual aims to help you achieve that goal.

I highly recommend that you read the section on *eman* at least twice. From *eman*, we get into conduct and all that it entails. After that, we explore the significance of time, and take a deep dive into the illusion of time and the mystic nature of the Eternal Now.

This manual would not be complete without discussing some of the common and modern-day obstacles many Muslims experience today, and that's exactly what I walk us through.

The next section examines the importance of coming to Islam through intellectual reasoning and only then submitting to Allah's ﷻ commands. At that point, I unpack one of the strongest arguments for the existence of Allah ﷻ, to empower parents and the young generation of Muslims with the rationale needed to maneuver around and away from those trying to instill doubts in us to steer us away from the *deen* of Islam.

Finally, any essential manual requires something practical to work on as a means to draw nearer to Allah ﷻ — an action or game plan. The *raqueeb* lessons are meant to do just that. Allah ﷻ says that those who strive in our commands will be guided and awarded with Allah's ﷻ Divine presence and given the *tawfeeq* to reach the level of *ihsan*. This requires a struggle to align ourselves with Allah's ﷻ orders. Alhamdulillah, Allah ﷻ attached His guidance not with the outcome of our struggle, but with the struggle itself.



Allah ﷻ just wants us to put in the effort. So make sure you do just that.

Challenge yourself or your friends to complete these lessons to help draw you nearer to Allah ﷻ. You also have the option of joining our Patreon community at [Patreon.com/muslimhub](https://Patreon.com/muslimhub) as we work together to achieve this goal.

I hope you enjoy and benefit from this manual in a way that gives you the guidance and success you need to secure your afterlife. Please keep me and my family in your prayers. *Jazākum Allahu Khayran.*

## **REVISION 3: A Summary for Those with Little to No Time to Read**

**D**ue to popular demand, I've added this section for the very busy individuals who barely have time to read. These next seven pages may not summarize the entire manual, but they definitely pack a punch. You'll probably develop the enthusiasm you need to read the entire thing, but if you don't, these pages should suffice in delivering the key points in the manual and then some. Although the manual delves into more details on many of the points we discuss, there are lessons in there that are not in the manual itself. Therefore, I suggest you start with this section as a warm up and then proceed based on how you feel.

### **Understanding this world**

*Tawheed* or the *Kalimah*, *La ilaha illa Allah Muhammadun Rasulullah*, is the key to Paradise, but there's one main thing that stands in our way of becoming realized in this *Kalimah*. This state of being acts as a *tawheed* blocker and it consists of being:

1. Affected by or
2. Attached to the means of this world.

The means of this world are pretty much all the created realm. Without the *Noor* or light of *Tawheed* we develop *shirk*. Shirk literally means partnership, and Allah has no partners – it is His essence or attribute. Falling into shirk or associating partners with Allah doesn't simply mean you worship other gods. It also means believing that anything or anyone other than Allah can also benefit or harm you in any way.

If you're not attached to anything in the created realm then there can't be any shirk. No shirk, no problem.

Let's first take a step back for a moment and unpack this created realm that we perceive. Most of us are deluded and think that there's a world out there independent of our minds, that we perceive, that's made out of matter. This couldn't be any further from the truth. The world you perceive is simply in your head. That's right, it's all in your mind! It's not really in your mind, it *is* your mind. Scientists have been searching for a world that is independent of mind and

they simply haven't found it. And they will never find it, because it's simply not there. Confused? Let me unpack it a little more for you.

In order for us to prove that there's a world separate from our minds, we have to find it independent of our minds. To do this you have to first understand what the mind is. The mind is composed of thoughts, feelings, and perception. Perception is seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching – sensing. The world you and I, and every other human being on this planet know is known only through the five senses of perception. Anything you perceive in this world is made up of some combination of sight, sound, smell, taste, or touch. You open your eyes and you see a tree, or smell a flower, or taste a burger, or touch a chair. Is it a coincidence that the world you perceive is made up of sight, sound, smell, taste, or touch, while the very tools of mind or perception are seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, or touching? Of course not! The world you perceive is consistent with your mind's senses because the world is mind. The reason that all 8 billion of us in this world see the same world is not because the world is really out there, but rather because the content of life is all downloaded from the same Source.

To elucidate this point, think of the video streaming service Netflix, for example. When a movie is being streamed on our iPads or TV sets and all 8 billion of us start and play the same movie, we all see the same content. That's not because the movie playing is really there or on our screens. If you were to get up and examine the people acting in the movie playing on your screen, you won't find them. All you find is your screen. The movie is simply the coloring of your screen. It's the screen in motion, or more accurately, the vibration or coloring of the pixels on your screen. And since the movie is being downloaded to all 8 billion screens on demand, we all see the same content, because it's downloaded from the same source. So, If I'm sitting here in El-Sahel in Egypt and you're in another city or country, and we both look up and see the sun, it's not because the sun is out there, but because both of our finite minds have access to the same content that's being downloaded from the same Source.

In other words, the world is made out of mind. So, saying that God created the world or *dunya* or the mind can be used interchangeably. They mean the exact same thing. Mind is the creation of Allah, meaning the activity or doing of Allah. It's God's action. Mind in motion is the world, while mind at rest

reveals God because all that's left if you subtract creation is the Creator. A clever way to express this is that the world, or mind, is God's motion picture, or the activity of God. God veils Himself with His own activity like a TV screen veils itself with a movie. *Dhikr* is the disentangling of God from His own activity, and hence God is mind at rest!

To help you understand this point even further, think of this world as a virtual reality headset (let's call it a mind-set to be more accurate) that is placed over your *Ruh* (soul). It's your soul's window into the created realm. When looking through your virtual reality mind-set, you see infinity and eternity (God, who in reality is the only One who exists) as space and time, respectively. Allah says in the noble Qur'an:

وَلِلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ فَأَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّوا فَثَمَّ وَجْهَ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

To Allah belong the east and the west: Whithersoever ye turn, there is the presence of Allah. For Allah is all-Pervading, all-Knowing [Qur'an 2:115]

We know Allah is the creator of space-time and hence He is beyond our four-dimensional space-time, meaning God is both infinite and eternal. According to the verse above, God is saying that He is all that is ever perceived. Whichever direction we

turn to, all there is in reality is the presence of Allah. However, since Allah cannot be contained in space-time, and the mind is time and space-bound, we see Allah in accordance with our mind's limitations.

If you were to put on orange-tinted sunglasses you would see the world tinted orange. If you try on green-tinted sunglasses, the world will appear tinted green. The sunglasses will superimpose their own limitations onto the world we view. The same goes for the mind. Allah places covers over our minds (the very stuff mind is made from) called perception and thought, which act as filters so that we see God as space-time. In other words, time is what eternity looks like when filtered through thought, and space is what infinity looks like when filtered through perception (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching). [Rupert Spira, "and Now are Dimensionless Consciousness"] This world or Dunya as it appears to us is what I refer to in this manual as The Divine Matrix. The Divine represents the world's Truth which is eternal and infinite, and the Matrix represents the illusory aspect of the world, the four dimensional space-time.

The light of *tawheed* or Noor acts as a key that decrypts the Divine Matrix (Dunya) so that you're left

with a sense of presence. The Now, which is infinite and eternal Knowledge or علم, is light or نور. Allah tells us in the noble Qur'an:

فَاعْلَمْ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لِذَنْبِكَ

Know, therefore, that there is no god but Allah, and ask forgiveness for thy fault [Qur'an 47:19]

And He says:

أَوْمَنْ كَانَ مَيِّتًا فَأَحْيَيْنَاهُ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُ نُورًا يَمْشِي بِهِ فِي النَّاسِ كَمَنْ  
مَثَلُهُ فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ لَيْسَ بِخَارِجٍ مِنْهَا ۚ كَذَلِكَ زُيِّنَ لِلْكَافِرِينَ مَا كَانُوا  
يَعْمَلُونَ

And is one who was dead and We gave him life and made for him light by which to walk among the people like one who is in darkness, never to emerge therefrom? Thus it has been made pleasing to the disbelievers that which they were doing [Qur'an 6:122]

Without Noor you're under the spell of mind. You're lost in space-time. With the light of *eman* we are able to transcend the dual nature of mind by discovering what's really happening behind the scenes. This light allows us to pierce through the veils of *asbaab* (means) in this dunya and see the Truth behind every scenario. You see the One executing behind all the



curtains of means. It's not that the world physically changes. The world we see when light enters into our hearts is the same world the Prophet ﷺ and his companions saw. The world simply becomes infused with infinity. We are no longer ignoring the truth because ignorance is remedied through the knowledge of awareness. You understand the world, and most importantly, you now know what Allah is getting at. You no longer see phenomena or the world running through means but you see the Creator of these means veiling His actions and attributes with the happenings and scenarios that unfold in this life. It's a true awakening. It's remembering after having forgotten. Most people are still in a state of heedlessness about this fact. Allah says:

يَعْلَمُونَ ظَاهِرًا مِّنَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ عَنِ الْآخِرَةِ هُمْ غَافِلُونَ

they know but the outer surface of this world's life, whereas of the ultimate things they are utterly unaware [Qur'an 30:7]

We are heedless of anything beyond what the naked eye sees. This world is simply the lifeline for the afterlife, when understood and dealt with accordingly. Everything becomes a means for the real life that comes after we transition from this world.

What does this understanding require? What's expected of us after this realized illumination?

### **Navigating this world in obedience to Allah ﷻ**

After we correct our perspective and we understand the true nature of this world, we are then required to respond to God in a way that's aligned with Muhammad Rasul Allah ﷺ. It always boils down to *eman* and *'amaal*.

Allah is with us when we believe and practice righteous deeds. There's no guarantee that Allah is with us if our basis is *mulk* (power) and *maal* (money). If we make this world and its riches our purpose, we will experience the ultimate loss and God is no longer on our side.

When practicing *eman* (perspective) and *a'maal* (righteous deeds), we are able to fulfill all of our needs and solve all of our problems. Some problems are just a matter of perspective. They no longer become problems when you understand what God's getting at. They're now opportunities that bring us closer to Hell or Heaven.

Shaytan wants to ruin these opportunities for us. He tricked the majority of people into thinking that

money and means can fulfill our needs and solve our problems.

You'll hear voices in your head that whisper "Of course Allah takes care of you but you have to work and take the means in this world for Allah to take care of you." As if Allah can't take care of us without these means. Allah has no needs whatsoever. He doesn't need anyone or anything. This is why it's important to delve into two of God's names to address this issue. We have to become realized in these two names specifically. They are the keys to all of God's other names and a protection from falling into shirk.

The first of these names is Allah's name, *Al-Qadir*. Literally it means "the One who can" or is able to. Allah is the most powerful, so there's nothing that He cannot do. If you believe Allah can do anything then you will believe in all of His other names.

You will believe that Allah is:

**Qadir** (able) to create;

**Qadir** (able) to give life;

**Qadir** (able) to give death;

**Qadir** (able) to honor;

**Qadir** (able) to disgrace;

**Qadir** (able) to prevent;

**Qadir** (able) to provide.

The problem here is that Shaytan will tell you Allah is Qadir to provide *but* you have to work. He's Qadir to cure you but you have to take medicine. Only with perspective and conviction do we understand Allah doesn't need any help from His creation. Allah didn't create the angels of rain because he needs them, Allah ﷻ created the angels of rain as a display for His powers – as a sign, primarily. If you believe Allah needs His creation or *asbaab* to provide for you, you've committed a form of shirk. You've associated partners with Allah. How do we avoid falling into this problem? We add Allah's name, *Al-Samad*. This name means that Allah doesn't need anything or anyone, and everything is in need of Him. Between Allah's names Al-Qadir and Al-Samad you complete the circle of tawheed.

We say Allah ﷻ is able to provide for us and doesn't need anything or anyone to do so. Of course, there's a difference between the absence of need and what He displays. Since this world is the testing field for humanity, Allah will continue to mask His doing

with the created things in this world. Always remember that Allah runs His show in this world primarily in three ways:

1. Allah does **through** worldly means
2. Allah does **without** worldly means
3. Allah does **against** the worldly means

In each of the instances above, Allah is the Doer, but when He acts through the means, He's simply masking His activity. Don't confuse the role of the means and think that the means are doing with God's permission. The means are an illusion. They don't do anything. They're just on display. Allah is the only Doer.

If Allah were to remove the means from the equation all that is left without creation would be the Creator. Allah would be revealed and the examination would be over. When we die, Allah removes this cover of means in dunya (mind) and then we see things for how they really are, a step closer to reality.

Deep reflection: Allah cannot be perceived with the mind. And since mind is the created realm, if Allah reveals himself by removing the means (creation),

there would be no one left (you or me) for God to reveal Himself to. The mind cannot register the event because it's out of space-time.

وَحَزَّ مُوسَىٰ صَعِقًا

And Moses fell down in a swoon [Qur'an 7:143]

It's important to note here that as believers, we don't have any issue with the world of means. We just have to see it for what it is: The testing field. We don't leave the means nor do we invite people to leave them. We don't tell people not to work or study. We tell them to work and study but to also have the right intention when doing so. Do it for the right reason. Work because Allah told us to utilize the means of this world, as long as when we do so we continue to obey God's commands that He placed in the means that He created. We don't go into business to make money. A believer goes into business to obey the commands that Allah associated with doing business in this life. He set the boundaries so you can play and color, but stay within the lines while coloring. Eventually you become accomplished and staying in between the lines becomes second nature. Most of humanity has erased these lines and are busy scribbling their lives away.

Now that we've established these realities and we understand the true function of the means that Allah has created in this world and that they're there to test us, we have to ask the question: How do we pass this test? In order to pass the test of means and scenarios that God plays in your head, you need to:

1. Negate the means of this world so that you're unattached. You're only attached to Allah and Allah alone. You no longer lean towards the means of this world because you understand that they don't do anything.
2. Avoid breaking any of God's commands that he placed in the means of this world. Getting married is a means to have children. Allah ﷻ can give you children without means as Allah ﷻ did with Maryam AS. So, you're not getting married to have children; you're getting married to fulfill the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and to pay heed to and fulfill the commands associated with marriage. That way, whether you have children or not, you're successful.
3. You give priority to Allah's command in the present moment over any means you're busy with. The time of Salah is in and you're busy

working at your job. You stop working and you pray, even if your job is purely for the sake of Allah. The commands Allah placed in your business or work is low priority when the time of prayer enters because Salah was prescribed at specific times:

إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ كَانَتْ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ كِتَابًا مَوْقُوتًا

Worship at fixed hours hath been enjoined on the believers  
[Qur'an 4:103]

Negation doesn't mean leaving the means. The Jews before us overemphasized the means of this world and became reliant on them. The Christian monks left or de-emphasized the worldly means altogether. The way of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and his followers is the middle path: To take the means but rely on Allah alone. We utilize the means for the right reasons and we're not attached to them. Our love for Allah and His Prophet ﷺ is more than any of these means.

This is why we say in Al-Fatiha:

اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ. صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ

Guide us to the straight path, the path of those you've blessed.  
Not the path of those Allah is angry with (the Jews before us



who overemphasized and relied on the means) nor the ones who went astray (the Christian monks who left the means of this world altogether) [Qur'an 1:6-7]

The middle path is the path of the blessed ones from humanity: The true followers of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

See how Allah clearly tells us in one verse to take the means while making it clear what the purpose for utilizing the means. He says:

وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا ۚ إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ

eat and drink: But waste not by excess, for Allah loveth not the wasters [Qur'an 7:31]

He says eat and drink, meaning utilize the means of food and drink. But for what reason? وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا, meaning don't be extravagant and wasteful with food. The purpose of taking the means is to pass the test of not breaking the boundaries God associated with these means. We are fulfilling the command of not being wasteful and simply eating because Allah commanded us to, not because eating keeps us alive. Allah is ultimately the one feeding us and doesn't need food or water to keep us alive. The people of the cave remained alive for 309 years without food

or water. Who kept them alive in that situation? Allah can allow time to run on specific creations and to stop when it comes to others. He kept the clock ticking with Uzair's donkey but stopped time for Uzair. He can also run time without its seeming effects if He wants, but His Sunnah in Dunya or this Divine Matrix is to run things through the veils of means or phenomena.

### **A Final Thought on this Revision**

Some people take the teachings above and begin to think of the world as some kind of silly game. In fact, it is a game, but only in the aspect that it's a waste of time when *deen* is not incorporated into our day-to-day lives. The game of life is a serious matter. Our time here is very short and this life is a test, and all of the teachings in the world won't help us if we don't put what we learn to practice. That's precisely why I included the *Raqeeb* Streaks at the end of this manual. The complete individual is the one who brings together knowledge and action, and I hope this manual accomplishes just that for you and is a means to your eternal happiness and success.

## Success In this Life and the Other

**H**umanity at large falls into one of two general categories: Those who desire this world and what it has to offer, and those who desire the afterlife and what it has to offer. This, of course, includes Muslims.

مِنْكُمْ مَّنْ يُرِيدُ الدُّنْيَا وَمِنْكُمْ مَّنْ يُرِيدُ الْآخِرَةَ

Some of you are after worldly gain in Dunya while others desire a heavenly reward in the Hereafter. [Qur'an 3:152]

While many so-called Muslims are running after the luxuries and ornaments of this life, true Muslims understand that the afterlife is better for them than this life.

وَلِلْآخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ لَّكَ مِنَ الْأُولَىٰ

And the next life is certainly far better for you than this one.  
[Qur'an 93:4]

If or when we clearly understand this point, we would be fully focused on making it there, and this life would simply become a means for the afterlife.

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

Whoever desires the harvest of the Hereafter, We will increase their harvest. And whoever desires 'only' the harvest of this world, We will give them some of it, but they will have no share in the Hereafter. [Qur'an 42:20]

This type of clarity of understanding is lacking in the Ummah today and it is crucial for one's salvation. It all begins with being very clear on what we're doing here on earth, our purpose in life, how we need to be and what we need to do to fulfill our purpose and attain success in both this world and the next.

Our Prophet ﷺ informed us that when Allah ﷻ wants good for His servant, He gives them the understanding of *deen*.

عَنْ مُعَاوِيَةَ بْنِ أَبِي سَفْيَانَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا قَالَ:  
 سَمِعْتُ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ:  
 مَنْ يُرِدِ اللَّهُ بِهِ خَيْرًا يُفَقِّهْهُ فِي الدِّينِ

When Allah ﷻ wishes good for anyone, He bestows upon him  
 the Fiqh (comprehension) of the religion. (Bukhari 71 /  
 Muslim 1037)

The fact that you are reading this manual is a testament to Allah's ﷻ wanting good for you, so begin by thanking Him, and pay close attention to what I'm about to share.

Many people in this life chase success, but not everyone is on the right path to success. Nobody knows a product like its maker or designer, and every product designer usually puts together a user manual explaining precisely what the product is for, how the product is to be used, and how to care for the product.

As Muslims, we know Allah ﷻ is our Maker. He knows us best, and He sent down the Qur'an as a guide telling us exactly what our purpose is and how to achieve this purpose to achieve success in both this life and the afterlife.

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ وَإِنَّمَا تُوَفَّقُونَ أُجُورَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ فَمَنْ زُحِرَ عَنْ  
النَّارِ وَأُدْخِلَ الْجَنَّةَ فَقَدْ فَازَ وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْغُرُورِ

Every living creature shall taste death, and you shall only be repaid your full reward on the Day of Resurrection: **So whoever is wrested from the Hellfire and entered into the lush grove of Paradise has triumphed forever**; While the pathetic life of this world is nothing but the passing enjoyment of delusion. [Qur'an 3:185]

The verse stipulates that to be triumphant or to be truly successful is to be saved from the torment of hellfire and enter the gardens of Paradise. There is an emphasis towards the end of the verse about the impermanence and delusional nature of this world because, ultimately, the ornaments of this life take most human beings off course. The question now is: How do we avoid Hell and enter Paradise? To make it into Paradise, there are two conditions: *Eman* and righteous conduct.

وَمَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّن ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَأُولَٰئِكَ يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ  
يُرْزَقُونَ فِيهَا بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ

And whoever does good, whether male or female and is a believer, they will enter Paradise, where they will be provided for without limit. [Qur'an 40:40]

But what about this life? Do we have to suffer? In the chapter of the Bee, a symbol for discipline and hard work, in Verse 97 Allah ﷻ says:

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهٗ حَيٰوةً طَيِّبَةً  
وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُم بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

Whoever does good, whether male or female, and is a believer, We will surely bless them with a good life, and We will certainly reward them according to the best of their deeds.

[Qur'an 16:97]

So, the conditions for success or admittance to Paradise and a good life here are:

1. **True *eman* and**
2. **Righteous conduct.**

But are we not all believers? Don't we all have *eman*? Are we not Muslim, after all?

Allah ﷻ makes a clear distinction in the Qur'an between Islam and *eman*. When some of the nomads around Prophet Muhammad ﷺ first embraced Islam, they quickly made the claim that they had become believers, to which Allah ﷻ responded:

قَالَتِ الْأَعْرَابُ ءَامَنَّا قُلْ لَمْ تُؤْمِنُوا وَلَكِنْ قُولُوا أَسْلَمْنَا وَلَمَّا يَدْخُلِ  
الْإِيمَانُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ

Some of the nomadic Arabs say, “We believe.” Say, O Prophet, “You have not believed. But say, ‘We have submitted,’ for faith has not yet entered your hearts.

[Qur'an 49:14]

*Eman* is something that takes time, effort, and sacrifice. After we submit, there's still work to do to go from a state of submission to a state of belief. The distance from the tongue to the heart may seem insignificant, but the effort to get there is no walk in the park. It takes effort.

وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَهَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ ءَاوُوا  
وَنَصَرُوا أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ حَقًّا لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ

Those who believed, migrated and struggled in the cause of Allah ﷻ and those who gave the migrating believers shelter and help are the **true** believers. They will have forgiveness and an honorable provision. [Qur'an 8:74]

This verse speaks to the effort required to fall into the category of a true believer. It is a lot of hard work: Migration, struggle, and sacrifice. To attain the highest level of success comes at a cost.



وعن أبي هريرة، رضي الله عنه، قال: قال رسول الله، صلى الله عليه وسلم "من خاف أدلج، ومن أدلج، بلغ المنزل، ألا إن سلعة الله غالية، ألا إن سلعة الله الجنة" رواه الترمذي وقال: حديث حسن.

Abu Hurairah (may Allah ﷺ be pleased with him) reported: I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, peace be upon him saying, "He who is afraid of the pillage of the enemy, sets out in the early part of the night; and he who sets out early, reaches his destination. Be on your guard that **the commodity of Allah ﷺ is precious**. Verily, **the commodity of Allah ﷺ is Paradise**".

Source: Al Tirmithi, who classified it as Hadith Hasan

In another verse in the Qur'an, Allah ﷻ makes it clear that there is a level of *eman* that we have, and a certain level that is required by Allah ﷻ.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا ءَامِنُوا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ؕ ءَلِكُتِبَ الَّذِى نَزَّلَ عَلَىٰ رَسُولِهِ ؕ ءَلِكُتِبَ الَّذِى أَنزَلَ مِن قَبْلُ ۚ وَمَن يَكْفُرْ بِاللّٰهِ وَمَلَٰئِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ ؕ وَالْيَوْمِ ءَآخِرِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَالًا بَعِيدًا

O believers! Have faith in Allah ﷻ, His Messenger, the Book He has revealed to His Messenger, and the Scriptures He revealed before. Indeed, whoever denies Allah ﷻ, His angels, His Books, His messengers, and the Last Day has gone far astray. [Qur'an 4:136]

## What Is *Eman*?

We often hear scholars speak of the increase and decrease of *eman*, but what is it, really? My personal observation is that it's a form of light He places in the hearts of those believers who work for it. And it is that very light, the *eman* of a believer that aids him in piercing through the veils of multiplicity — the veils of darkness that cover this world's phenomena. In other words, it's a new way of seeing that guides to the One truth.

Consider the verse of the Qur'an where Allah ﷻ says:

وَكَذَلِكَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ رُوحًا مِّنْ أَمْرِنَا ۚ مَا كُنتَ تَدْرِي مَا الْكِتَابُ وَلَا  
الْإِيمَانُ وَلَكِن جَعَلْنَاهُ نُورًا نَّهْدِي بِهِ مَن نَّشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا ۚ وَإِنَّكَ  
لَتَهْدَىٰ إِلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ

And so We have sent to you 'O Prophet' a revelation by Our command. You did not know of 'this' Book and faith 'before'.

But We have made it a **light**, by which We guide whomever We will of Our servants. And you are truly leading 'all' to the Straight Path (the Path of Allah ﷻ). [Qur'an 42:52]

This light or *eman* is very slippery. It requires continuous effort to achieve and maintain it.

وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

As for those who **struggle** in Our cause, and who strive hard for Us, We will surely **guide them** to Our paths. And Allah ﷻ is certainly with the good-doers. [Qur'an 29:69]

The scholars say that “فِيْنَا” (pronounced ‘*feena*’) means “in God’s commands,” and “سُبُلَنَا” (pronounced ‘*Subulana*’) are the righteous deeds that lead one to Paradise. In other words, for those who strive or struggle to obey Allah’s ﷻ orders, Allah ﷻ will guide them to the deeds that will deliver them to Paradise.

Consider the hadith of our Prophet ﷺ:

قول النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم: إن الإيمان ليخلق في جوف أحدكم كما يخلق الثوب، فاسألوا الله أن يجدد الإيمان في قلوبكم

Indeed *eman* is worn out inside one of you just like a *thawb* (garment) is worn out, so ask Allah to revive *eman* in your hearts.

The gist of all this is that *eman* requires effort until it reaches a level that is strong enough to bequeath righteous deeds — the second condition for success. Allah ﷻ mentions *Amanu* (belief) *Wa* (AND) *‘Amilu Salihaat* (performed good deeds), meaning it is not a choice between one or the other. Both are required. However, true *eman* will always generate righteous deeds. If someone is claiming *eman* but they are not

acting upon it, then they are either deceived or their *eman* is not strong enough to bequeath righteous deeds, so they need to make more effort to intensify the light in their hearts.

I delve into *eman* a lot more in the next chapter, but first, let's unpack the second condition to success. What makes a deed or action, a righteous one? In Surah Al-Kahf, Allah ﷻ says:

فَمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا لِقَاءَ رَبِّهِ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ  
أَحَدًا

So whoever hopes for the meeting with their Lord, let them do good deeds and associate none in the worship of their Lord.

[Qur'an 18:110]

Right after mentioning righteous deeds in this verse, Allah ﷻ says, “and let him not associate any partners through his worship of Me.” Here, we can deduce that a righteous deed is one that is performed with a heart completely directed toward Allah ﷻ alone. Your heart is Allah's ﷻ home and just like you wouldn't be happy with a stranger staying in your home, Allah ﷻ is not happy when anyone else resides in His. So, the main quality of a righteous deed is that it is done purely for Allah ﷻ , and Allah's ﷻ sake

alone. This is called sincerity. Pay close attention now because it is fascinating how all of these concepts are interconnected. In an authentic hadith:

عَنْ أَبِي فِرَاسٍ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ سَلُونِي عَمَّا شِئْتُمْ فَنَادَى رَجُلٌ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ مَا الْإِسْلَامُ قَالَ إِقَامُ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءُ الزَّكَاةِ قَالَ فَمَا الْإِيمَانُ قَالَ الْإِخْلَاصُ قَالَ فَمَا الْيَقِينُ قَالَ التَّصَدِيقُ بِالْقِيَامَةِ

Abu Firas reported: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “Ask me about whatever you wish.” A man called out, “O Messenger of Allah ﷺ, what is Islam?” The Prophet said, “To perform prayer and give charity.” The man said, “**What is faith?**” **The Prophet said, “Sincerity.”** The man said, “What is conviction?” The Prophet said, “Certainty in the truth of the Resurrection.”

Source: Shu’ab al-Imān 6356

It is not a coincidence that the mention of *eman* precedes righteous deeds in the Qur'an. Now that we know *eman* and sincerity are the same thing, it is clear why sincerity is a requirement for the validity of our righteous deeds.

Many people are confused about their *deen* because they lack understanding. They assume that because they are Muslim, that makes them true believers by default. They think religion is just about praying and

fasting. They are distracted by this worldly life's attractive, appealing, and delusionary aspects. They're busy chasing the goodies. They neglect their *eman*. When their *eman* gets weak, their deeds are weak and insufficient to bequeath a pure life here, and one of success in the hereafter.

“Am I not a Muslim?” they say. “Do I not pray?” And they put their trust in their (at best) incomplete or weak acts of worship. I fear that they might fall under the category of people Allah ﷻ mentions:

قُلْ هَلْ نُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِالْأَخْسَرِينَ أَعْمَالًا الَّذِينَ ضَلَّ سَعْيُهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا  
وَهُمْ يَحْسِبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ يُحْسِنُونَ صُنْعًا

‘They are’ those whose efforts are in vain in this worldly life, while they think they are doing good!’ [Qur'an 18:104]

We need to understand that *deen*, as far as Allah ﷻ is concerned, is Islam. And Islam is submission to *all of Allah's* ﷻ commands, as shown to us by Rasulullah ﷺ. Not *salah* alone, not *zakat* alone, not just fasting during Ramadan. Allah ﷻ wants submission to all of His commands. He is also not that interested in the outer forms of our actions.

Allah ﷻ is not interested in hundreds of *rak'as* of *salah*. Allah ﷻ is rarely interested in quantity unless it produces quality. Allah ﷻ doesn't say, "the One who created death and life to test who amongst you is more in deeds." Instead: "who amongst you is BEST in deeds."

الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ  
الْغَفُورُ

'He is the One' Who created death and life to test which of you is **best** in deeds. And He is the Almighty, All-Forgiving.  
[Qur'an 67:2]

Most young Muslims from recent generations are pretty confused. They're Muslim and they pray, but have many problems in their lives, so they begin to doubt their religion. Many end up leaving the fold of Islam because of a lack of clarity in understanding their *deen* and not having firm conviction in their faith.

If you struggle with sincerity to strengthen and maintain your *eman* in this life continuously, Allah ﷻ will guide you to perform those righteous deeds that will get you to Paradise. When you try to gain proper knowledge, learn all of the commands required of

you by Allah ﷻ, learn about the way that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ executed and performed these deeds, and then perform them by emulating his example, Allah ﷻ will become pleased with you. In return, through His Grace and Mercy, Allah ﷻ will give you a good life and reward you with Paradise in the next.

To summarize:

- True success is achieved by entering Paradise
- Paradise requires *eman* and righteous deeds
- *Eman* requires continuous effort and struggle to develop and maintain it
- True *eman* bequeaths righteous deeds
- With true *eman* and righteous deeds, you will attain the Pleasure, Grace, and Mercy of Allah ﷻ
- Through Allah's ﷻ Pleasure, Grace, and Mercy, you will enter the gardens of Paradise, *inshāllah*.



## *Eman - A New Way of Seeing*

**A**llah ﷻ tells us in the Qur'an that we were put on this earth to be tested. Tested on what? Who amongst us is best in conduct.

الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ  
الْغَفُورُ

'He is the One' Who created death and life in order to test which of you is best in deeds. And He is the Almighty, All-Forgiving. [Qur'an 67:2]

This world we inhabit is the proving ground where the test of life takes place. We will refer to it as the Divine Simulation, or the Divine Matrix (DM). Why the Matrix? A matrix is defined as the environment or context in which something, such as a society, develops and grows.

In the aforementioned verse from the Qur'an, death and life are representations of an ending and a beginning, respectively. In my observation, the verse is indirectly pointing to the creation of time. And time is

the environment or context in which deeds are recorded. Our actions are recorded, and recordings have a beginning and an end, and can only take place in a medium that allows for such qualities, i.e., time.

The movie “The Matrix” portrays the Matrix as a computer program, a sort of illusion, a dream world that’s not real, a false world constructed by machines to take advantage of the human race. And although there is an illusory aspect to this world, that is not what we’re referring to when we mention the Divine Matrix.

According to the Qur’an, this world was created with truth. Allah ﷻ says:

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ

Do you not see that Allah ﷻ has created the heavens and the earth with truth? [Qur'an 14:19]

Now that we’ve established that it is not entirely an illusion, how can we call this existence a Divine Simulation? When we speak of a simulation, we’re referring to its definition as a deception or the act of pretending. There is a deceptive aspect to this world, a trick of sorts. It is made to appear a certain way to test us. Notice how Allah ﷻ stipulates this:

إِنَّا خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ أَمْشَاجٍ نَبْتَلِيهِ فَجَعَلْنَاهُ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا

‘For’ indeed, We ‘alone’ created man from a drop of mingled fluids, to **test** him, so We made him hear and see [Qur'an 76:2]

Whatever we perceive in this world is a test. The reality of this world is not discovered through sight, but rather through insight. This world is a cover for something else happening behind the scenes. This is what we’re referring to when we call this world a Divine Simulation. In other words, this world, or simulation, is encrypted. The key to this encryption is stored in the testimony of faith, the *Kalimah*:

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ

La ilaha illa Allah Muhammad Rasul Allah

There is no God but Allah ﷻ and Muhammad is His  
Messenger ﷺ.

## The Truth Will Set You Free!

This world or Divine Simulation is covering up or masking the truth. Before diving into this truth, let’s look at some verses from the Qur'an that address this cover-up.

لَقَدْ كُنْتَ فِي غَفْلَةٍ مِنْ هَذَا فَكَشَفْنَا عَنْكَ غِطَاءَكَ فَبَصَرُكَ الْيَوْمَ  
حَدِيدٌ

“Verily, you were [totally] heedless of this [scene]. Now We have **removed** from you your **covering** [of neglect], and sharp is your sight this Day!” [Qur'an 50:22]

يَعْلَمُونَ ظَاهِرًا مِنَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ عَنِ الْآخِرَةِ هُمْ غَافِلُونَ

They know (only) the **appearance** of the life of this world, and they are **heedless** of the Hereafter. [Qur'an 30:7]

What is being hidden from us to test us? What is that ultimate truth that has been covered up to test our conduct? That ultimate truth is encoded into the formula of *tawheed*. The first part of the *Kalimah* that makes us believers:

لا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

La ilaha - illa Allah

Now, pay close attention because everything to come will be based on having a clear understanding of the secret behind this testimony of faith, how it relates to our test in this world, and what Allah ﷻ is covering up in order for this test to be effective.

First, this *Kalimah* is called the *Shahadah*, which means to Witness. That is why, when we declare the

*Shahadah*, we begin by saying, “I bear witness.” This is the world of witnessing, also known as the world of *mulk*, and we witness through perception.

Again, pay close attention. Notice how the first part of the *Shahadah* — witnessing — begins with negation. Allah ﷻ is saying that something about what you perceive is off, so negate what you perceive. This is supported by the first part of the *Shahadah*: *La ilaha*. What are we negating, though, and why?

This world is the world of means. In Arabic, the dependent causes and their dependent effects are called *asbaab*. For example, we look up at the sky and notice that it’s raining. A closer look reveals that the rain is coming down from the clouds above your head. Clouds are a *sabab*, or means for rain. Rain is a means for crops to grow. Food is a means for the satiation of hunger, and so forth and so on.

Allah ﷻ is saying this is all a veil, a cover for what’s really going on behind the scenes. He, Allah ﷻ alone is the one *actually* doing everything, but He veiled this fact with *asbaab* in order to test your faith. Are you going to believe that Allah ﷻ is the one doing everything, and in return turn to, and rely on Him alone? Or are you going to depend on your unreliable

and intentionally limited senses of perception to believe that the *asbaab* are responsible for the phenomena you see all around you?

## **The Magic Curtain**

A man who is not very intelligent is invited for dinner at his friend's place after his friend gets married. His friend is religious and has a curtain up for his wife's privacy. His wife is busy cooking for her guest, and the aroma of the Hyderabad biryani (a popular South Asian dish made of rice and meat) is filling the house. The guest notices and gets a look of amazement on his face when he sees the plate of biryani and other dishes start to appear from behind the curtain. At once, he jumps up and asks his friend: "Where did you get that curtain from?"

His friend is confused, but answers that he picked up the curtain from the furniture store below the apartment, and the guest excuses himself immediately and rushes for the door.

"Where are you going?" asks his friend, "And what about the food?" "Later," the man says, bolts out the door and goes straight to the furniture store. He finds the same curtain, purchases it, goes home and then

calls his relatives over to eat. He puts up the curtain and waits for his guests. When they arrive, they sit there waiting patiently for the meal. Nothing shows up. After some time, they ask whether the man will be serving food. "Of course," he replies. "This is a magic curtain! I was at my friend's house and he had this very same curtain, and eventually, it began to produce various dishes."

Perplexed, one of the man's relatives asks: "Do you mean your friend who just got married?" and the host confirms he is talking about the same friend. The relatives give each other sad, knowing looks and one finally explains, "It wasn't a magic curtain, brother! It was his wife behind the curtain making the dishes and then pushing them through the opening. The curtain is just there to cover her!"

Everything in this world is a curtain or cover for the acts or *Qudrah* of Allah ﷻ, meaning the Power of Allah ﷻ. Behind all of the means of this world is Allah's ﷻ infinite power doing everything. The cover of *asbaab* is there to test you. What is the test? It is whether you will believe in what you see and perceive or in what you were told by Allah ﷻ Himself in the Qur'an.

One of the best explanations I have heard for *eman* or belief in Allah ﷻ s: *Eman* is to negate *basar* (sight) and to affirm the *Khabar* (what Allah ﷻ informs us in the Qur'an).

Take, for example, how we believe that medicine cures. This is met with the verse in the Qur'an where Allah ﷻ informs us:

وَإِذَا مَرَضْتُ فَهُوَ يَشْفِينِ

And He 'alone' heals me when I am sick. [Qur'an 26:80]

We believe that medicine cures but Allah ﷻ tells us that only He is the One who cures. So which one is it? And if Allah ﷻ cures, then what is the role of the *sabab*? What is the role of medicine?

Many Muslims have confused the role and purpose for which Allah ﷻ created *asbaab* (means) of this world. This confusion is due to what scientists call classical conditioning.

## Pavlov's Dogs

The Russian scientist, Ivan Pavlov, conducted an experiment in the 1800s after he noticed that dogs begin drooling when they see food. He wondered whether he could trick the dog into thinking that ringing a bell



causes food to appear. He would present the dog with food while simultaneously ringing a bell. The dog would drool and eat the food. He repeated this a few times over the course of a few days and then tested his hypothesis by ringing the bell without presenting any food. To his amazement, the dog still drooled even though there was no food in sight. Pavlov discovered what we now call “classical conditioning.” The dog was conditioned to associate the sound of the bell with food, and respond to it in the same way, as if it caused the food to appear.

We are very much like Pavlov’s dogs. We can see that ringing the bell didn’t cause the food to appear. We can see that the bell’s sound and the food were merely associated with each other. We can see that it was Pavlov who associated them. He rang the bell, and when he did so, he brought the food. The regular association between the ringing bell and the food led the dogs to believe that the sound caused the food to appear. (Basira Education and Karamali 31-32).

Similarly, when Allah ﷻ sends clouds, rain often falls. The regular association between the appearance of clouds and rain leads us to perceive and believe that the clouds caused the rain to fall. In fact, Allah ﷻ created the clouds and Allah ﷻ sent down the rain,

but Allah's ﷻ metaphorical hand (the Hand of Power) is hidden, veiled, or covered by the clouds and the rain.

