

Reflections on the Hadith of Jibreel

Omar (may Allah be pleased with him), reported that they **were sitting with the Prophet ﷺ** when a man came to him whose clothes were intensely white and whose hair was intensely black; no signs of travel could be seen upon him, and none of them recognized him.

He was in fact Jibreel (عليه السلام).

and he asked “what is Islam?” The Prophet ﷺ recounted the five pillars of Islam. Then he asked about Iman. Then the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم recounted the six pillars of iman. Then he inquired about Ihsan.

These are referred to as the degrees of religion. They can be thought of as a pyramid with the base as Islam. Then the next level is Iman (faith). Then the top level is Ihsan (perfection). These levels represent advancement and growth. Islam, Iman and Ihsan correspond to Muslim, Mu’min and Muhsin, respectively. Therefore a Muhsin- necessarily a Mu’min and a Muslim. And a Mu’min is necessarily Muslim but not necessarily a Muhsin.

Islam is the pillars or the outwardly deeds. Then the Iman comes after and in this context is the inner worships. Then after comes Ihsan and it is the perfection and excellence of these worships.

So Islam is the outwardly worships, the two testimonies of faith, the prayer, fasting, zakat and Hajj. They are worships conducted

physically and worships conducted through spending wealth. Iman in this place refers to belief in the unseen. Belief in Allah, His angels, His Messengers, His books, the Last day, and the Divine Decree (Qadar), both the good of it and the bad of it.

When Islam and Iman are mentioned together or in conjunction they have distinct meanings as is the case in this hadith. And when Islam and Iman are mentioned on their own they have the same meaning which is the entirety of the religion including belief, words and inner and outer deeds.

With regards to the outwardly actions one should take care to offer them in the best possible fashion. He should understand what the two testimonies of faith mean and what they imply. As far as prayers, it is not simply about offering the prayers. We were commanded to establish the prayers. Establishing prayers means offering in the prescribed manner. Thus it is possible for one who prayed to not have prayed (truly). You have probably heard of the man who prayed at the time of the Prophet ﷺ three times in a row and the Prophet ﷺ told him pray for you have not prayed. It is said that this man did not have tranquility in prayer.

Next, Iman was mentioned. Remember that Ibn Umar cited this Hadith in response to those who denied Qadr- The Divine decree. The pitfall that people fall into is that they try to gauge Allah's knowledge by their own knowledge. And Allah is not constrained either by time or place. From the creation of the first man Adam to the last man, people will live for distinct periods of time. Allah

the exalted has knowledge of this entire period from its beginning to its end. He knows how each person will live and what they will do. This is not an excuse for a person to do wrong. Rather, this is an indication of Allah's vast knowledge. Belief in the Divine Decree makes things easy for a believer and that what has been decreed for him is better for him. And a person will be content knowing and believing in the words of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم "what has missed you was not going to befall you, and what has befallen you was not going to miss you."

That is, whatever has befallen a person whether desirable or undesirable was meant to befall them absolutely. So one should be content and know that the decree of Allah is better for him.

In the authentic Hadith, the Prophet said:

عجبا لأمر المؤمن إن أمره كله له خير، وليس ذلك لأحد إلا للمؤمن : إن أصابته سراء شكر فكان خيراً له، وإن أصابته ضراء صبر فكان خيراً له

How wonderful is the case of a believer; there is good for him in everything and this applies only to a believer. If prosperity attends him, he expresses gratitude to Allah and that is good for him; and if adversity befalls him, he endures it patiently and that is better for him. [Muslim 2999]

In either case, the believer has an act of worship (gratitude or patience) to get closer to Allah.

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Then he said: inform me about Ihsan? It is to worship Allah as if you see Him. That is as you worship-for example as you stand in prayer-you offer it as if you can see Him. If you cannot then know that He sees you.

This is a matter of being mindful of Allah. A matter of perfection of the deeds. Therefore, some scholars said that the pillars of Ihsan are the worship of Allah and the muraqaba (mindfulness of Allah).

Some people pray as if they just want to finish the prayer. They pray like they are pecking. They do not complete the bowing or prostration. Is such a person worshipping Allah as if they see Him? Certainly not. Therefore this level of the religion is precious. A person should strive to attain it. A person should strive to attain this level. He should strive to savor acts of worship. To feel contentment and relaxation through it. The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

يَا بِلَالُ أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ أَرْحِنَا بِهَا

O Bilal, call iqamah for prayer: give us comfort by it. [Sunan Abu Dawood 4985]

So we should find comfort through worships.