Why does Allah ﷻ employ *asbaab* in this way? It stands to reason that if Allah ﷻ were to remove this cover and we were to directly see that Allah ﷻ is responsible for everything, that would have a dramatic impact on the test of faith. Where would be the test? Everyone would become a believer if Allah ﷻ revealed Himself as the true cause or Actor behind all of these Actions or effects we see in our world. In order to test us, Allah ﷻ covered up His acts with the curtains of means to reveal who amongst us will rely on the means, objects, and people of this world — falling into subtle *shirk*, or associating partners with Allah ﷻ — and who will rely on Allah ﷻ alone.

Believing that these apparent means, or *asbaab*, are what cause other things to happen is akin to the *mushrikeen* of Mecca believing that their statues caused things to happen. Their idols were just symbolic representations of various means in this world. They believed that these so-called gods made things happen. Today, we believe that money, technology, and status can make things happen. In reality, only Allah ﷻ does.

Allah ﷻ created the *asbaab* — the apparent dependent means and their dependent effects on this world — and associated them with each other:

1. For convenience
2. As a service to humanity
3. As a pointer to His existence
4. To test our *eman*
5. To fulfill Allah's ﷻ commands that are integrated into the *asbaab*.

Imagine a world where we weren't sure if sitting on a chair would keep us from falling, or one in which if we were to jump, we would fly at times and at others we would fall back down.

Gravity is not the true cause of keeping us from floating into space. Rather, Allah ﷻ does that through an association between the mass of two objects, the distance between them and the gravitational constant ( $F = G \times m_1 \times m_2 / r^2$ ).

Through the advent of science, we are not discovering the true causes of the effects in the universe. Rather, we are discovering regular associations between dependent causes in the universe and their dependent

effects. That's what science is: The study of regular associations Allah ﷻ has placed in the universe. It helps us discover the regular associations between dependent causes and their dependent effects. The world would not be habitable if we didn't trust that it functioned in a certain way. [*Why Islam is True*].

When talking about the means of this world, Allah ﷻ often uses the word *sakhara* (سَخَّرَ), meaning "subjugated." In a hadith, Allah ﷻ tells us that this world was created for us, but that we were created for Him and that we shouldn't let what was created for us distract us from Whom we were created for. In another hadith *qudsi*, Allah ﷻ commands this world: "Whoever serves you, use him, and whoever serves Me, serve him." In other words, Allah ﷻ, out of His infinite generosity, subjugated the means and resources of this world for our service and convenience and told us to worship Him in return. When we fail to do so, many of the subjugated things of this world turn on us.

The earth was subjugated for us to walk upon. The same earth, if disobedience of Allah ﷻ becomes widespread and common, will shake and devour this human being. We call this phenomenon an earthquake. The seas and oceans that are made for our

ships to sail on turn into tsunamis to destroy thousands of homes and kill thousands of people.

Furthermore, Allah ﷻ placed these regular associations in the universe as a pointer to His existence. The perfect harmony, intricate patterns, detailed orientations, and fine-tuned design of everything in this universe is a sign of an intelligent designer.

These regular associations are a test from Allah ﷻ. Our eyes tell us one thing, and the regular associations Allah ﷻ placed in the seeming causes and effects of this world tell us another. Whom will we believe and whom will we rely on: Our own eyes and ears, or what we are informed by Allah ﷻ in the Qur'an? For most non-believers, seeing is believing; but for us as believers, believing is seeing.

The means of the world don't actually do anything at all. It's not that they are acting with Allah's ﷻ permission. Rather, they are *not acting at all!* They are just a mask for the real Doer.

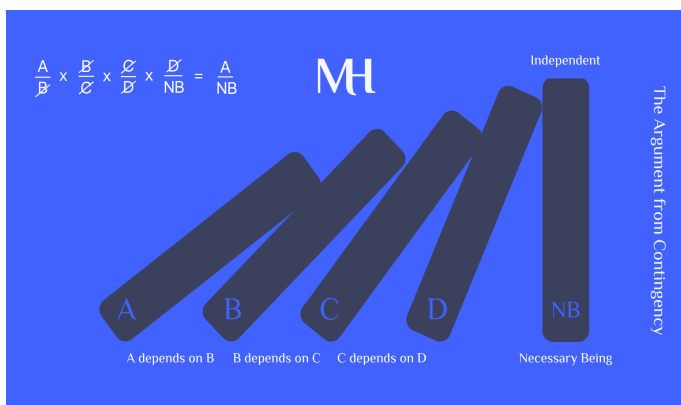
Let's say we're watching the movie *The Matrix* on a screen. Are the characters on the screen actually doing anything? Are they really there? Can you walk

up to the screen and grab the characters Neo or Morpheus? Of course not. They are merely projections. If you physically approach the moving images and examine them, all you would find is a flat screen. The movie you're watching is just the coloring or activity of the screen. All there really is to the movie is the screen.

Another example to clarify this point is from the argument of contingency (which I unpack toward the end of this manual). For reference, the word "contingent" simply means "dependent." Something that is contingent depends on something else. A contingent thing cannot be the true cause behind something else.

Imagine four people standing in line. The first person is needy and therefore leans back on the second, but the second is needy and hence leans on the third. The third is also needy, so he leans on the fourth. The fourth is not in need of anything and hence does not need to lean on anything. He remains standing erect. Who is actually holding the line up? Does person one, two, or three actually do anything at all? The answer is no. They're just there for *zeenah*, for the show.

Allah ﷻ is putting up a show. See the illustration below: If we remove B, C, and D from the picture, NB or the Necessary Being (meaning the one it's impossible to be without) will hold A up. NB is doing all of the work. Allah ﷻ is the Necessary Being. He's the one doing all of the work. The *asbaab* are there just to put on a show.



There is another key reason behind Allah ﷻ creating the *asbaab* of this world. Some people decide to turn their backs on the means of this world when they learn that Allah ﷻ is the true Doer of everything and that the means of this world are mere associations that are not really doing anything. This is a grave mistake.

Allah ﷻ doesn't want us to turn our backs to this world. Allah ﷻ simply wants us to negate its apparent and illusory causational attribute. Take it, but negate it. Use the means of this world but don't rely on them. If you turn your back to *asbaab*, you could potentially be turning your back to Allah's ﷻ orders, because He put His commands in the created means in this world. Our job is to remove any conviction on the *sabab* itself, and then fulfill Allah's ﷻ command in it, in the way shown by our beloved Prophet ﷺ. That is true success and proper understanding of deen.

Let's say Allah ﷻ sent us a lot of money. Money is a *sabab*, a means for purchasing things. Our job is not to leave this money or decrease it and our job is not to increase it either. Our job is to first remove any conviction in its ability to benefit us. In other words, we don't rely on it, and then we spend it according to the orders and boundaries that Allah ﷻ set for money in this world.

Here, we would avoid spending that money on things that are displeasing to Allah ﷻ, and we would spend it in accordance with shariah. We would avoid extravagance. we would pay zakat if eligible. We



would help the needy. And we would remind ourselves that this money is a test from Allah ﷻ to see how we're going to utilize it. This is a Muslim who has understood the role of means or *asbaab* in this life. This is the balanced Muslim, the true *faqih* — the one with a proper and balanced understanding.

What's important to remember when it comes to *as-baab* is that they're just a cover or curtain for what's really happening. These means are not acting through Allah's ﷻ permission. They have no volition or agency of their own. They don't ask Allah's ﷻ permission so that Allah ﷻ gives them the green light and then they act out of their own intelligence or accordance. All means in reality are dead. Allah ﷻ is the Doer.

Some people say that money can benefit you with Allah's ﷻ permission. This sentence is somewhat problematic and needs some adjustment. Allah ﷻ, if He wills, will benefit you through money. Don't give any agency to the means of this world.

Remember that in relation to the means of this world, Allah ﷻ acts or does in three ways:

1. Allah ﷻ does without means. He creates from nothing
2. Allah ﷻ does through means. He creates out of creation
3. Allah ﷻ does against means. He creates out of creation in a way that is not common to that creation.

Examples of creating something from nothing include the creation of the first human, Prophet Adam عليه السلام, or the creation of water.

An example of creating out of His own creation includes the making of our mother *Hawwa* or Eve عليها السلام, from our father Adam عليه السلام. Or how Prophet Esa or Jesus عليه السلام, was created in his mother's womb, Maryam عليها السلام, without a human father. A practical example we can relate to today is Allah ﷻ bringing about rain from clouds or crops from seeds.

In all these examples, Allah ﷻ is the one creating or acting. Even when creating through means, remember, means are just a cover. They're just a veil. His *Qudrah* or Power is part of His Essence. It's not bor-

rowed by creation. The cloud is not a program executing its code or pouring rain independent of Allah ﷻ. Rather, this is how it works:

- Allah ﷻ created clouds, and Allah ﷻ provides rain
- Allah ﷻ created the sun, and Allah ﷻ provides light
- Allah ﷻ created water, and Allah ﷻ quenches thirst
- Allah ﷻ created food, and Allah ﷻ satiates hunger
- Allah ﷻ created medicine, and Allah ﷻ cures.

The clouds, sun, water, food, and medicine are all covers for the Act of Allah ﷻ. He is the Sole Proprietor. The Sole Actor. The Director. The Producer. The Executor. The Maintainer. The Sustainer. The *only Doer* in this multiverse.

Finally, Allah's ﷻ doing against the means is when Allah ﷻ displays His Act, but in a way that is uncommon to the means through which He displays it. It's not common for a staff that strikes the sea to cause it to split. However, Allah ﷻ displayed this phenomenon through Musa's عليه السلام staff. Another example would be Prophet Ibrahim عليه السلام sitting in the fire

for 40 days without a single hair on his body being burnt. It's common for fire to burn, but Allah ﷻ used it as a means of coolness and peace. There are plenty of examples in the Qur'an where Allah ﷻ is showing us His act of creating against the means in display.

Now if we revisit the first part of the testimony of faith, *La ilaha illa Allah*, we see that *La ilaha* pertains to the negation of the witnessed realm.

We say "*la ilaha*" to negate any causation associated with the clouds, the sun, the water, the food, and the medicine. This is what it truly means to associate partners with Allah ﷻ. And we say "*illa Allah*" to affirm that the true Causer of everything in this multi-verse is Allah ﷻ alone. But if this is the case, one might think that the majority of people are associating partners with Allah ﷻ, which means they are practicing *shirk*! Consider what Allah ﷻ has to say about it in Surah Yusuf:

وَمَا يُؤْمِنُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ بِاللَّهِ إِلَّا وَهُمْ مُشْرِكُونَ

And most of them believe not in Allah except that they attribute partners unto Him. [Qur'an 12:106]

There are two types of *shirk*: Outright *shirk* and subtle *shirk*. The subtle *shirk* is where most of us fail the

test with Allah ﷻ, and I believe that's what the *Ayah* above references.

Why do the means of this world have such an effect on us? The reason we're affected by the things of this world and end up leaning on them like Musa عليه السلام leaned on his staff is because we see some type of benefit in them. We believe money can lead to status, which can lead to control or power. When we fail to give our attention to Allah ﷻ, our attention is consumed by petty things like the recognition of people. We were created to recognize Allah ﷻ, not so people can recognize us! Allah ﷻ says:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

I didn't create Jinn and Ins (man) except so that they may  
worship me (recognize me) [Qur'an 51:56]

When the light of *tawheed* enters the heart of the believer, it deconstructs the seeming causal agents of things in this world, and we begin to see that Allah ﷻ is the only true Cause for everything we see and don't see in this world. We begin to pierce through the veils of multiplicity to get to the One behind it all. Allah ﷻ Himself disassociates the act of doing from humanity.

فَلَمْ تَقْتُلُوهُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ قَتَلَهُمْ وَمَا رَمَيْتَ إِذْ رَمَيْتَ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ رَمَىٰ

It was not you 'believers' who killed them, but it was Allah Who did so. Nor was it you 'O Prophet' who threw 'a handful of sand at the disbelievers', but it was Allah Who did so.

[Qur'an 8:17]

We are naturally inclined to trust what we perceive in this world as truth. We are conditioned through the regular associations Allah ﷻ placed in this world to trust and rely on its means because we think they have an inherent ability to act or give benefit or harm. Means like wealth, money, fame, status, power, influence, and natural resources have no intrinsic ability to help anyone:

لا حول ولا قوة إلا بالله

There is no might and no power except by Allah

We have to decondition ourselves and break the strong spell cast upon us from this *dunya* by first and foremost going through an awakening, understanding what's really going on behind God's curtains, and then untangling and removing the chains of *shirk* that accumulated and rusted in our hearts over the heedless years of our life.

Disentanglement is done through negating the five major curtains that have covered and blinded our insight:

1. The doing of the universe
2. The common five: Water, food, sleep, medicine, and money
3. The beloved eight
4. The false convictions of previous nations who were destroyed by Allah ﷻ
5. Ourselves.

When we speak of negating, we're speaking about the actual verbal act of negation, saying something like, medicine cannot cure, Allah ﷻ is the One who cures.

We need to take a close look inside our hearts to see if we believe any of these things can benefit or harm us in any way. If we find a strong attachment to money, we begin negating money. Remember not to confuse negating with leaving the means behind. The point is not removing money or means from our pockets, the point is to remove the conviction of money or any of the means of this world from our hearts.

## Negating the doing of the Universe

What is the soul? The soul, or *Ruh*, is from the command of Allah ﷻ.

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الرُّوحِ قُلِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا

They ask you 'O Prophet' about the spirit. Say, "Its nature is known only to my Lord, and you 'O humanity' have been given but little knowledge." [Qur'an 17:85]

We're able to see with our eyes, hear with our ears, walk with our legs, and strike with our hands as long as we're alive. Once we die, the *Ruh* is no longer inside our body. The same eyes and ears are there, but we can no longer see or hear. The same legs and hands are there, but we can no longer walk or strike. What changed after death? The soul left. And what is the soul? It is the *Amr*, or Command of Allah ﷻ.

When the soul was intact, we were seeing through Allah's ﷻ command, hearing through Allah's ﷻ command, and walking and striking through Allah's ﷻ command. Without Allah's ﷻ command or the *Amr* of Allah ﷻ, the body is an empty vessel. The command of Allah ﷻ runs through the entire created realm.



اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ وَمِنَ الْأَرْضِ مِثْلَهُنَّ يَتَنَزَّلُ الْأَمْرُ بَيْنَهُنَّ لِتَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ أَحَاطَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا

Allah is the One Who created seven heavens 'in layers', and likewise for the earth. The 'divine' command descends between them so you may know that Allah is Most Capable of everything and that Allah certainly encompasses all things in 'His' knowledge. [Qur'an 65:12]

Without His command, nothing in the created realm can be sustained. Allah ﷻ brings something into existence from nothing with His *Qudrah* and then He sustains that creation with His *Amr*:

أَلَا لَهُ الْخَلْقُ وَالْأَمْرُ

The creation and the command belong to Him 'alone'.

[Qur'an 7:54]

*Khalq*, or the act of creation, is *eejad*, or to bring into existence, and the *Amr*, or command, is *imdaad*, which is needed to sustain existence. It's similar to power and current in electricity. There needs to be power for the light to switch on, but current has to continuously flow through the wires for the light to remain on. What gives any creation its existence and sustained manifestation is Allah's ﷻ command. With this in mind, it's a lot easier to understand how fire cannot burn without the *Amr* of Allah ﷻ:

قُلْنَا يَنَارُ كُونِي بَرْدًا وَسَلَامًا عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ

We ordered, “O fire! Be cool and safe for Abraham!”

[Qur'an 21:69]

When Ibrahim عليه السلام was thrown into the fire, the rope around his hands burned, but not a hair on Ibrahim عليه السلام was harmed. Allah ﷻ simply changed His command associated with the fire. The attribute of burning does not belong to fire, it belongs to Allah ﷻ. He can turn it on and off as He pleases. Fire is simply a means and display of His power. Allah ﷻ can burn without fire, but the fire cannot burn without Allah's ﷻ command.

The sun cannot provide light or heat without the *Amr* of Allah ﷻ:

إِذَا الشَّمْسُ كُوِّرَتْ

When the sun is put out [Qur'an 81:1]

The sun does not give light except with the command of Allah ﷻ. Allah ﷻ can provide light without the sun, but the sun cannot provide light without Allah's ﷻ command.

## Negating the common five

1. **Water does not quench thirst** except with the command of Allah ﷻ. Allah ﷻ can quench thirst without water, but water cannot quench thirst without the command of Allah ﷻ.
2. **Food does not satiate hunger** except with the command of Allah ﷻ. Allah ﷻ can satiate hunger without food, but food cannot satiate hunger without the command of Allah ﷻ.
3. **Sleep does not provide rest** except with the command of Allah ﷻ. Allah ﷻ can give you rest without sleep, but sleep cannot provide you with rest without the command of Allah ﷻ.
4. **Medicine does not cure** except with the command of Allah ﷻ. Allah ﷻ can cure without medicine, but medicine cannot cure without the command of Allah ﷻ.
5. **Money does not fulfill needs** except with the command of Allah ﷻ. Allah ﷻ can fulfill needs without money, but money cannot fulfill my needs without the command of Allah ﷻ.

There are many examples in life where Allah ﷻ hints at these realities. At the time of death, you can drink gallons of water and not feel quenched. A father and grandfather eat the same food. The grandfather only gets weaker while his son, the younger father, gets stronger. Many of us sleep only a little yet feel very energized; at other times, we sleep for extended hours and still feel tired. Medicine? There are many

instances where people with the same sickness take medicine only for some of them to get better while others do not or the illness gets worse. But by far, one of the hardest things to negate is money.

Tell people money can't benefit them and they will say: "Wait, wait, wait a second! Stop right there. What do you mean money can't benefit? Let's see how far you get in life without money." We're not saying you should get rid of money. We're not saying to get rid of your sustenance, we're just saying get to know your Sustainer. We're not saying lose all your provisions, we're saying get to know your Provider.

Look at it this way: Money belongs downstairs, but benefit and harm are upstairs, metaphorically. Neither is the presence of money beneficial, nor is the scarcity of money harmful. If money can't benefit you in the afterlife, a life that is more real than this one, what makes you think it can benefit you in this life? Allah ﷻ says:

يَوْمَ لَا يَنْفَعُ مَالٌ وَلَا بَنُونَ إِلَّا مَنْ أَتَى اللَّهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ

the Day when neither wealth nor children will be of any benefit, except those who come before Allah with a pure heart  
‘will be saved’. [Qur'an 26: 88-89]

Our beloved Prophet ﷺ said:

عن كعب بن عياض، رضي الله عنه، وقال سمعت رسول الله، صلى الله عليه وسلم، يقول: إن لكل أمة فتنة، وفتنة أمتي المال

Ka'b bin 'Iyad (May Allah be pleased with him) reported: Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, "Verily, there is a Fitnah (trial) for every nation and the trial for my nation (or Ummah) is wealth."

Source: Al-Tirmithi, who classified it as Hadith Hasan Sahih  
Reference: Riyadh As-Salihin 480

Money is one of the bigger idols or false gods of this *Ummah*. The Prophet ﷺ explicitly warned about those who worship money when he said:

وعنه عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم، قال: تعس عبد الدينار والدرهم والقطيفة والخميصة إن أعطي رضي وإن لم يعط لم يرض

Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with him) reported: The Prophet ﷺ said, "May he be miserable, the worshipper of the dinar and dirham, and the worshipper of the striped silk cloak. If he is given anything, he is satisfied; but if not, he is unsatisfied".

Source: Sahih Al-Bukhari  
Reference: Riyadh As-Salihin 467

When the order of Allah ﷻ coincides with a decision to make or lose money and we give priority to money

over Allah's ﷻ order, then we are slaves or servants of money.

There are many situations where money becomes useless. During the Gulf War (1990-1991), the Kuwaiti dinar became worthless. What good is money if you're stuck in your home and unable to purchase what you need? The fable of the king who loved his wealth offers a clear lesson. The king went to his treasure room to look upon his riches, accidentally locking himself inside. His servants and workers couldn't figure out where he was. A few days later, they found him dead in the room with a note that read: "All the treasures of this world couldn't buy me a cup of water to save my life in the end."

Money might be able to buy a bed but it can't buy sleep. It can buy a mansion, fancy cars, and luxurious clothes, shoes and purses, but it can't buy happiness.

### **The Sunnah vs. the Qudrah of Allah ﷻ**

Allah ﷻ has a *Sunnah*, or a typical way or example, of how He runs His show in the Divine Matrix. The general rule is that Allah ﷻ veils His activities through the means of this world. Allah ﷻ does what he needs or wants to do through means. For example,

Allah ﷻ quenches thirst through water. Make sure you understand this point clearly. Water is just a veil, it doesn't really do anything, it's just an appearance that Allah ﷻ creates, a display or scene produced for our senses to cover up what's happening behind the scenes. In reality, it is Allah ﷻ who quenches thirst.

The *Sunnah* of Allah ﷻ is that *He quenches* through water. The *Qudrah* of Allah ﷻ is that He can quench without water. Remember how we said Allah ﷻ does in three ways: without means, through means, and against means. Allah doing through means is *Sunnat-u-Allah* and Allah doing without or against means is the *Qudrah* of Allah. In reality, however, it's all the *Qudrah* of Allah. It's just that when He does through or against the means, He is just covering up His *Qudrah* with the means.

## **Negating the Beloved Eight**

Allah ﷻ makes a clear statement that His guidance will be incomplete so long as our hearts are attached to eight things. To remove these eight from our hearts, we need to negate any type of benefit or harm we believe to be associated with them.

قُلْ إِنْ كَانَ آبَاؤُكُمْ وَأَبْنَاؤُكُمْ وَإِخْوَانُكُمْ وَأَزْوَاجُكُمْ وَعَشِيرَتُكُمْ وَأَمْوَالٌ  
اٰفْتَرَقْتُمُوهَا وَتِجَارَةٌ تَخْشَوْنَ كَسَادَهَا وَمَسَاكِنُ تَرْضَوْنَهَا أَحَبَّ إِلَيْكُمْ مِّنَ اللَّهِ  
وَرَسُولِهِ وَجِهَادٍ فِي سَبِيلِهِ فَتَرَبَّصُوا حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ اللَّهُ بِأَمْرٍ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي  
الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ

Say, 'O Prophet,' "If your parents and children and siblings and spouses and extended family and the wealth you have acquired and the trade you fear will decline and the homes you cherish—'if all these' are more beloved to you than Allah and His Messenger and struggling in His Way, then wait until Allah brings about His Will. Allah does not guide the rebellious people." [Qur'an 9:24]

When a king walks down a street, everyone steps aside for him. We can't expect the *Kalimah*, "*La ilaha illa Allah*" to take proper hold of our hearts while the love of these things is still lingering in our hearts. Allah's ﷻ complete help and victory will only come when these eight are set aside. The setting aside of these eight means that we are no longer attached to them, but we handle them according to Allah's ﷻ order, and not according to our whims. *Inshāllah*, we'll delve into these more extensively later in the chapter on obstacles.

## Negating the false convictions of previous nations

If success was in:



**Money:** Qaroon would have been successful

**Kingship and dominion:** Namrood would have been successful

**Power:** Pharaoh would have been successful

**Labor:** Hamaan would have been successful

**Agriculture:** Qawm Saba would have been successful

**Factories:** Qawm Saleh would have been successful

**Physical strength:** Qawm ‘Ad would have been successful

**Trade:** Qawm Shu’ayb would have been successful

Allah ﷻ sent prophets to many nations to warn them that success is not in any of their material possessions or accomplishments. It’s not in status, intelligence, or strength. It’s simply in obeying Allah’s ﷻ commands, as shown by the prophet of the time.

The prophets were not asking the rich to get rid of their riches, nor were they encouraging the poor to acquire wealth. The prophets were not sent for that. They were sent to make an effort on the hearts of humanity to shift their attention from *Ghayru-Allah* (other than Allah ﷻ) to Allah ﷻ. They were asking the rich to commit to Allah’s ﷻ commands with their

riches and the poor to commit to Allah's ﷻ commands in the absence of riches. They were asking for the rich to be grateful to Allah ﷻ by being God-conscious in their dealing with these riches that Allah ﷻ sent to them as a test and for the poor to be patient by being God-conscious in their dealing with the lack of means that Allah ﷻ kept from them as a test.

If success was in any of these material possessions, Allah ﷻ would not have destroyed these nations. Without exception, they were all destroyed by Allah ﷻ and they lost out in both this life and the life hereafter. We must be honest with ourselves and see which of the tests above has the greatest impact or attachment in our hearts, begin negating them every time we speak of them, and avoid gatherings that are extravagant in their mention and glorification of these things.

## Negating Ourselves

The greatest *sanam*, or statue, worshipped today is the *nafs*. It's the "I." This is the hardest thing to negate because it's the closest thing to ourselves. But negating the *nafs* is crucial, because Allah ﷻ said:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا

Successful indeed is the one who purifies their soul, and  
doomed is the one who corrupts it! [Qur'an 91:9-10]

We don't want to kill our ego, we want to know it. In order to know it for what it really is, we need to start by negating it. The more we negate it, the more we'll know it, and the more we know ourselves, the more we'll know Allah ﷻ.

At the time of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, the *Sahabah* started saying that they did this and that to the non-believers. Allah ﷻ then reminded them to negate their self-doing and revealed:

فَلَمْ تَقْتُلُوهُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ قَتَلَهُمْ وَمَا رَمَيْتُ إِذْ رَمَيْتُ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ رَمَىٰ

It was not you 'believers' who killed them, but it was Allah Who did so. Nor was it you 'O Prophet' who threw 'a handful of sand at the disbelievers',<sup>1</sup> but it was Allah Who did so.

[Qur'an 8:17]

Even with all of the angels that Allah ﷻ sent down in the Battle of *Badr* as a means to victory, Allah ﷻ explicitly reminded them to negate any association of themselves with victory and He revealed:

وَمَا النَّصْرُ إِلَّا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ

And victory comes only from Allah — the Almighty, All-Wise — [Qur'an 3:126]

Allah ﷻ even negated the effort of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ himself when he threw sand at the *mush-rikeen*.

وَمَا رَمَيْتَ إِذْ رَمَيْتَ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ رَمَىٰ

Nor was it you 'O Prophet' who threw 'a handful of sand at the disbelievers',<sup>1</sup> but it was Allah Who did so. [Qur'an 8:17]

He then told the Prophet ﷺ to announce in Allah's ﷻ words that he, the Prophet ﷺ, has no power to benefit or harm himself.

قُلْ لَا أَمْلِكُ لِنَفْسِي نَفْعًا وَلَا ضَرًّا إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ ۚ وَلَوْ كُنْتُ أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبِ  
لَا سْتَكْتَرْتُ مِنَ الْخَيْرِ وَمَا مَسَّنِيَ السُّوءُ ۚ إِنْ أَنَا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ وَبَشِيرٌ لِّقَوْمٍ  
يُؤْمِنُونَ

Say, "I have no power to benefit or protect myself, except by the Will of Allah. If I had known the unknown, I would have benefited myself enormously, and no harm would have ever touched me. I am only a warner and deliverer of good news for those who believe." [Qur'an 7:188]

And then Allah ﷻ told the Prophet ﷺ that he doesn't get to guide whom he pleases:

إِنَّكَ لَا تَهْدِي مَنْ أَحْبَبْتَ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ  
 You surely cannot guide whoever you like 'O Prophet', but it  
 is Allah Who guides whoever He wills, and He knows best  
 who are fit to be guided. [Qur'an 28:56]

And in the end, what does Allah ﷻ tell our beloved  
 Messenger ﷺ?

فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَأَسْتَغْفِرْهُ

then glorify the praises of your Lord and seek His forgiveness  
 [Qur'an 110:3]

*Rabbika*, your Lord, not your *nafs*. He said *Rabbika*,  
 not *nafsika*. In the end, we have to attribute it all to  
 Allah ﷻ and totally erase any remnants or claims of  
 our ego from the process.

## Benefits of Negation

If we negate any of these worldly attachments, we will  
 benefit in three major ways. Allah ﷻ will:

1. Remove its power or effect from the heart  
 right before our eyes.
2. It will become subservient to us and in ser-  
 vice to us.
3. Allah ﷻ will protect us from its evils.

Ultimately, this world is a delusion. Allah ﷻ says:

اعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَلَهُوَ زِينَةٌ وَتَفَاخُرٌ بَيْنَكُمْ وَتَكَاثُرٌ فِي  
الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ كَمَثَلِ غَيْثٍ أَعْجَبَ الْكُفَّارَ نَبَاتُهُ ثُمَّ يَهِيجُ فَتَرَاهُ مُصْفَرًّا ثُمَّ  
يَكُونُ حُطَامًا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانٌ وَمَا  
الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْغُرُورِ

Know that the worldly life is only play, and distraction, and glitter, and boasting among you, and rivalry in wealth and children. It is like a rainfall that produces plants, and delights the disbelievers. But then it withers and dries up, and you see it yellowing, and then it becomes debris. While in the Hereafter there is severe agony, and forgiveness from Allah, and acceptance. The life of this world is nothing but enjoyment of **delusion** (vanity). [Qur'an 57:20]

The delusion here refers to the strong yet empty pull of this world and its ornaments, but it also could refer to the world's finite and temporary nature:

كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ

All that is on Earth is Perishing! [Qur'an 55:26]

One of the qualities of Truth is that it is unchanging. It is one of Allah's ﷻ names, *Al-Haq* (The Truth), because God is unchanging. He is the true and only Constant in existence.

This world that we're calling the Divine Simulation or Matrix is the most crucial part of our journey back to Allah ﷻ. To reach our final destination safely, we need to understand the rules of the game. How we maneuver and respond to the conditions and circumstances that are created and sent our way is of utmost importance. How we spend our time in this Divine simulation will determine our final abode:

فَرِيقٌ فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَفَرِيقٌ فِي السَّعِيرِ

A group in Paradise, and a group in hell fire. [Qur'an 42:7]

With this new perspective of the world/Matrix, remember that the first part to success in this life is *eman*, which is a new way of seeing or perceiving the world. With this groundbreaking approach comes a new lifestyle, a new way of conducting ourselves because *eman* without *a'maal* (actions) is incomplete. It's never enough. True *eman* bequeaths righteous actions and we need both to be successful.

## Conduct in the Divine Matrix

Allah ﷻ made this life the house of means, the house of seeming causes and seeming effects, in order to test who is best amongst us in conduct. The one best in conduct will first see things for what they are. Think of this world or the Divine Matrix as Allah's ﷻ book. Allah ﷻ is the author of this book. The book is encrypted, however, and the key to this encryption is Allah's ﷻ *Nur* or light. We will need to develop enough inner light to be able to read and understand this book. What is the intent of the Author? What is Allah ﷻ getting at?

When our hearts are polished through the abandonment of bad deeds, constant remembrance of Allah ﷻ and performance of good deeds, they begin to radiate with *Nur*. Notice how frequently Allah ﷻ associates deeds with light. In a hadith, Allah ﷻ mentions:



وعن أبي مالك الحارث بن عاصم الأشعري رضي الله عنه قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: "الطهور شطر الإيمان، والحمد لله تملأ الميزان، وسبحان الله والحمد لله تملأ -أو تملأ- ما بين السماوات والأرض، والصلاة نور، والصدقة برهان، والصبر ضياء، والقرآن حجة لك أو عليك. كل الناس يغدو، فبائع نفسه فمعتقها، أو موبقها"

Abu Malik Al-Harith bin Asim Al-Ash'ari (May Allah be pleased with him) reported that:

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Purity is half of faith, and the praise of Allah fills the scale. Glorification and praise fill up what is between the heavens and the earth. Prayer is a light, charity is proof, and patience is illumination. The Qur'an is proof for you or against you. All people go out early in the morning and sell themselves, either setting themselves free or ruining themselves.

*Reference: Riyad As-Salihin 25 Source: Muslim, who classified it as Sahih*

True righteousness is accompanied by a light, as Allah ﷻ The Glorious has said.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَءَامِنُوا بِرَسُولِهِ يُؤْتِكُمْ كِفْلَيْنِ مِن رَّحْمَتِهِ  
وَيَجْعَلْ لَّكُمْ نُورًا تَمْشُونَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

O you who believe! Have Taqwa of Allah, and believe in His Messenger, He will give you a double portion of His mercy, and He will **give you a light** by which you shall walk (straight). And He will forgive you. And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

[Qur'an 57:28]

As mentioned in the previous chapter of *eman*, when enough light penetrates our hearts, we are able to pierce through the veils of multiplicity — the *as-baab*, or created means of this world — and reach the One behind it all. When Allah ﷻ makes reference to Darkness in the Qur'an He mentions it in the plural form, while the mention of light is usually in the singular form.

هُوَ الَّذِي يُنَزِّلُ عَلَى عَبْدِهِ آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ لِّيُخْرِجَكُمْ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ  
وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُمْ لَرَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ

He is the One Who sends down clear revelations to His servant to bring you out of darknesses and into the light. For indeed Allah is Ever Gracious and Most Merciful to you.

[Qur'an 57:9]

We see that the One who created everything is Allah ﷻ. Everything includes both the objects or things, and various episodes, events, or situations in our lives. Many people understand and remember that Allah ﷻ is the Creator of objects, but many forget that He is also the Creator of the situations that happen in our lives. When we're no longer spiritually numb or asleep, we see that the events that manifest in our lives are not random. Allah ﷻ created and then executed these events or episodes in our lives to test our conduct or how we will respond to them.

So, Allah ﷻ created objects and circumstances. Objects are things we can hold or perceive and circumstances are events that leave us with a certain feeling. Objects are held and circumstances are felt. Medicine is something we can see and hold, while a cure is something we feel. We often say we took medicine and we feel better. Food is something we can see and grab, while satiation is something we feel. We often say we ate food and we feel full. Water is something we drink, and quenched is something we feel. We often say, we drank water and we feel quenched.

As mentioned in previous chapters, the reality of the matter is that medicine, food, and water don't really do anything.

Three people have the exact same sickness. They visit the doctor and he gives them the same medicine. Two of them get better and the other dies. If cure was in the medicine, they would all get better, but it is Allah ﷻ who cures them. Let's look at another example:

In Surah Al-Kahf, Allah ﷻ tells us that the people in the cave were there for 309 years without food or water. Who kept them alive? Allah ﷻ with His mighty

power kept them alive. Allah ﷻ doesn't need the means He created in this world to get things done.

Allah ﷻ generates our needs and circumstances with His power and fulfills those needs from His treasures. But if He is the one generating and fulfilling our needs, then why did He command us to take the means in this world, and why did He create those means in the first place? To test if our hearts will turn to Allah ﷻ or the means we utilize.

Allah ﷻ generates needs in us to see how we will go about fulfilling those needs, and sends situations or circumstances our way — the various events and scenarios in our lives — to see how we will attempt to change those circumstances. He wants to see what we're going to do about them. Our effort to fulfill our needs and change our circumstances is what the *a'malaa* is referring to at the end of this verse. Our responses to the various needs Allah ﷻ generates in us, and the circumstances He sends our way is the test of life. Allah ﷻ wants to see who amongst us will have the best response, i.e., the best conduct.

الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا

He who created time—to test you—which of you is best in conduct. [Qur'an 67:2]

Let's look at two examples to further clarify this point. Two businessmen go into business. One makes one million dollars and the other loses one million dollars.

Who is a successful businessman as far as Allah ﷻ is concerned? The one who followed and obeyed Allah's ﷻ commands that he ordained for business dealings. If we lose one million dollars but follow Allah's ﷻ commands in doing so, we're successful. If we make one million dollars but disobey Allah's ﷻ commands in doing so, then we're unsuccessful. Pay close attention here, because although we discussed what constitutes success in the first chapter, we did so in the macro scale, and now we will explore the microscopic aspect of it.

Success is not in obtaining or losing things or the coming and going of things. Success is in following Allah's ﷻ commands. Money will come and money will go. Success is not tied to whether you have or don't have money. Success is tied to your conduct as it pertains to the coming and the going of this money.

Imagine two sick people. Allah sends both the circumstance of sickness. After six months, both were cured and felt better. Who is the successful one? Who remained sick and who got better is not the point. Success is not in circumstances or situations rising or changing. Success is in following Allah's ﷻ commands as they pertain to the circumstance itself.

*Sahabah* were not concerned with changing their circumstances. They were only concerned with knowing what Allah ﷻ wants during those circumstances and fulfilling Allah's ﷻ wishes. They weren't preoccupied with their own happiness, but rather, they were preoccupied with His.

Whenever we're faced with a situation, we have to remember that there are two possible options for our response: One is the way of *hawa*, or caprice, when we basically do as we please, and the other is the way of *huda*, or guidance, when we do as Allah ﷻ pleases in the way shown by His messenger, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. The catch is that it will often be made to seem to us that if we act based on *huda*, there will be some loss or harm to us in the process, while if we follow our own instincts and desires, we will benefit.

That is the struggle in Allah's ﷻ commands, as Allah ﷻ says in the Qur'an.

وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

As for those who **struggle** in Our cause, who strive hard for Us, We will surely **guide them** to Our paths. And Allah is certainly with the good-doers. [Qur'an 29:69]

If our *nur* is strong enough, we will always choose Allah's ﷻ commands no matter what the situation or cost of *dunyawi*, or worldly, dowry. The trick is that *the loss is a mirage*. If we pass the test and give precedence to Allah's ﷻ command, we will always be successful. Notice I didn't say we would turn out successful in the end, but that we will *always* be successful, because as Muslims we are not result oriented, we are command oriented — the command that is demanded of us in the present moment. If we follow Allah's ﷻ commands in any given situation, we are already successful in Allah's ﷻ view, irrelevant of the outcome.

## The Staff of Musa

Allah ﷻ will often present us with a situation where the right move or decision on our end appears harmful but the outcome is, in reality, beneficial. Consider

the staff of Musa عليه السلام. Allah ﷻ turned it into a snake and then asked him to grab it. At face-value, the consequence of that command is harmful. I don't know many people who would want to grab a huge and poisonous snake by the head. Most would run away like Musa عليه السلام in this scenario. Then Allah's ﷻ command came:

وَمَا تِلْكَ بِيَمِينِكَ يَمُوسَىٰ قَالَ هِيَ عَصَايَ أَتَوَكَّؤُا عَلَيْهَا وَأُشْعِرُ بِهَا عَلَىٰ  
 غَنَمِي وَلِيَ فِيهَا مَآرِبُ أُخْرَىٰ قَالَ أَلْقَهَا يَمُوسَىٰ فَأَلْقَاهَا فَإِذَا هِيَ حَيَّةٌ  
 تَسْعَىٰ قَالَ خُذْهَا وَلَا تَخَفْ ۖ سَنُعِيدُهَا سِيرَتَهَا الْأُولَىٰ

‘Allah asked,’ “And what is that in your right hand, O Moses?”. He replied, “It is my staff! I lean on it, and with it I beat down ‘branches’ for my sheep, and have other uses for it.” Allah said, “Throw it down, O Moses!”. So he did, then—behold!—it became a slithering snake. Allah said, “**Take it, and have no fear.** We will return it to its former state.

[Qur'an 20: 17-21]

Often, to test us, Allah ﷻ will create certain scenarios in our life where following his command will seem harmful to us and we will feel scared of the outcome. We fear some loss of sorts: Loss in our wealth, our health, our family, our homes, our status, or our appearance in people's eyes. We imagine scenarios and their potential outcomes with a sense of cautiousness or trepidation. “What will people say if I wear *hi-jab*?” we might ask ourselves. “How will people treat



me if I grow a beard?” This fear is rooted in our attachment to the material things, objects, and people of this world.