Some people say: I get more happy through giving charity than the happiness of the person to whom I gave.

A person should strive to savor and appreciate the acts of worships.

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How does a person attain it? He becomes mindful of Allah when he worships Him. He becomes mindful of Him in every moment. If a person is aware others are looking at them even a small child they feel ashamed to make a sin. What about Allah? Therefore we need to be mindful that Allah sees us and is watching us.

He then asked: "When will the Hour be?" He said: 'The one who is being asked about it does not know more than the one who is asking.'

He asked: 'Then what are its signs?'

The scholars have categorized the signs into major and minor signs. The major signs indicate that the Day of Judgment is close. Some Major signs are the Dajjal, Isa and Yajooj and Majooj. With regards to the minor signs they are many- some of which have happened and some are yet to happen. An example of the minor signs are the adornment of the Masajed.

he said: 'When the slave woman gives birth to her master

One of the explanations of this is that the mistreatment of parents will increase to the point that the son will treat his mother like a Master treats a slave and the daughter will treat her mother in the same fashion that a Master treats a slave.

This unfortunately is happening now and there are people who treat their mothers as servants.

This is in contrast to how the righteous treat their parents. In the well-known Hadith related in Al Bukhari (2215) and Muslim (2743) one of the three men who were trapped in a cave invoked Allah to move the rock by virtue of his kindness towards his parents:

“O Allah, I had my aged parents and I served them milk before I served my wife, children and my servants. One day I was delayed and on my return I found my parents sleeping, and I disliked to wake them up. The children were crying at my feet (because of hunger). That state of affairs continued until dawn. O Allah! If You regard that I did it for Your sake, then please remove this rock.”

A person should realize that honoring their mother and father is a means of getting closer to Allah. The Prophet ﷺ said:

الوالد أوسط أبواب الجنة

A parent is the best of the gates of Jannah; [Sunan Ibn Majah 3663]

and when you see barefoot, unclothed, destitute shepherds competing in constructing tall buildings.'

Here unclothed does not mean without clothes literally. It means that their clothing is less than that of the average person. They may have holes in it. It may be torn. They may be missing a belt etc. The scholars have explained that this means that the worldly riches will pour down on the people to the point that even the

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destitute among them will have a large share and compete in building structures. In the authentic Hadith the Prophet ﷺ said that a person will get reward for everything that they spend except in building. This is not referring to building Masajed. What is meant by this is a building that is in excess of his needs. Now many people build and include rooms that they never live in or they spend in adornment etc in excess of what they need. A lot of people spend huge amounts of money in building. There is nothing blameworthy in building something to contain oneself and their family like the average person or slightly more. However, he should be guarded to build what will benefit him after he dies.

Allah said in verse 77 of Surah Qassas (28):

وَابْتَغِ فِيمَا آتَاكَ اللَّهُ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ

But seek, through which Allah has given you, the home of the Hereafter;

The Prophet ﷺ said:

مَنْ بَنَى مَسْجِدًا لِلَّهِ كَمَا فَحِصَ قَطَاةٍ أَوْ أَصْغَرَ بَنَى اللَّهُ لَهُ بَيْتًا فِي الْجَنَّةِ

Whoever builds a mosque for the sake of Allah, like a sparrow's nest for Allah or even smaller, Allah will build for him a house in Paradise. [Sunan Ibn Majah 738]

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The Prophet ﷺ rooms were so small than when he was praying that when he went to make sujood that his wife Aisha had to move her leg to make space. Also, a guest would come to him and he would go to all his houses and he would not find anything in it. He ﷺ did not stock up from this worldly life. In spite of the fact that if he ﷺ wanted to he would have been the richest person. Allah ordained the Prophet's share as 1/5. However, he ﷺ did not take any of it. One time a he ﷺ prayed and left immediately and the companions were worried about him and he informed them that I remembered a piece of gold and I did not like that it would remain with me.

Contrast that to the situation nowadays. People who were previously poor are now living in extravagance, waste and excesses.

We should take heed from the example of the Prophet ﷺ and strive for the everlasting life and not this transient fleeting world.