زَيْنَ لِلنَّاسِ حُبُّ الشَّهَوَاتِ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ وَالْبَنِينَ وَالْقَنَاطِيرِ الْمُقَنْطَرَةِ مِنَ  
الذَّهَبِ وَالْفِضَّةِ وَالْخَيْلِ الْمُسَوَّمَةِ وَالْأَنْعَامِ وَالْحَرْثِ ۚ ذَلِكَ مَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ  
الدُّنْيَا ۗ وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ حُسْنُ الْمَبَآءِ

The enjoyment of ‘worldly’ desires — women, children, treasures of gold and silver, fine horses, cattle, and fertile land — has been made appealing to people. These are the pleasures of this worldly life, but with Allah is the finest destination (the Hereafter) [Qur'an 3:14].

Allah ﷻ wants these things out of our hearts, and this is why we hear the call to prayer five times a day. The *Adhan* begins with four *takbeers*: *Allahu Akbar*, *Allahu Akbar*, *Allahu Akbar*, *Allahu Akbar*, and only then do we hear the testimony of *Tawheed*: *Ash-hadu An La ilaha Illa Allah*. The problem is that we can't properly bear witness to the *Kalimah* — we're not seeing with the *nur* of *eman*.

We're blinded. We're unable to truly witness because witnessing has been veiled from our hearts due to the spell of alluring *asbaab*, the greatness of creation clearly evident in our hearts. Our tongues say *Allahu Akbar*, but our hearts say: Money and fame are *Akbar*, PhDs are *Akbar*. Our hearts are overwhelmed

with the images of luxurious objects and experiences, and are hence attached to, and moved by them. As long as these attachments have taken up room in our hearts, the *Kalimah* is veiled from us and we're blinded by our love of this world. We need to negate the things of this world and affirm the greatness of Allah ﷻ so that the *Kalimah* of *Tawheed* becomes effective.

The Staff of Musa عليه السلام symbolizes our attachments to the things of this world, as we see when Allah ﷻ commands Musa عليه السلام .

قَالَ أَلْقِهَا يَمُوسَىٰ

Allah said, "Throw it down, O Moses!" [Qur'an 20:19]

Once the love and attachment to the things of this world is out of our hearts, then following Allah's ﷻ commands, even if apparently harmful, will not only cause us no harm, but Allah ﷻ will bring benefit out of it. Since Allah ﷻ is the *Nafi'* and the *Daar*, Allah ﷻ is able to bring benefit out of that which seems harmful, and bring harm out of that which appears beneficial.

Put your trust in Allah ﷻ, and not on your senses. It's *tasleem* not *tafheem*, meaning it's about submission

and not cognition. Logic will tell us that throwing a beneficial staff or grabbing a harmful snake is foolish and irrational. That assessment would be correct if it was truly the case, but since we're in Allah's ﷻ Divine Matrix, we're in the Mind-World, In-Time, we are being tested, and things are not what they appear to be. In this realm, seeing doesn't lead to believing, but rather, believing leads to seeing — a new way of seeing.

Nothing we do that seems harmful can harm us if we do it to obey Allah's ﷻ command, and nothing we avoid that seems beneficial can benefit us if we avoid it to obey Allah's ﷻ command. It is Allah ﷻ who controls outcomes and Allah ﷻ alone who provides benefit or afflicts with harm:

قُلْ لَا أَمْلِكُ لِنَفْسِي نَفْعًا وَلَا ضَرًّا إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ وَلَوْ كُنْتُ أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبِ  
لَأَسْتَكْبَرْتُ مِنَ الْخَيْرِ وَمَا مَسَّنِيَ السُّوءُ ۚ إِنْ أَنَا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ وَبَشِيرٌ لِّقَوْمٍ  
يُؤْمِنُونَ

Say (O Prophet), “I have no power to benefit or protect myself, except by the Will of Allah. If I had known the unknown, I would have benefited myself enormously, and no harm would have ever touched me. I am only a warner and deliverer of good news for those who believe.” [Qur'an 7:188]

To conduct ourselves in an appropriate manner while plugged into this Matrix, we need to see the situations, desires or needs that arise as tests from Allah ﷻ. Once that's established, then we must respond based on *huda* or prophetic guidance.

Like we said time and again — and I can't emphasize this point enough — our responses are our conduct:

الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا

He who created death and life—to test you—which of you is best in conduct [Qur'an 67:2].

It all starts with knowledge, though. How will we conduct ourselves if we don't know how to conduct ourselves? We have to know what Allah ﷻ wants from us in each situation. Allah ﷻ says:

فَاعْلَمْ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لِذَنْبِكَ

Know that there is no God but Allah and ask forgiveness for your sin [Qur'an 47:19]

Action is based on knowledge. We will need to know something about the action we're busy with to perform it properly. How much knowledge? The amount of knowledge required from Allah ﷻ is the knowledge needed to fulfill Allah's ﷻ orders as they continuously arise in the present moment.

As we go about our day, we will need to pray five times at least. For our prayer to be accepted, we will need to make *wudu* (ablution). Therefore, having knowledge of *salah* and *wudu* is necessary. The call to prayer is made or an *Adhan* app on our phones sound while we're talking to a friend and it's time to pray *Dhuhr*. We have the knowledge required for what it takes to perform our prayer correctly. We have *yaqeen*, or conviction, that our success at this moment is not in speaking to our friend, although it's a very juicy conversation that we're quite anxious to finish. It's hard, but we struggle against our *nafs* and we remind ourselves that Allah ﷻ is watching us now and we're mindful of His presence and of the reward associated with praying *salah* in congregation in the masjid. We make the intention that we want to pray to please Allah ﷻ and submit to his current command that's unfolding in the Divine Matrix right now. We then excuse ourselves and tell our friend we need to get ready for *salah*, and that we have to stop talking now but will call them later.

We then head to the washroom while we're aware that Allah ﷻ is watching us and is pleased with us. We remember that making *wudu* erases all of our minor sins and acts as a spiritual shield and protection.

We proceed to enter the washroom with the left foot as is the *sunnah* of our Prophet ﷺ, and we make ablution. While making *wudu*, we are conscious of our water consumption because Prophet Muhammad ﷺ used a specific amount of water for ablution, and Allah ﷻ told us in the Qur'an that He doesn't love those who are extravagant. We continue this process until we leave for the masjid and pray our *salah*.

We want to rush to call our friend back now but we remember that we're supposed to complete certain *dua*'s and *tasbeehs* before moving from our place of prayer. We have this knowledge and we have conviction that our success is in following Allah's ﷻ command that matches the experience that unfolds in the now. So we sit and recite the Prophet's *dua*'s that are recommended post-*salah* and we complete our *tasbeehs* before leaving our place of *salah*.

We're about to exit the masjid and we remember that Allah ﷻ is watching us and is pleased with us and we proceed to exit the masjid with our left foot and recite the *du'a* associated with leaving the house of Allah ﷻ. We're still cognizant that Allah ﷻ is watching us and is pleased with us because we're matching the programs He is downloading to us — the programs of experience with the commands He ordained on us

related to those experiences. We open the car door, sit inside and recite the *du'a* of riding a vehicle, and so forth and so on.

We can't live our deen in this world in submission to Allah ﷻ if we don't know what's required from us based on the experiences Allah ﷻ sends our way. So we need enough knowledge to empower us to act or conduct ourselves in response to the situations or circumstances we find ourselves in.

We will need to have *eman* or we won't have perspective and won't see the circumstances in our lives as coming from Allah ﷻ. We need to be aware of Allah ﷻ in order to remember what's required of us in the present moment.

And we will need motivation in the form of knowledge of the reward associated with the action we're going to perform. We need to do it all for the sake of Allah ﷻ or the act won't be accepted, so we will need a strong conviction that only Allah ﷻ can benefit or harm us, and that doing what Allah ﷻ wants and expects of us in the present moment is the very essence of success.

This will require a level of struggle because we won't always feel like leaving what we're busy with in the present moment, due to both our *nafs* and *shaytan* playing their parts in the process, which doesn't make things any easier.

Finally, our actions need to be based on the prophetic *sunnah* for them to be accepted by Allah ﷻ, and not based on our own whims and intellectual prowess.

## **The Extent of Knowledge**

What about something like performing *Haj*? We need to know when *Haj* becomes obligatory for us but we don't need to know the details or *manasik* (rituals) of *Haj* until Allah ﷻ permits, and the time comes for us to perform *Haj*. Remember, what's required of us is the knowledge to execute what God wants from us in the present moment and not in the imaginary future.

No experience ever unfolds in the future. Experience is always happening now. The future is only a thought in our heads. We utilize our minds to plan *Haj* sometime in the future, and when we feel the plan about to unfold we begin to seek the detailed



knowledge and nuances pertaining to the performance of *Haj*.

## **Useful Knowledge We Need on a Daily Basis**

Here's a list of some daily practices we will need to learn and be familiar with to conduct ourselves properly and worship Allah ﷻ in the now. Religious knowledge pertaining to:

1. Waking up
2. Sleeping
3. Using the washroom
4. Getting dressed and the clothes we wear
5. Bathing
6. Eating
7. Drinking
8. Driving
9. Looking in the mirror
10. Traveling
11. *Wudu* (ablution)
12. Prayer
13. Fasting
14. Reciting Qur'an
15. Daily *adhkar*
16. Making *du'a*

17. Sexual Activity (for married couples ONLY)
18. Work: How to deal with the boss and colleagues
19. Conducting business
20. Going to the mall or going shopping
21. How to treat our spouse
22. How to raise our children

It will be helpful here to provide some categories for religious conduct or worship. This world is the world of rights, and the afterlife is the world of reaping the rewards of fulfilling those rights. There are rights that pertain to Allah ﷻ and those that pertain to people.

The Scholars sometimes divide these rights that we have to fulfill into three categories:

1. *'Ibadaat*: How to worship Allah ﷻ.
2. *Mu'amalaat*: How to conduct ourselves with people in general. This typically deals with the rights we owe people with whom we conduct business or work.
3. *Mu'asharaat*: How to conduct ourselves with our parents, spouses, and children and these are the rights that our families have upon us and how we go about fulfilling those rights.

We need to seek Islamic knowledge pertaining to all categories and the actions that are part of each of them. *Hisnul Muslim (Fortress of the Muslim)* is a useful booklet that has many of the *dua*'s that our Prophet ﷺ performed when conducting common actions throughout his day.

Now, what about the *husn* aspect. Allah ﷻ says, *Ah-sanu 'amala*, or those best in conduct. For an *'Amal* to have *husn*, or excellence, it must have specific attributes. The more of these attributes it has, the weightier the action is on the Day of Judgement, and the higher your abode in *Jannah* (Paradise). The more of these attributes our conduct fulfills, the better that action is in the sight of Allah ﷻ. We should make an effort for our actions to have:

1. *Yaqeen*: We have conviction that we are successful right here and now
2. Sincerity: The action is done purely for the sake of Allah ﷻ
3. Mindfulness of Allah ﷻ and on the Reward from Allah ﷻ: That Allah ﷻ is, sees, and hears us, and He is closer to us than our own selves, and that we are getting a reward in this life and the hereafter for this action

4. The Prophetic *Sunnah*: The action is performed and is aligned with the way of our Messenger ﷺ
5. *Mujahadah*: We perform the act irrelevant of how we feel. Whether we feel like it or not. Whether it's convenient or not. Whether it's beneficial to us or not.

Now, here's a question: Don't all of these actions take place in time? And if they do, don't these actions take time? And if they do, shouldn't we make an effort to make the most of our time? Our Prophet ﷺ cautioned us.

عَنْ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا قَالَ قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ:  
نِعْمَتَانِ مَغْبُورٌ فِيهِمَا كَثِيرٌ مِنَ النَّاسِ: الصِّحَّةُ وَالْفَرَاغُ

“There are two blessings which many people lose:

(They are) health and free time for doing good.”

(Bukhari 8/421)

He also said ﷺ:

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عِيلَانَ، حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو أَحْمَدَ، حَدَّثَنَا سُفْيَانُ، عَنْ لَيْثٍ،  
عَنْ مُجَاهِدٍ، عَنْ ابْنِ عُمَرَ، قَالَ أَخَذَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ  
بِمَنْكَبِي فَقَالَ " كُنْ فِي الدُّنْيَا كَأَنَّكَ غَرِيبٌ أَوْ عَابِرُ سَبِيلٍ وَعَدَّ نَفْسَكَ  
فِي أَهْلِ الْقُبُورِ " . فَقَالَ لِي ابْنُ عُمَرَ إِذَا أَصْبَحْتَ فَلَا تُحَدِّثْ نَفْسَكَ  
بِالْمَسَاءِ وَإِذَا أَمْسَيْتَ فَلَا تُحَدِّثْ نَفْسَكَ بِالصَّبَاحِ وَخُذْ مِنْ صِحَّتِكَ قَبْلَ

سَقَمِكَ وَمِنْ حَيَاتِكَ قَبْلَ مَوْتِكَ فَإِنَّكَ لَا تَدْرِي يَا عَبْدَ اللَّهِ مَا اسْمُكَ غَدًا  
 " . قَالَ أَبُو عِيسَى وَقَدْ رَوَى هَذَا الْحَدِيثَ الْأَعْمَشُ عَنْ مُجَاهِدٍ عَنْ  
 ابْنِ عُمَرَ نَحْوَهُ . حَدَّثَنَا أَحْمَدُ بْنُ عَبْدِ الصَّبِيِّ الْبَصْرِيُّ، حَدَّثَنَا حَمَّادُ  
 بْنُ زَيْدٍ، عَنْ لَيْثٍ، عَنْ مُجَاهِدٍ، عَنْ ابْنِ عُمَرَ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ  
 عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ نَحْوَهُ

“Be in the world like a stranger or a passerby, and count yourself among the inhabitants of the grave.”

Ibn 'Umar said to me: "When you wake up in the morning, then do not concern yourself with the evening. And when you reach the evening, then do not concern yourself with the morning. Take from your health before your illness, and from your life before your death, for indeed O slave of Allah! You do not know what your description shall be tomorrow.” (Jami` at-Tirmidhi 2333)

## The Significance of Time

**A**llah ﷻ tells us in Surah al-Asr that our activity in time, or how we conduct ourselves in time, can lead to either our failure or our success.

وَالْعَصْرِ إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ  
وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ

By the 'passage of' time! Surely humanity is in 'grave' loss, except those who have faith, do good, and urge each other to the truth, and urge each other to patience and perseverance.

[Qur'an 103]

*Subhanallāh*, there couldn't be a better word to take oath on in this surah. By taking oath on 'Asr, Allah ﷻ is bringing emphasis to the importance of what is to come next. The usage of the word 'Asr denotes not just time, but the passage of time. What's more, 'Asr here denotes the last portion of the day before sunrise. It's the final sprint in the relay race. This is where you have to give it your all. And finally, 'Asr in Arabic means "to apply pressure or to squeeze." Allah ﷻ wants us to feel the pressure so we get to work and make the most of our allotted time.

If this was the only surah we had access to in the Qur'an, it would suffice for us. *Alhamdulillah*. It is

profound. Allah ﷻ is saying, as time passes, if you're not realized in the following four qualities, then you're at a loss:

1. *Eman*
2. Righteous Conduct
3. Calling others towards the *deen* of Islam and
4. Having patience.

We need to change our perspective and work to strengthen our *eman* so that we busy ourselves, day and night, with righteous deeds. However, as we see from Point 3, calling others to Islam, it's not enough that we practice the *deen* ourselves. We must have concern for others and call them towards Allah ﷻ (The Truth) as well. As long as we're focused on ourselves, people will perceive us as, and call us righteous. The moment we begin calling others towards that Truth, we will face resistance and suffer. This will require the last condition in the *surah*, in which we will need to put patience into practice. The second half of this *surah* has to do with our responsibility as followers of the final Messenger of Allah. We will unpack that dimension of our *deen* in the second part of this manual that I hope to launch later this year, *inshāllah*. For now, let's focus on the first two points.

Any time that passes without *eman*-infused righteous deeds counts against us. We can't blame the times for our current state, nor can we blame time for our problems by saying we just don't have enough of it. We choose how we spend our time. We are accountable for it. It's all on us, ourselves. Imam al-Shafi'i said, "We blame Time, though we commit the wrongs, Time has no evil except the sins we commit in Time."

## A Deeper Dive into Time

**Warning!** *This section on time is quite deep and heavy to comprehend, so you should read it several times (no pun intended).*

Let's examine our actual experience of time. We'll soon see that time is a useful illusion. Have you ever had an experience in the past? We definitely had many thoughts of the past but even those thoughts, when we experienced them, we experienced in the present moment. Your actual experience of the world is always in the now or the present moment. In fact, the breakfast yesterday or this morning, when you actually had it, the time was now. The dinner we will have tonight or the next, when we have it, it will be now. The experience manifests and then disappears. Our access to that experience is now limited to



memory, but we're not talking about our thoughts (memory or imagination). We're talking about our actual experience. Have you ever had an actual experience in the past? Has anyone ever had any experience in the past? Has anyone ever experienced the future? Or is it simply a thought in the form of imagination that is also unfolding now? Any experience we have is fleeting or perishing. Its very nature is that it comes and it goes. It never remains. Like they say: It, too, shall pass!

What I'm saying here is that time is a meaningful and useful illusion. We only experience the present — now. Time is born at every instance that our minds are active. Time is what eternity looks like when filtered through thought. [Rupert Spira, “and Now are Dimensionless Consciousness”]

The activity or movement of the mind creates the illusion of time. What is the mind? The mind is not the container of our thoughts and perceptions. The mind *is* our thoughts and perceptions. So, every time we have a thought, time is born. *Time is the Matrix* and the Matrix is God's testing field (*Li yabluwakum*). Remember this verse?

الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا

He who created time (death and life)—to test you—which of you is best in conduct [Qur'an 67:2].

Death is a symbol for the end of something, just as life is the symbol for the beginning of something. Something with a beginning and an end is in time. Allah ﷻ is saying He created time to test us, who is best amongst us in conduct. And if time is born every time we have a thought, a feeling, or a perception, then time is born whenever we have an experience. Time is, by its nature, human experience.

But if experiences have a beginning and an end, what is it that observes or witnesses those experiences? Are we the witnesses of our own experiences? When a thought appears, that same thought eventually disappears and is replaced with another thought. Do we disappear with the first thought? Is it our experience that we witness a thought when it appears and then lose ourselves when the thought disappears? Or is it our experience that we're always there, witnessing the events as they rise and fall? Experiences come and go, but do we come and go with them? When we experience thoughts, we separate ourselves from the rising thoughts by saying something like: "I thought that you were coming tonight," or "I thought that you cared about me." There is an "I" that

thinks. This “I” can’t be the thought itself because it claims ownership of the thought. There is the thought, and the “I” that had it. This means we cannot be our thoughts. We are that which witnesses or observes thought.

What about our physical bodies? Are we our bodies? Let’s examine that thought for a minute. When our heads or bodies hurt we say things like, “My head hurts,” or “My body aches.” Something is claiming ownership of the body. When we say, “My head,” we’re saying the head belongs to us, so it follows that we can’t be our heads or our bodies. Let’s repeat this thought process with our feelings.

We find ourselves saying things like, “I feel hungry,” or “I feel tired.” Something is claiming ownership of our sensations or feelings. The hunger or fatigue belongs to the “I” that claims it. Hence, it follows that we are not our feelings. That which experiences thoughts, feelings, and perceptions doesn’t end every time a feeling, thought or perception comes to an end. That which witnesses experience is always there.

Even in deep sleep when mind activity comes to a halt, something is aware of the fact that time wasn’t

present. So, what is it that's aware of experience that comes and goes, aware of time that comes and goes, but itself doesn't come and go? It never comes to an end. It's not born and it never ends. It's everlasting but not in time, for it is not limited by time. What does it sound like I'm describing here? If it sounds like Allah's ﷻ attributes, then keep reading.

There's a *hadith qudsi* that is often misinterpreted. It states:

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ " لَا تَسُبُّوا الدَّهْرَ  
فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الدَّهْرُ "

Abu Huraira reported Allah's Apostle (ﷺ) as saying:

Do not curse Time, for it is Allah Who is Time.

Reference: Sahih Muslim 2246e

The word *dahr* in Arabic, although often translated as time, is not time. *Zaman* or *waqt* is time. *Dahr* is the present moment. It is the infinite now. It is  $1/\text{time}$  as time, or  $t$  approaches 0. When time is there, meaning the ego or mind is active with experience, the value for time is 1, and  $1/1 = 1$  which is the ego-centric "I."

The less we are caught up in experience, the faster time begins to approach zero, the faster we approach

infinity, or the nearer we feel to Allah ﷻ.  $1/0 = \text{infinity}$ . Allah ﷻ is the infinite witnessing presence. Allah ﷻ is the *Dahr*. Allah ﷻ is the Eternal Now. How else could He be closer to us than our own selves?

The now is not an infinitesimal unit of time, and there is not a series of moments. The Now is timeless and there is only One Moment in which all experience manifests. Think of Allah ﷻ as the infinite witnessing canvas of experience. The images and drawings on the canvas are experiences. Experience is simply the coloring of the canvas.

Another way to think about this is as an infinite screen. The movie on the screen is experience, but if you examine the screen by walking up to it and touching it, you don't find the images on the screen. All you find is One indivisible screen that momentarily takes on the shape of all of these different images. All there is to experience is the screen. You can't say that the movie is separate from the screen. The movie doesn't exist apart from the screen on which it plays, or stand out from the screen. The word *exist* in Latin means "to stand out from."

The movie is simply the coloring of the screen. Yet, the experience of the movie cannot exist without the

screen. In the same way, the world doesn't stand out from Allah ﷻ. It doesn't have real existence. The world is the activity or the act of Allah ﷻ.

هَذَا خَلْقُ اللَّهِ فَأَرُونِي مَاذَا خَلَقَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ دُونِهِ ۚ بَلِ الظَّالِمُونَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ

This is Allah's creation. Now show Me what those 'gods' other than Him have created. In fact, the wrongdoers are clearly astray. [Qur'an 31:11]

Imam Ghazali says, *Hatha Khalqu Allah* means *Hatha Fi'lu Allah*, meaning all the created realm is the Act of Allah ﷻ.

So, if Allah ﷻ is the witnessing presence, if He is the witnessing "I," then what am I? Am I Allah ﷻ? *Astaghfirullah*. We are *not* one with God and we are definitely not God. In the full spectrum of reality, we're not really there. We don't exist. There is no spoon, Neo! We don't exist. We simply subsist through Allah ﷻ. We are through Him. We are the Action of Allah ﷻ.

It is critically important that we do not mix the essence of Allah ﷻ with His Actions. Allah ﷻ is not the created realm but the created realm is made from His Command, *Kun* (Be). He can neither be bounded by, nor limited by any of His creations. Time and space

are His creations, and He SWT, is beyond space and time.

Time is what eternity looks like when it is viewed through the lens of the finite mind, and space is what infinity looks like when it is viewed through the lens of the finite mind. Remove the mind and you're left with the presence of Allah ﷻ.

To borrow a concept from the domain of electricity and electronics, think of the mind as a resistor and the presence of Allah ﷻ as current.  $I = V/R$ . The higher the resistance (R), the lower the current. The lower the resistance, the more, we can sense the presence of Allah ﷻ.

To experience the now, we need to stop travelling in time and be present. Before you start thinking this is all “woo-woo” New Age spirituality stuff, here (“What on earth? Time travel? We thought that was impossible?”), I assure you it is not.

Allah knows best, but in my opinion, we're time-traveling every single day. Every time we drift in thought, we're traveling in time. We're lost in the wormhole of time. Through *dhikr* or remembrance, we snap out of our minds or out of time.

It helps to think of time as experience and the Now, or the timeless present moment, as the recording witness of our responses to experience.

وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ ؕ

And He is with you wherever you are. [Qur'an 57:4]

In time, a thought appears, and that thought has the potential to instigate an action with a particular intention. Good intentions can yield righteous actions, while bad intentions can yield devious actions. The moment we make a good intention to act upon a thought and/or act upon that thought, our intention and action are recorded in our book of deeds called *Ki-tab*, which keeps tabs on us.

If the moment is timeless and the past and the present are just an illusion, and all experience unfolds here and now, then it's not really how we spend our time on this earth that matters, but rather, how we respond to the experiences that Allah ﷻ downloads or generates in our minds. The downloads of experience are of two types: Experiences that are from Allah ﷻ to us and those that are from Allah ﷻ in us.

We can't control what's from Allah ﷻ to us or what's from Allah ﷻ in us. Examples of things that are from



Allah ﷻ to us include the family we were born into or the car crash that left us severely injured. What's from Allah ﷻ in us are things like our heart pumping or our liver functioning. We have no control over any of those things.

What we will be questioned about are our uploads: The actions that are from us to Allah ﷻ. Things like whether we prayed or not and whether we fasted or not, or whether we lied to our bosses or not. These are our uploads, and our uploads impact the downloads. Good uploads often lead to favorable downloads or circumstances from Allah ﷻ, while poor uploads often lead to unfavorable downloads or circumstances from Allah ﷻ.

## **The Uploads & Downloads of Destiny**

The *Black Mirror* series on streaming video service Netflix introduced episodes that give us some control over the possible outcome of the episodes. However, that control is an illusion. You get to a certain point in the show where you decide what happens next. You get to choose from two possible options and the outcome of the episode changes based on the choices you made. The author of the episode wrote various scenarios that they assigned to the choices we make.

If we choose to drop the cup, this will happen, but if we choose to catch the cup before it falls, then a different outcome will transpire. The outcomes are the destiny, written by Allah ﷻ. The choices we make, however, are the uploads. They are what goes from us to Allah ﷻ.

He doesn't force us to make our choices. We have to make our own choices. Allah ﷻ simply knows what we're going to choose because He is beyond time and already knows all of our choices. But knowing, and forcing or determining our choices are very different things. We have been given free will for a reason. We are here to be tested on how we will use that free will, the choices we will make.

Every choice or action we take (upload) creates a domino effect of downloads from Allah ﷻ. To have a good and pure life in the Matrix, we will need true *eman*, which is *Nur* from Allah ﷻ that enables us to decode the Matrix and conduct ourselves in a manner that will trigger the favorable *Qadar* from Allah ﷻ.

لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَعَلَيْهَا مَا اكْتَسَبَتْ

All good will be for its own benefit, and all evil will be to its own loss. [Qur'an 2:286]

*Kasabat* here refers to the uploads or choices we make, and '*Alayha Maktasabat* refers to the downloads or resulting circumstances from Allah ﷻ based on the decisions we made.

All that being said about time being an illusion, it's important to mention it is a practical one, a useful concept that lets us function in this life in an orderly fashion.

It keeps the world from going into a state of chaos. It allows us to organize ourselves and manage our daily activities. Time is our capital. In an average lifetime, we all go through approximately 500 million breaths. Each breath that keeps us alive also brings us closer to death. We can't increase the time we have in a day but we can learn how to make the most of it.

Sahl Al Tusturi mentions that the human being will never be at peace or rest until he realizes that the only time he has is the moment that he is in. In truth, the saints, or those described as friends of Allah ﷻ (*Awliya*) are always anchored in the moment.

أَلَا إِنَّ أَوْلِيَاءَ اللَّهِ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَكَانُوا  
يَتَّقُونَ

There will certainly be no fear for the close servants of Allah, nor will they grieve. 'They are' those who are faithful and are mindful 'of Him'. [Qur'an 10: 62-63]

What is it they do not fear? That which is to come: The future. And what do they not feel sad about? What transpired in their past. They are not caught up in time. They are anchored in the moment.

The verse that immediately follows tells us what they do with the moment: They believed and were God-conscious, meaning they infused the now with sincere conduct. What is the result if we do this? The next verse gives the glad tidings:

لَهُمُ الْبُشْرَىٰ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ ۚ لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِكَلِمَاتِ اللَّهِ ۚ ذَلِكَ هُوَ  
الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ

For them is good news in this worldly life and the Hereafter. There is no change in the promise of Allah. That is 'truly' the ultimate triumph. [Qur'an 10:64]

Glad tidings or success in both this life and the next. May Allah ﷻ give us the understanding and ability to practice and to convey what we have learned so far.

We should also be aware that we have enemies working to keep us off the straight path. These enemies,

whom we know as Iblees and his followers, will work hard to produce obstacles to deter us and lead us astray. How we deal with these obstacles will be a testament to how determined we are to get to the finish line. When we are determined, put in the effort and suppress our desires in order to please Allah ﷻ, He will most definitely help and protect us. Notice how in the Qur'an, Allah ﷻ doesn't say to make the intention and put your trust in Him, rather Allah ﷻ says:

فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ

Once you make a decision, put your full trust in Allah. Surely Allah loves those who trust in Him. [Qur'an 3:159]

Allah ﷻ wants to see our determination, and He will test our determination and sincerity many times as we advance on our individual spiritual journeys.

What are some of the obstacles? As mentioned, one of our sworn enemies is Iblees, or Shaytan (Satan), and he's been around for a long time. He has a ton of experience and will do his utmost to deceive and misguide us. He has many tricks up his sleeves that have been described in many books. One that I highly recommend is *Talbees Iblees* or *The Devil's Deception* by Ibn Al-Jawzi. This is, by far, one of the best reads to protect yourself from the scheming of Iblees.

What I would like to focus on in this manual is one of the more modern attempts of Satan to deceive the masses.

## Modern-Day Obstacles

Since this world is a test, as we've established numerous times throughout this manual, Allah ﷻ placed some obstacles along our way to gauge our level of sincerity. *Jannah* (Paradise) has many levels and is similar to a pyramid in its hierarchy. There are more people on the bottom levels than there are at the top. The higher up we go, the more special and magnificent the rewards and bounties awaiting us.

Those on higher levels can visit those on lower levels, while those on the lower levels cannot access those on the higher ones. Entering Paradise is only through the Grace and Mercy of Allah ﷻ, but our place in *Jannah* is based on our conduct and the quality of our deeds in this world. The better our deeds, the higher up we go. Allah ﷻ puts these obstacles before us in our journey as a filtration and placement system.

أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تُدْخِلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَعْلَمِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ  
جَاهَدُوا مِنْكُمْ وَيَعْلَمَ الصَّابِرِينَ

Do you think you will enter Paradise without Allah proving which of you ‘truly’ struggled ‘for His cause’ and patiently endured? [Qur’an 3:142]

## The Beloved Eight

*Jannah* has eight doors, and it’s an interesting observation that the main obstacles are exactly eight, as mentioned in the Qur’an.

قُلْ إِنْ كَانَ آبَاؤُكُمْ وَأَبْنَاؤُكُمْ وَإِخْوَانُكُمْ وَأَزْوَاجُكُمْ وَعَشِيرَتُكُمْ وَأَمْوَالٌ  
اٰفْتَرَقْتُمُوهَا وَتِجَارَةٌ تَخْشَوْنَ كَسَادَهَا وَمَسَاكِنُ تَرْضَوْنَهَا أَحَبَّ إِلَيْكُمْ مِّنَ اللَّهِ  
وَرَسُولِهِ وَجِهَادٍ فِي سَبِيلِهِ فَتَرَبَّصُوا حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ اللَّهُ بِأَمْرٍ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي  
الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ

Say, ‘O Prophet,’ “If your parents and children and siblings and spouses and extended family and the wealth you have acquired and the trade you fear will decline and the homes you cherish—if all these are more beloved to you than Allah and His Messenger and struggling in His Way, then wait until Allah brings about His Will. Allah does not guide the rebellious people.” [Qur’an 3:24]

The obstacles, in order:

1. Parents
2. Children
3. Brethren
4. Spouses
5. Tribes



6. Money saved
7. Businesses you run that you're concerned might turn a loss
8. Homes you enjoy.

More than half of these obstacles are family related, which is the main struggle faced by both those considering Islam and those trying to advance in their spiritual growth as Muslims.

We're naturally attached to many of these obstacles. Allah ﷻ doesn't ask us to remove the love of these things completely from our hearts. He created us and knows how weak we are. Rather, He wants us to love Him, His Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, and strive in Allah's ﷻ path (struggling to put His commands before our own whims and desires) more than any of these obstacles or tests.

Allah ﷻ will send us situations in our lives to test us with one or more of these things. How do we pass the test? How does Allah ﷻ know that we love him more than any of these things? He knows, but He tests us to establish proof against us on the Day of Judgement in case we raise an objection.

The next obvious question is: How do we know if we're passing or failing these tests? It's quite simple, really. Allah ﷻ sends a situation our way, where making a particular choice will seem to come at the cost of these bounties with which He blessed us. We either choose the bounty or Allah ﷻ. Whichever one we choose is the one we love more. For example, imagine we're not yet Muslim, but considering becoming Muslim. Our parents tell us that if we move forward with that decision, they'll disown us. Do we choose Islam or our parents in this case? Or, we're presented with an opportunity where we can make a lot more money than we do now, but the revenue from this business venture is morally or ethically questionable and is most probably impermissible. Do we choose the money or do we choose Allah ﷻ? Whichever one we choose is the one we're more attached to, or that we love more. When we truly love someone, we're prepared to sacrifice everything and everyone for them.

The first five obstacles Allah ﷻ mentions in this verse have to do with social and environmental pressures. We may be worried what family members will think or how they will perceive us. In more severe circumstances, we may wonder what they might do to us in

response to our choices. It tests our mindset and integrity. The last three of the eight items are mainly financial obstacles, but the last one is also about our personal comfort. Allah ﷻ wants to see if we are willing to sacrifice a particular lifestyle for His sake.

Whether it is social, economic, or lifestyle pressure, we must hold firm to our *deen*. If we fail a test, Allah ﷻ tends to repeat the same test in different ways until we graduate. Whenever we pass a test, we're faced with a more difficult one until our level of *eman* is determined. The stronger our *eman*, the easier it is to pass these tests.

Here are some common situations that may trigger a warning bell for us. These circumstances are usually associated with a test from Allah ﷻ.

1. New business opportunities that may be impermissible
2. A questionable promotion at work
3. Travelling or immigrating for the sake of religious knowledge or to propagate the *deen* of Islam where we usually suffer from social, economic, and lifestyle losses
4. Family gatherings
5. Travel.

Family gatherings will present us with situations where we might have to mingle with relatives or extended family members in ways that are displeasing to Allah ﷻ.

While travelling, we will face situations where fulfilling our obligations for worship might be tested. It helps to plan ahead in these types of circumstances. It's always hard in the beginning. It's supposed to be. Tests aren't always supposed to be easy. Just remember, if we hold our ground, remain steadfast and choose Allah's ﷻ pleasure every time, things will always end up in our advantage.

The social pressures we face from family members will eventually turn into respect. The hearts of all people are in Allah's ﷻ control. He only turns people against you initially to test you. Similarly, all the expected, apparent, projected or feared financial losses we think we will suffer turn into financial gains if we hold fast to Allah's ﷻ commands. Simply stick to Allah's ﷻ commands and be patient. Success is not in the aftermath or in the results. Success is in obeying Allah's ﷻ orders irrelevant of the situation or circumstance we face.

*Inshā Allah*, if we pass through all these obstacles, we will have all eight doors of *Jannah* (Paradise) calling out our names and will be able to choose any door to enter.

These obstacles and tests have been around for a very long time. But what about some modern obstacles we might face in our journey to Allah ﷻ? I believe the New-Age spirituality movement is gaining a lot of momentum and deserves a considerable amount of our attention.

New Age spirituality teachers are the self-styled, so-called (false) messengers of our times. This new trick of Shaytan is an extremely effective one because it focuses on the appealing realities and puts *shariah* aside. It's all the love without any of the baggage. It's like a young teenager with raging hormones being told he can sleep around with beautiful women without marrying them. Although tempting, it is a recipe for long-term disaster.

If someone tells a young Muslim: You don't have to worry about praying five times a day, fasting the month of Ramadan, wearing *hijab*, or refraining from shaking hands with the opposite sex (these days, commonly deemed an inconsequential act even by

Muslims), how will they feel? For them, it's almost too good to be true. Beyond that, this person might explain that *eman* is in the heart and that all religions point to the same truth, and as long as you believe in the One Being that started it all, and you don't hurt anyone, then you're okay. Obviously, if the Muslim's *eman* is weak and knowledge of their *deen* limited, they could easily be attracted to such nonsense.

*Deen* is a complete way of life that includes not just inward realities like mindfulness, but also outward restrictions on how we look and dress. It's a full package. The religion of Islam is not an option out of many options out there. Islam is Allah's chosen *deen* or way of life for all of humanity.

For many of our youth, being Muslim is either a forced circumstance because they are born into a Muslim family, or merely a cultural or lifestyle preference, so they are easily shaken or led astray by these New Age types onto devious Satanic paths. It is much harder for them to lose their way if the Truth of Islam was proven to them as a fact. We'll get into proofs when we discuss the argument from contingency, but first let's look at some of these modern-day obstacles and ways to overcome them.

## Messengers of God vs. Messengers of Satan

Before we delve into righteous actions, I want to address some of the issues pertaining to New Age spirituality, as it has impacted many young Muslims and left them confused. Due to the advent of social media, and easy access to New Age spirituality books written in English, young Muslims are heavily influenced by their teachings.

To give the New Age types credit, they've dumbed down and made relevant to our times many hard-to-digest teachings such as being present and visualization, for example. When these concepts are packaged and presented in a certain way, they can be very seductive. In reality, mindfulness, being present, and visualization are just buzzwords for *dhikr* and *du'a*. With Islam, you don't need to look elsewhere. *Deen* means a lifestyle that is compliant to Allah ﷻ and aligned with His Messenger ﷺ, and Allah ﷻ has already completed it for us.

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتَمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ  
دِينًا

Today I have perfected your faith for you, completed My  
favour upon you, and chosen Islam as your way.

[Qur'an 5:3]

If something is ostensibly missing in our *deen* it's because we either haven't found it yet or we don't know where to look. In comparison, these New Age books are readily available through one-click buys on Amazon.com!

While they may explain a lot of concepts in a very simplified and inclusive manner, that doesn't mean that they are guided or have a shortcut to success. You've probably heard of some of these New Age spirituality teachers, such as Eckhart Tolle, who published *The Power of Now*; Rhonda Byrne who published the popular book, *The Secret*; Deepak Chopra, Francis Lucille, Rupert Spira, and others. Between them, they have captured the imaginations of society at large, garnered millions of followers and have a huge influence, especially on people in the West.

Let's take Francis Lucille and Rupert Spira for example, and unpack some of their teachings to help illuminate the pitfalls of following these types of messages. Lucille and Spira belong to a version of



New Age spirituality called *The Direct Path*. There are two caveats to their teachings. Rupert, Lucille, and all who practice *The Direct Path* teach you to depend on your direct experience as a means to awakening, and to better understand your true nature, because it's all you really have to go by. This is great if all there ever is to the world, or if all we know of the world is our experience of it, but as Muslims, we know very well that there are many worlds out there and we have access to knowledge beyond our perception. Allah ﷻ says:

تَنْزِيلُ الْكِتَابِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ مِنْ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

The revelation of this Book is — beyond doubt —  
from **the Lord of all worlds** [Qur'an 32:2].

Although our experience in this world has been limited and capped since we're here to be tested, we do have access to knowledge beyond our direct experience because we were given information of the unseen by Allah ﷻ. This is what distinguishes the so-called *Direct Path* from the authentic Straight Path of Allah ﷻ: Belief in the unseen world or system of Allah ﷻ. The Qur'an clearly mentions this as a condition for guidance:

ذَٰلِكَ الْكِتَٰبُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ

This is the Book! There is no doubt about it!—a guide for those mindful of Allah, **who believe in the unseen** [2: 2-3]

But aren't our senses more dependable than what we read in religious texts? For many non-Muslims, this might make a lot of sense. They would rather rely on what they perceive than what they think is outdated information they find in religious texts. But as believers, we know without a doubt that the Qur'an is Allah's ﷻ uncreated, unchanging, protected Word. And hence, we prioritize Allah's ﷻ Word over our world of perception. It's a more reliable source.

We can't even see through to what's on the other side of a wall or hear what's happening in the house across the street, let alone all of the things Allah ﷻ tells us exist that are in the realm of the unseen. On a purely rational basis, which is more reliable: Allah's ﷻ Word, or our own personal experiences?

For many non-Muslims or non-believers, seeing is believing, but as we mentioned before, for believers, believing is seeing. As believers, we negate the *basar* (sight) when it doesn't align with the *Khabar* (information from Allah ﷻ in the Qur'an). In Arabic, we say:

## تكذيب البصر و تصديق الخبر

To negate what we see and believe what we're told

And since a lot of New Age spirituality teachers rely on their personal experience as a test of reality, their access to truth is only as good as their understanding of their experience.

In contrast, as Muslims, we have a more reliable source. We rely on Allah ﷻ for our guidance. Allah ﷻ the Creator, Knower, Sustainer, and Controller of everything in the multiverse. Allah ﷻ sent us His messengers, all with the same clear message. With Allah's ﷻ permission and knowledge from Him, they told us what happened to the people of the past, what our purpose in life is, what we're doing here on earth, how we are expected to behave and conduct ourselves in every moment of our lives, and how to respond to every type of situation. And finally, they told us in detail where we're headed and what is going to happen to us after we die.

New Age spirituality teachers are in the dark compared to Allah's ﷻ messengers. They mix truth with falsehood and then only confuse the masses, not to mention, making a lot of money in the process. Allah ﷻ tells us clearly whom to follow in the Qur'an.

اتَّبِعُوا مَنْ لَا يَسْأَلُكُمْ أَجْرًا وَهُمْ مُهْتَدُونَ

Follow those who ask no reward of you, and are 'rightly'  
guided. [Qur'an 36:21]

To summarize the problem with New Age spirituality, we can say:

1. They don't have knowledge of the unseen or what is to come in the future, and are limited to direct experience when it comes to knowledge
2. They admix truth with falsehood
3. They have something to lose if they quit their teachings — mainly their monetary gains
4. They don't offer a clear purpose and *shariah* (way of life) to follow.

So, what is the true solution to this issue? What can we show or teach our young Muslims to help them overcome this obstacle?

## **The Antidote to this modern-day obstacle**

For many young Muslims today, Islam is a matter of preference and not a matter of fact. This needs to change! When our religion is a preference, we're in danger of growing out of it. Preferences change all

the time. Facts are facts and never change. I would like to equip you with a rock-solid rational argument for Allah's ﷻ existence. We have to first come to the factual conclusion that Islam Is true. Submission comes after knowledge. Consider the verse:

فَاعْلَمْ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

So, know 'well, O Prophet,' that there is no god 'worthy of worship' except Allah. [Qur'an 47:19]

Once we are convinced that it is indeed Allah ﷻ speaking to us in the Qur'an, then it's more likely that we submit to His orders. Ibn Sina first introduced this rational argument from contingency, and then it was developed and put into a more modern context by various scholars over the years. Sheikh Hamza Karim is one of the major proponents of this argument in our times. He presents the argument in an easy-to-follow and relatable fashion. I highly recommend his course, [Why Islam Is True](#), to all Muslims, especially young Muslims.

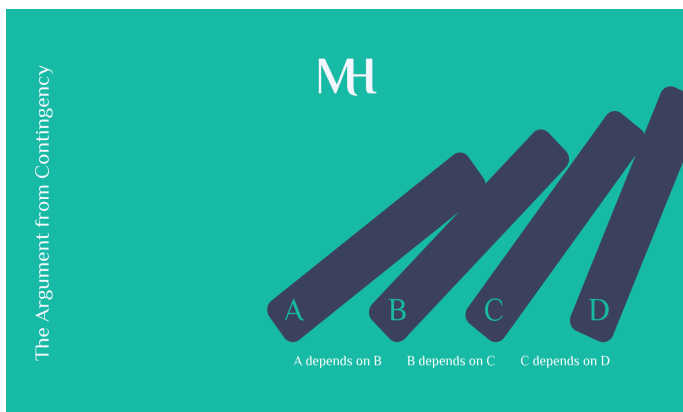
## As a Matter of Fact

**W**e examined the argument from contingency earlier to show that the means of this world are not, in reality, the causes of anything as long as they are themselves contingent on something else. We fully dissect this argument in this chapter to show how, if you understand it properly, this argument is by far the strongest argument for the existence of Allah ﷻ. It is solid.

Everything in the universe is needy or dependent on something else to make it the way it is. Whether it's rainfall, the wind blowing, or the sun shining, everything in the universe, without exception, is needy. Materialists believe that something else makes things the way they are. This, of course, is akin to the *mush-rikeen* of Mecca, who believed that their gods — statues made of gold or silver that were themselves needy — were responsible for making things the way they are. Similarly, Materialists believe that clouds are responsible for rain. But where did the clouds come from? What's responsible for the clouds being the way that they are?

Materialists will tell us that clouds are formed when water vapor turns into liquid water droplets. Great, but what made water vapor the way that it is, and where did the vapor come from? You see where this is going. *Everything* in the universe is needy, but something that is itself needy cannot in reality fulfill the need of anything. It may appear to, and in fact, it does appear to, but appearances are deceptive in nature and cannot be trusted.

So, now what we need to show or prove is that other things in the universe are not responsible for the way things are. To do so, we present them with an example.



Let's revisit the example of a line of people, each leaning on another for support, this time in a little more detail. This was articulated by Sheikh Hamza Karamali in a recent podcast interview in 'Yaqeen Podcast', entitled, "Prove that God Exists."

Imagine the first person in line decides to lean back on the person behind him, so he's depending on the second to hold him up. The second person is also dependent (everything in the universe is needy or dependent), needs to be supported, and leans on a third person, behind him. Then the third leans back for support on the fourth, the fourth on the fifth, and so on... It's a very long line that stretches as far as the eye can see, and they're all leaning on each other, but we can't see the end of the line. What would be a reasonable conclusion? There's something or someone at the end of the line holding them all up, because if there wasn't anything at the end to hold them all up, they would all be lying on the ground. And the thing that's holding them all up can't be held up by anything else, because when one thing leans on another and a second leans on a third, then the second or middle thing isn't doing anything. They're both (the first and the second) leaning on the third or last one.

As we pile up the things that are leaning, we are not really improving the situation. We're only making the problem worse because now we don't have just one thing to explain, we have one, two, three, four... one hundred, one thousand, one million, one billion, one decillion, one centillion... an infinite number of things to explain. So, when we look at the universe and say one thing made another the way that it is, we need to ask: What

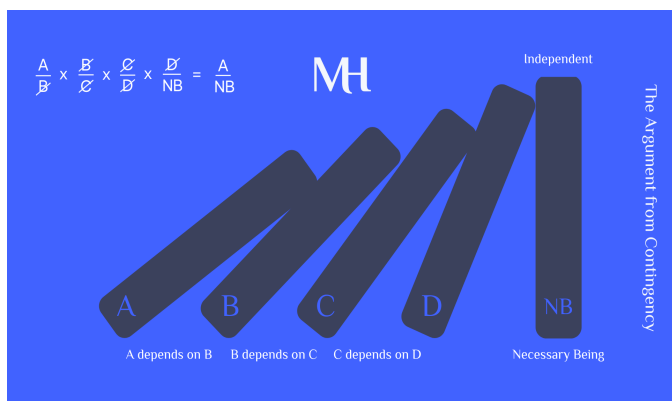


made this other thing the way that it is? And we search for another explanation for it. Then we go to something else in the universe and ask the same question, and then something else, ad infinitum. It's a never-ending process. This is called the progress of science, and it's useful, because it gives us insight into how the universe works. More importantly, it also reveals that everything is actually depending on an entity that doesn't depend on anything, and the technical term for this is a Necessary Being (from Sheikh Hamza Karamali YouTube DoubleTake Video: "Prove that God Exists.")

Allah ﷻ says in the Qur'an:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُمَسِّكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ أَنْ تَزُولَا وَلَئِنْ زَالَتَا إِنْ أَمْسَكَهُمَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ مِّن بَعْدِهِ إِنَّهُ كَانَ حَلِيمًا غَفُورًا

Indeed, Allah ﷻ alone keeps the heavens and the earth from falling apart. If they were to fall apart, none but Him could hold them up. He is truly Most Forbearing, All-Forgiving [Qur'an 35:41].



So there you go: We're now familiar with one of the strongest — if not the strongest — rational proofs for Allah's ﷻ existence. Some of us might be thinking, why do we need proof? We're believers, and we believe in whatever Allah ﷻ tells us.

The story of the Muslim scholar Fakhr Al-Din Al-Razi comes to mind, in which he was strolling with his large entourage of students when an old lady inquired who he was. One of his students explained that he was Al-Razi and that he had 70 proofs for the existence of Allah ﷻ. The old lady replied that he wouldn't need 70 proofs if he didn't have 70 doubts. When Fakhr Al-Din heard what she said, he told his students that they should all aspire to have the *eman* of the old lady. The key word here is "aspire."

We're all at different stages in our journey to Allah ﷻ. We're brought up or raised in different environments. We don't all have the same access to knowledge or scholars. The information online is so vast that many people don't know where to start or end up being confused by the sheer number of different opinions about Islam. Some will tell us that the *Sahabah* never used rational arguments to prove Allah's ﷻ existence, so we shouldn't do it either. Some go over and beyond in their philosophical arguments and debates, and it just becomes a matter of who can flex their brain's metaphorical muscles more. And what about new Muslims who don't speak Arabic and haven't yet developed a strong bond with the Qur'an? They were not born into a Muslim family or brought up in a Muslim environment. So how do we help them?

Whenever I'm confused or unsure about anything, I like to turn to the Qur'an. In times where people are confused, Qur'an is their refuge. Let's see what the Qur'an has to say about rational arguments.

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاءَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا بَاطِلًا ۚ ذَٰلِكَ ظَنُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ۖ فَوَيْلٌ  
لِّلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنَ النَّارِ ۚ أَمْ نَجْعَلُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ كَالْمُفْسِدِينَ  
فِي الْأَرْضِ ۚ أَمْ نَجْعَلُ الْمُتَّقِينَ كَالْفُجَّارِ ۚ يَتَّبِعُ أَنزْلَنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِّدَبَّرِ  
ءَايَاتِهِ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُوا الْأَلْبَابِ

We have not created the heavens and earth and everything in between without purpose — as the disbelievers think. So woe to the disbelievers because of the Fire! Or should We treat those who believe and do good like those who make mischief throughout the land? Or should We treat the righteous like the wicked? This is a blessed Book which We have revealed to you O Prophet so that they may contemplate its verses, and people of reason may be mindful. [Qur'an 38: 27-29]

Allah ﷻ begins by talking about all of the visible phenomena that He created and then explains that He didn't create them in vain. There is a reason or reasoning behind the created realm. Then He says one of the very purposes of sending down the Qur'an is for us to contemplate its verses, and that it is a reminder for those with understanding.

Verses in the Qur'an are referred to as *ayaat*. An *ayah* literally means “a sign.” Allah ﷻ wants us to contemplate His signs. A sign points to something beyond itself, just like the means, or *asbaab*, of this world point to something beyond them. So, to contemplate His signs would be to search for meaning in the created realm. One sign will lead you to another sign, which will lead you to another until you reach the

creator of all signs. This is also the way of the prophets.

Ibrahim عليه السلام looked up to Allah's ﷻ signs and, through inductive logic, reached the rational conclusion of a Necessary Being who is not contingent on anything else.

وَكَذَلِكَ نُرَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ مَلُوكًا السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَيَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُوقِنِينَ فَلَمَّا جَنَّ عَلَيْهِ اللَّيْلُ رَأَىٰ كَوْكَبًا ۖ قَالَ هَٰذَا رَبِّي فَلَمَّا أَفَلَ قَالَ لَا أُحِبُّ الْأُفْلِينَ فَلَمَّا رَأَىٰ الْقَمَرَ بَازِعًا قَالَ هَٰذَا رَبِّي فَلَمَّا أَفَلَ قَالَ لَئِنْ لَّمْ يَهْدِنِي رَبِّي لَأَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الضَّالِّينَ فَلَمَّا رَأَىٰ الشَّمْسَ بَازِعَةً قَالَ هَٰذَا رَبِّي هَٰذَا أَكْبَرُ فَلَمَّا أَفَلَتْ قَالَ يُقَوْمِ إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِّمَّا تُشْرِكُونَ إِنِّي وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ حَنِيفًا ۖ وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ

We also showed Abraham the wonders of the heavens and the earth, so he would be sure in faith. When the night grew dark upon him, he saw a star and said, “This is my Lord!” But when it set, he said, “I do not love things that set.” Then when he saw the moon rising, he said, “This one is my Lord!” But when it disappeared, he said, “If my Lord does not guide me, I will certainly be one of the misguided people.” Then when he saw the sun shining, he said, “This must be my Lord—it is the greatest!” But again when it set, he declared, “O my people! I totally reject whatever you associate ‘with Allah in worship’. I have turned my face towards the One Who has originated the heavens and the earth—being upright—and I am not one of the polytheists.” [Qur'an 6: 75-79]

Allah ﷻ starts by saying that He showed Ibrahim عليه السلام the dominions of the heavens and the earth to remove any doubt in him or so that he can be sure, so he can have *yaqeen*, or conviction. What was the result of this exercise that Ibrahim عليه السلام performed? He went from one contingent creation to another and realized that the One who is the cause for everything else cannot be contingent, and so he turned wholeheartedly to Allah ﷻ.

I believe that these types of arguments are not just recommended, but a must in our times — especially after attending some of the classes for the respected scholar Sheikh Hamza Karmali, the author of the course and book *Why Islam Is True*. Our young generation of Muslims are being bombarded with atheistic arguments from every angle and their *eman* is at stake. Many have left the fold of Islam because for them, Islam was a matter of culture and preference, and not a matter of fact.

We begin with rational arguments like the argument from contingency, or the argument from intelligent design to prove Allah's ﷻ existence, and so that He and Islam become a matter of fact. The second stage, once we have conviction that Allah ﷻ exists and that Islam is the true religion sent by Allah ﷻ through His

final messenger Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, would be to submit wholeheartedly to all of Allah's ﷻ commands.

The process would look something like this:

1. Whether we're born into a Muslim family or not, we begin our journey to Allah ﷻ through reason. We study the argument from contingency. Again, I can't emphasize enough the strength of this argument if we learn it properly. Invest in yourself and take the course, *Why Islam Is True* with Sheikh Hamza Karmali (Disclaimer: I'm not paid by them for this recommendation. I just genuinely believe it's one of the best courses you can take to come to the objective conclusion that the truth of Islam is factual.)
2. Study the Qur'an and focus on the knowledge that's beneficial, the knowledge that will lead us to success. As you read for yourself, I began this manual by sharing what Allah ﷻ tells us about achieving success in this life and the next. That success is that we avoid *Jahannam* (Hell), because Hell is ultimately a choice we make, and we make an effort to enter *Jannah* (Paradise).

3. Learn that the key to entering Jannah lies in righteous conduct, and that in order for our conduct to be righteous, we need to undergo a shift in perspective, to see things in a new light: *Eman*, which I defined here as a new way of seeing.
4. Realize that Allah ﷻ created the Divine Matrix, meaning time, to test our conduct. We begin to sense the urgency of our time here on earth. Time, we learned, is experience. and Allah ﷻ is downloading various experiences into our lives to test us. He is constantly generating needs in us and sending circumstances our way to see how we are going to fulfill those needs and respond to those situations.
5. To help us see experience for what it is and respond appropriately to the events Allah ﷻ sends our way, we see that we have to make a constant effort to increase our *eman*. This effort involves negating much of our perceived experience and affirming that Allah ﷻ is the Director and Producer of all that we experience in our lifetime. Eventually, we see that the means of this world are just a cover and test from Allah ﷻ, and that our main ob-



jective is to utilize the means that Allah ﷻ created for us in this world without relying on them; that we fulfill Allah's ﷻ commands related to these means, and we don't allow them to distract us from any of our obligations towards Allah ﷻ or any of His creations.

6. As part of our journey to Allah ﷻ, we're met with various obstacles. To turn up the pressure a little, Allah ﷻ made certain things or objects in this world rather appealing to us by nature. The bigger and harder the tests we pass, the better and higher our place in Jannah will be in the afterlife.
7. We make an effort to remove all attachments to the things of this world from our hearts so that our hearts reflect nothing but the love of Allah ﷻ and His attributes. We slow down and are at ease because we realize that ultimately, all we ever have and all we're ever responsible for is our righteous conduct in the present moment or the Eternal Now and that the secret to Divine presence or "withness" (*ma'iyyah*) is about being anchored in the moment while being conscious of Allah's ﷻ demands that gush from it, obeying or acting upon those commands.

The result of all this is that we become amongst the friends of Allah ﷻ when we have nothing to worry or grieve about, and we experience heaven on earth before heaven in the next life. The whole point of it all is that we get to that point — the point beneath the *baa* in the *Basmalah* (بسم) that signifies the effacement of the ego, where we and everything we possess is for Allah ﷻ and a means to His pleasure.

May Allah ﷻ grant us all success in this life and the life hereafter. Ameen!

# The Game Plan

There is nothing more valuable than our time or life here on earth. Our time here is very short and limited but far from insignificant. How we conduct ourselves here will determine our eternal abode in the afterlife. We don't want to be from amongst the losers on that day who lose themselves and their families. The greatest sign of *tawfeeq* from Allah ﷻ is that we utilize our lives only in what benefits us in this life to please Allah ﷻ and raise our degree in the afterlife. And the greatest sign of loss is that our lives are spent in the disobedience of Allah ﷻ. The amount of time we waste in this life is insane.

Some of us are kept busy with countless hours in front of a screen, watching sports or binging on countless Netflix series. Some of us are into video games and spend endless hours on our PlayStations. Allah ﷻ wants us on our Pray Stations, not PlayStations. And then there are those who are hooked on social media, spending hours scrolling through their feeds or planning or preparing a video.

Worse still is the endlessly abundant stream of pornography that alarming numbers of our Muslim brothers and sisters are addicted to, effectively enslaved by it.

What are we doing? When will we wake up? Don't trade an eternal Paradise in the afterlife for sixty to seventy years of this life.

### **It's a bad bargain!**

In fact, it is the worst deal we can possibly make, and it lasts for eternity.

Our beloved Prophet ﷺ said:

عَنْ أَنَسٍ - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ - قَالَ قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ "لَوْ  
تَعْلَمُونَ مَا أَعْلَمُ لَضَحَكْتُمْ قَلِيلًا وَلَبَكَيْتُمْ كَثِيرًا"

Narrated Anas:

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "If you knew that which I know, you would laugh little and weep much."

Reference: Sahih Al-Bukhari 6486

Rabi'a told Sufyan, "You are made up of days; every time a day passes, a part of you passes away with it." Remember, your time is your capital, so don't spend it on what is not necessary. Stay focused on the following four activities. If you're not busy with one of

these four activities, Shaytan is busy with you. Imam Shaf'i said, "If you don't keep your *nafs* (yourself) busy with good, it will keep you busy with evil."

The four activities are:

1. *Da'wah* (inviting to Islam)
2. Learning and teaching
3. Remembrance and worship of Allah ﷻ
4. Service to humanity.

### **Da'wah**

Every day, you should talk about Allah ﷻ with Muslims, with the intention of rectifying and strengthening your *eman*. Not all talk counts as da'wah. Your da'wah must have polarity, meaning it should shift their focus from this world to the next. It should shift the listener from:

1. The shortness of this life to the vastness and eternal nature of the afterlife
2. *Asbaab* to *A'maal*; from the means of this world to the righteous actions shown to us by our Messenger ﷺ
3. Creation to the Creator
4. Following the trends of the times to following the Messenger ﷺ of the end of times

5. Our responsibility as the messengers of the Messenger ﷺ of Allah ﷻ. To carry the message of Islam and spread it to every corner of this earth.

For the first four, we should follow the style of negation and affirmation. For example, if we take the third point of shifting focus from the creation to the Creator, we negate the doing of creation and affirm that Allah ﷻ is the only Doer. We could say money cannot benefit, Allah ﷻ is the One who gives benefit. Status cannot benefit, if Allah ﷻ wants, he can give honor through the means of disgrace or disgrace through the means of honor. He does what He wills and He has control over everything.

### **Da'wah Frequency**

There are 24 hours in a day, so try to give *da'wah* at least 25 times a day to benefit *inshāllah*. I will expand on this point in Part 2 of the manual, *inshāllah*.

### **Learning and Teaching**

Our Prophet ﷺ said:

وعن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال:  
"ومن سلك طريقاً يلتمس فيه علماً سهل الله له به طريقاً إلى الجنة"  
(رواه مسلم)

Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with him) reported:  
The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, "Allah makes the way to  
Paradise easy for him who treads the path in search of  
knowledge."

Reference: Riyad As-Salihin 1381

Source: Sahih Muslim

For knowledge, there's the knowledge of virtues, meaning the rewards associated with doing certain actions, and the knowledge of rulings. The Halal and Haram. What's permissible, impermissible and recommended from a *shariah* perspective. We get knowledge of virtues from the books of virtues. (See the Resources chapter.) Because we're forgetful and there are many distractions in today's world, we have to spend at least 30 minutes every day reading the books of virtues to stay motivated in our discipline to fill our days and nights with righteous deeds that please Allah ﷻ.

As for the knowledge of *shariah* rulings and Islamic theology, we make an effort to get a hold of a trusted and traditional scholar of Islam and ask them all of our questions pertaining to the *fiqh*, or jurisprudence

of worship, and the *fiqh* related to our dealings with other people. It's also essential to learn the fundamentals of Islamic theology so we know Allah ﷻ well by understanding what He is not. Having a clear understanding of Allah's ﷻ attributes goes a long way in strengthening our *eman*.

Make sure you're reading at least one new book every month to increase and improve your knowledge of the *deen* of Islam. I have some recommendations in the Resources chapter.

### **Remembrance and worship of Allah ﷻ**

Whenever we are heedless of Allah ﷻ, Shaytan has an inroad to whisper into our heads. As long as we're mindful of Allah ﷻ, the light of presence will burn Shaytan and he won't be able to get through to your head.

To practice mindfulness and to get to a point where we remember Allah ﷻ at all points, we will need to set a daily regimen for ourselves. In order of Importance:

1. Our five times daily *salah*
  - a. In the masjid for men



- b. On time but at home for women
- 2. Daily Qur'an recitation
  - a. One *Juz* ' for those fluent in it
  - b. Whatever daily amount you can read with consistency if you're not fluent
- 3. Daily mindful *Adhkar* in the morning and in the evening time with
  - a. 100 x *Astaghfirullah*
  - b. 100 x *Salah* on Prophet Muhammad ﷺ
  - c. 100 x *Subhanallah wal Hamdulillah, wa La ilaha illa Allah, wa Allahu Akbar wala Hawla wala Quwwata illa billah*
- 4. Contemplation before sleep
  - a. Take yourself to account before Allah ﷻ does
  - b. Go over what you did good and thank Allah ﷻ, and what you did bad and repent to Allah ﷻ
  - c. Make proper *tawbah* for all sins

- d. Clear your heart by forgiving everyone, including your sworn enemies whom you despise — especially those you despise. Get in the habit of asking Allah ﷻ for good things for them and Allah ﷻ will change how you feel towards them.
  - e. Close your eyes and meditate. Visualize that you died and those who love you most are in tears, washing your body to prepare it for burial, and then they place you in your *Kafan* and pray on you at the masjid. Then visualize your grave and being placed in it, and everyone walking away, and the two angels come and sit you up for questioning.
5. Night prayer or *tahajjud*. It has a secret and is a door unto Divine presence
- a. Wake up at least an hour before *Fajr* time enters and pray. Spend most of your *salah* in your *sujood* and practice mindfulness while in *sajdah*. Think how Allah ﷻ is watching you and fill your heart with love and gratitude for Him, and remember all of His bounties upon you.

- b. Pray at least two *rak'as* along with *Witr*. If you can do four *rak'as* then all the better.
- c. If you have enough time, divide your *tahajjud* time into
  - i. Praying
  - ii. *Du'a* or supplication for yourself, your family members, friends, colleagues, neighbors, and the Ummah at large
  - iii. Istighfaar. Seeking Allah's ﷻ forgiveness
  - iv. Recitation of the Qur'an. *Tahajjud* is where you should complete most of your Qur'an daily recitation.

### **Service to Humanity**

There are rights we owe to Allah ﷻ and rights we owe to people. Ensure that you don't go over and beyond your obligations to Allah ﷻ in a way that impacts your obligations to the creations of Allah ﷻ.

It comes in a hadith that the prophet asked the Sahabah:

وعن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه، أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال:  
 "أتدرون من المفلس؟" قالوا : المفلس فينا من لا درهم له ولا متاع  
 فقال: "إن المفلس من أمتي يأتي يوم القيامة بصلاة وصيام وزكاة،  
 ويأتي قد شتم هذا، وقذف هذا وأكل مال هذا، وسفك دم هذا، وضرب هذا،  
 فيعطى هذا من حسناته، وهذا من حسناته، فإن فنيت حسناته قبل أن  
 يقضي ما عليه، أخذ من خطاياهم فطرحته عليه، ثم طرح في النار"  
 (رواه مسلم)

Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with him) reported:

Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, "Do you know who is the bankrupt?" They said: "The bankrupt among us is one who has neither money with him nor any property". He said, "The real bankrupt of my Ummah would be he who would come on the Day of Resurrection with Salat, Saum and Sadaqah (charity), (but he will find himself bankrupt on that day as he will have exhausted the good deeds) because he reviled others, brought calumny (slander) against others, unlawfully devoured the wealth of others, shed the blood of others and beat others; so his good deeds would be credited to the account of those (who suffered at his hand). If his good deeds fall short to clear the account, their sins would be entered in his account and he would be thrown in the (Hell) Fire".

Reference: Riyad As-Salihin 218

Source: Sahih Muslim

To ensure we don't lose our good deeds on the Day of Judgement, we have to ensure that we fulfill the rights of people after we fulfill the rights of Allah ﷻ.

These are some of the rights you have to be aware of and make an effort to fulfill.

1. **The rights of your *nafs*:** Keeping yourself clean and tidy is essential in Islam. You can't help others if you can't help yourself, and you need to set a good example for others. Make sure you always smell great. Use a toothbrush and a *miswak*. Utilize antiperspirant and deodorant. Mouthwash is essential to take care of morning-breath right when you wake up. Use good scents that are not too overwhelming or cheap. Spend on good perfume. I don't talk to anyone in my family before I complete all of these rituals in the morning: Performing ablution and using mouthwash, scented beard oil, deodorant, and perfume. As a rule, make sure the person standing next to you in *Fajr Salah* is glad they're standing next to you. If you're married, don't take your marriage for granted. Smell just as good for your husband or wife. Ensure you use mouthwash and smell nice before you demand affection. Ensure you take care of your health by working out and eating right. More on this in Part 2 of this manual, *inshāllah*.

2. **The rights of your spouse and children:** Be someone they enjoy being around. Play with your kids and don't just buy them toys and game consoles. Go out on dates with your spouse and spend quality time together away from the kids. Take her or him to a fancy restaurant every once in a while. Overlook their shortcomings and praise their good qualities. And most importantly, pray for them at night.
3. **The rights of your parents:** They are your key to *Jannah* (Paradise) and a long life on earth. If you care for them properly, Allah ﷻ will care for you. Be patient with them. As they grow older, it will become harder and harder to care for them. They also can trigger you more easily and more often than anyone else can. Just remember that soon, you're going to be in their shoes.
4. **The rights of your business partners or colleagues:** Make sure you don't cheat them and always be honest with them. The honest and truthful businessman will be around the prophets on the Day of Judgement. It's such a high caliber but it's not easy. Many Muslims pray all night and fast all day but their dealings with other people in business and

trade, or in the workplace, could use a tremendous amount of work. Those who worship Allah ﷻ are not concerned with saving a few bucks here or there or making more money, but rather, they're concerned about obeying and fulfilling Allah's ﷻ commands. But those who worship money will stop at nothing to save a few dollars. Beware.

## Things to Avoid

If you're not careful, you're going to end up taking a few steps towards Allah ﷻ, but more steps away from Him. If you take two steps towards Allah ﷻ by obeying Him and then two steps back by disobeying Him, then you didn't really go anywhere, did you? Here are some of the things I avoid, and I've found it very useful and helpful on my journey to Allah ﷻ. Avoid what you can and ask Allah ﷻ for help with whatever you can't.

1. TV
2. Limit smartphone screen time as much as possible except when using it to attain religious knowledge or to give *da'wah*
3. Music: Some religious tunes can be okay. There is a difference of opinion on the matter. Just do what you can.
4. Backbiting or talking about others when they're not present in a way that would upset them if they were present
5. Lying. Avoid it at all costs.
6. Mixing excessively with the opposite sex, especially without a religious need
7. Looking or listening to anything that is *haram*. Guard your senses



8. Guard your thoughts. Be mindful of the thoughts rising in your head. All misconduct begins with an evil thought.
9. Any dealings with *riba* (usury/interest).

## The Raqeeb Streaks

Allah ﷻ tells us that if we strive or struggle to fulfill His commands, we will be guided to those actions that will lead us to Paradise. In addition, we will achieve the ultimate goal: Divine Presence. Allah will be with us.

وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

As for those who **struggle** in Our cause, and who strive hard for Us, We will surely **guide them** to Our paths. And Allah is certainly with the good-doers. [Qur'an 29:69]

Allah ﷻ also tells us:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا

Successful indeed is the one who purifies their soul, and doomed is the one who corrupts it! [Qur'an 91:9-10]

We need to make an intentional and focused effort to obey Allah's ﷻ commands. The companions had the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in their midst, but they also had around 11-13 Meccan years worth of strife and struggle where their egos were tamed and slowly

brought into complete submission to Allah's ﷻ commands.

The following are called *Raqeeb* challenges. *Raqeeb* means to watch over or observe, in Arabic. Allah says about the angels who watch over us and record our deeds:

مَا يَلْفِظُ مِنْ قَوْلٍ إِلَّا لَدَيْهِ رَقِيبٌ عَتِيدٌ

Not a word does a person utter without having a 'vigilant' observer ready 'to write it down'. [Qur'an 50:17]

Allah ﷻ is observing our hearts and every action we perform. With these four *Raqeeb* challenges, we have to go for a certain amount of days, a streak, without breaking any of the rules associated with the lesson. If you err, you make *wudu* and pray *salah*, *tawba* and then start back at Day 1 until you complete the streak prescribed.

Note: Whenever *salah* is prescribed in the masjid it's meant specifically for men. Our respected sisters can pray at home within 15 minutes of *adhan* (when *salah* time enters). First *takbeer* in the masjid for men means that they make their *takbeer* to enter into the *salah* behind the imam before the imam recites "*alhamdulillah rabbi alameen.*"

**Disclaimer:** Each *muraqaba* lesson has a level of righteousness, a goal associated with it. For example, *Saliheen* for *Raqeeb* 3. This is not a get-out-of-Jahannam free card, nor an official stamp to become a *Saleh*, *Muttaqi*, *Muhsin*, or *Siddeeq*. It is simply meant to encourage and motivate you to become a better version of yourself. Note that this is a self-*Muraqaba* challenge. A group peer *Muraqaba* is exclusively available to MuslimHub Patreon members. See [patreon.com/muslimhub](https://patreon.com/muslimhub) for more information.

**Note:** For the following four *Raqeeb* challenges, please print and use the *Raqeeb* tracking sheets sent to you by email as a separate pdf when you purchased this manual.

### **Raqeeb 3 - Three day watch (Saleheen)**

1. Fajr, Duhr, Asr, Maghrib: Salah within 15 minutes of Adhan (women add isha salah as well)
2. Isha in Congregation at the Masjid with First Takbeerah (for men only. Women pray it at home within 15 minutes of Adhan)
3. First Row in Friday prayers (Applies only if a Friday falls within the three days. It's also only for men.)

4. Gheebah: No Bad Mention of others behind their backs whether the statement is true or not
5. No Lying: White lies included

**Note:** Being late (minute 16 after official *adhan* time enters) for any salah breaks the covenant of *Raqeeb*  
3. START OVER!

### **Raqeeb 7 - Seven-day watch (Muttaqeen)**

1. Duhr, Asr, Maghrib: Salah within 15 minutes of Adhan (women add Fajr and isha salah)
2. Fajr and Isha in congregation at the Masjid with First Takbeerah (for men only)
3. First Row in Friday prayers (for men only)
4. No Gheebah: No Bad Mention of others whether the statement is true or not
5. No Lying: White lies included
6. No Boasting in matters of Deen or Dunya
7. No Anger: Do not raise your voice for more than two consecutive sentences

### **Raqeeb 10 - Ten-day watch (Muhsineen)**

1. All Salah's in masjid with first takbeer (women pray at home within 15 min of Adhan)
2. Stay in masjid after fajr in Dhikr and recite Yasin until sunrise and pray 4 rak'as of Duha (women will do this at home)
3. Reciting Surat Al-Mulk before sleep
4. Perform tahajjud prayers (preferably at last third of the night. At least 4 rak'as)
5. First Row in Friday prayers (for men only)
6. No Gheebah: No Bad Mention of others whether the statement is true or not

7. No Lying: White lies included
8. No Boasting in matters of Deen or Dunya
9. No Anger: Do not raise your voice for more than two consecutive sentences
10. Not allowed to defend yourself when criticized or verbally attacked. Just remain silent.
11. No Ostentation: Showing off in acts of worship

**Raqeeb 40 - Forty-day watch (Siddiqeen)**

Same as Raqeeb 10 (the Watchful Muhsin) but for 40 days.

## Resources & Credits

1. *Riyad Saliheen* for reading on the virtues of conduct
2. [Basiraeducation.org](http://Basiraeducation.org) for improving your Islamic knowledge online
3. [Whyislamistrue.com](http://Whyislamistrue.com)
4. [Freeislamiccalligraphy.com](http://Freeislamiccalligraphy.com)
5. Halaltrip.com in-flight prayer
6. *Khatmah* Qur'an App for tracking your daily recitation of the Qur'an. Use Muslim World League (MWL) for *salah* times calculation in North America instead of ISNA
7. *The Study Qur'an* by Seyyed Hossein Nasr
8. [Patreon.com/muslimhub](https://Patreon.com/muslimhub)
9. [muslimhub.club](https://muslimhub.club)
10. *Eman* - A New Way of Seeing Illustration:  
[https://www.freepik.com/free-vector/green-human-eye-isolated\\_10603016.htm#query=seeing&position=3&from\\_view=search&track=sph](https://www.freepik.com/free-vector/green-human-eye-isolated_10603016.htm#query=seeing&position=3&from_view=search&track=sph)
11. Conduct in the Divine Matrix Illustration:  
<https://www.freepik.com/free-vector/streaming-binary-code-numbers-technology-back->



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## Patreon Community

[The Muslim Hub Patreon](https://patreon.com/muslimhub) ([patreon.com/muslimhub](https://patreon.com/muslimhub)) is an effort to bring forth community members and supporters to continue the work of *Da'wah*. We are excited to offer the opportunity to join our community of like-minded individuals keen on learning more about Islam and its teachings. As a member of our Patreon community, you will have access to exclusive content, resources, *Eman* Jolts, and in-person and virtual events that are tailored specifically to the Muslim Hub Community.

The Muslim Hub Community is dedicated to creating a safe and welcoming space where Muslims can come together to learn, share, and grow. Whether you are a lifelong Muslim, a recent convert, or simply interested in learning more about Islam, we invite you to join us and become part of our community.

As a member of our Patreon community, you will have access to a range of benefits including but not limited to:

- *A Sadaqa Jaāriyah* to support our global *Da'wah* work;
- Exclusive content and resources: You will have access to exclusive writings, videos and other resources that are not available to the general public;
- Community Forums: A place to connect with other Muslims around the world while sharing your thoughts, asking questions, and engaging in discussions;
- Live Events: We will be holding periodic live events, from webinars, Q&A sessions, and workshops, designed to provide you with an opportunity to learn and connect with other members of our community;
- Personalized support: For higher-tier Patreon members, we offer personalized support, guidance, and mentorship.

Finally, your support will enable us to continue our mission to serve and dedicate the time for further learning and high-quality educational content and resources to the Muslim Community. **Join today:** [patreon.com/muslimhub](https://patreon.com/muslimhub)

Inshallāh, we can't wait to welcome you to our community. We have a lot of heart-work to do, after all. Our afterlife awaits us!

## **Shura Sessions**

We understand that navigating your spiritual journey can be challenging, and we are here to provide you with the guidance and support you need to help you connect with your faith and reach your spiritual goals.

Our Shura sessions are designed to be personalized and tailored to your individual needs. During your session, you will have the opportunity to discuss your spiritual journey, ask questions, and receive guidance from Ousama.

To schedule your session, simply use our Calendly booking system to select a date and time that works for you. Once your booking is confirmed, you will receive a confirmation email with a link to your video call.

During your session, you can expect to

- Discuss your spiritual goals and challenges: Our mentorship sessions are focused on helping you achieve your spiritual goals. You will

have the opportunity to discuss any challenges you are facing and receive guidance on how to overcome them

- Receive personalized guidance
- Build a relationship with a mentor: Building a relationship with a mentor can be an important part of your spiritual journey. Our mentors are here to provide ongoing support and guidance as you continue on your path.

We believe that mentorship is an important part of any spiritual journey, and we are committed to providing you with the support and guidance you need to reach your spiritual goals.

Hear it from previous **Mentees** themselves:

"They tell you if you want to learn Islam properly to find a teacher, Ousama was that for me. I always wanted to strengthen my relationship with Allah ﷻ and have trust in His path for me, and He sent me a teacher as a means for me. I view Allah ﷻ, and his attributes in a way I never knew was possible. My journey is lifelong, but the steps I've taken fill the void as I place it with my love for Allah ﷻ. May Allah ﷻ reward Ousama for his

efforts and the effect he's had on my path."  
[Ahlam, USA].

"I've been a Muslim my entire life. After listening to Ousama for quite some time, I experienced an Islamic realignment of sorts. By focusing on minor adjustments daily along with real heart work, I entered a spiritual highway. He continuously redirected me towards Allah ﷻ in actions and allowed me to understand how our creator functions in every moment. May Allah ﷻ reward him and his team." [Fatima, Turkey].

**Book your Heart-to-Heart Shura session today and take the first step towards a more fulfilling spiritual journey.\***

[calendly.com/muslimhub](https://calendly.com/muslimhub)

***\*Disclaimer:***

*As a mentor, it is important to make clear that the shura sessions are not intended to replace therapy or medical treatment.*

*While the sessions are to offer guidance and support to individuals on their spiritual journey, Ousama Alshurafa is not a licensed therapist or medical professional. The mentorship shura sessions are focused on providing guidance and support related to Islam and spirituality.*

*If you are experiencing mental health or medical issues, it is important that you seek professional help from a licensed therapist or medical provider. The mentorship sessions are not a substitute for therapy or medical treatment, and I strongly encourage you to seek professional help if you are in need of it.*

*The mentorship sessions are not a crisis hotline or emergency service. If you are experiencing a crisis or emergency, please call your local emergency services or seek immediate help from a licensed professional.*

*The shura session is here to support you and your spiritual journey but it's important that you take care of your mental and physical health as well. Please keep this in mind when considering whether the shura sessions are appropriate for you.*



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