



توکل

Tawakkul

The Missing Peace in
the Journey of Life



Shaykh
Faheem

An Islamic Lifestyle Solutions publication

The immense global panic as a corollary of the Covid19 pandemic has seen a rise in distress around the world. Thousands are dying daily and even more are plagued with the possibility of contracting this virus every passing day.

In hope of restoring the Islāmic concept of “Tawakkul” (utmost reliance) in God Almighty, [Awqaf SA](#) and the [Islāmic Lifestyle Solutions](#) have made this PDF version available to readers for FREE electronic reading. However, it may not be construed as permission to print this book, or excerpts from it, without written consent from the author or publisher unless for citation purposes.

Furthermore, it is hoped that the reader will benefit from this work and will consider contributing to the [Educational Writer’s Waqf Fund](#) in order to empower future writers whilst securing ongoing reward at the same juncture.

TAWAKKUL

The Missing Peace in the Journey of Life



 Shaykh
Faheem

www.ShaykhFaheem.com

*An **Islāmic Lifestyle Solutions** Publication*

All Rights Reserved.

No part of this publication may
be used or reproduced in any manner
whatsoever without written permission of the
Author except in the case of brief quotations.

Published by **Islāmic Lifestyle Solutions**

500 Ridge Road, Overport, 4067, Durban, South Africa

(+27) 31 207 7276 · ils@hotmail.co.za

www.Islamiclifestylesolutions.co.za

Printed in South Africa

First Edition –December 2020

Author / Typesetting – Shaykh Faheem

Author Website – www.shaykhfaheem.com

About the Author - <http://islamiclifestylesolutions.co.za/shaykh-faheem/>

Proof Reading– Mufti Omar Dawood

Cover – MRK Productions

Sponsor – Awqaf SA

DONATE TO THE AWQAF SA EDUCATIONAL WRITERS WAQF FUND (REF: EDW001) AND RECEIVE ONGOING REWARD.



When a person dies all good actions come to an end except three (a) continuous charity, (b) beneficial knowledge, and (c) pious children who pray for the deceased. (Hadith)

As the waqf fund continually support writers to contribute beneficial knowledge you will earn continuous rewards for as long as the education is practiced on and continues through generations.

Be part of this Prophetic PRACTICE of changing lives by Pledging your support the Educational Writers Waqf Fund through Awqaf SA.

<https://awqafsa.org.za/pledge/>

http://bit.ly/AwqafSA_Debit

Banking Details for Direct Payments

Bank: FNB Islamic Finance

Acc Name: Awqaf SA Acc

Number: 62052040145

Code: 250655

Bank: Al Baraka Bank

Acc Name: Awqaf SA

Acc Number: 300118114151

Code: FORDSBURG BC: 786000

Reference: (Your Name and Contact)/EDW001

“Waqf is a most powerful, sacred, strategic, sustainable, enduring, and empowering of all Islamic voluntary charities. Your everlasting legacy and eternal fountain of reward.”

The intention of this project is to popularise the Islamic system of establishing Waqf as a means of voluntary charity giving that will benefit communities in perpetuity.

A Waqf is a permanent donation dedicated to Allāh by a donor for any Shariah compliant purpose in perpetuity. A Waqf is a Sadaqah Jariyah, a continuous sadaqah, which earns the donor and the one in whose name it is Gifted a continuous reward.

As a charitable endowment, Awqaf SA preserves and invests the donated Waqf Capital and spends only the returns to fund a variety of community projects promoting 'Integrated Development and Self-Reliance'. Investment income generated through this Waqf will be used to financially support educational writers to enable research and publication of books that will positively benefit mankind.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said: ‘...Whoever introduces a good practice in Islam, there is for him its reward and the reward of those who act upon it after him without it diminishing their reward in the slightest...’ (Muslim)

We encourage you to assist us in further developing the Waqf system by establishing your Waqf and encouraging others to do so as well.

On completion of the book, we request that you share the book with others in order to disseminate knowledge of both the book and the prophetic institution of Waqf.

“Enjoin what is right and just and forbid what is wrong, evil and unjust.
And loan to Allah a beautiful loan.” (Qur’an 73:21)

For, Muhammad Hassaan, Farhath Faatimah, Hanzalah & Zuhayr. May this book guide you along the journey of life.

وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا ﴿٢﴾ وَيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ ۚ وَمَنْ يَتَّوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بَالِغُ أَمْرِهِ ۗ قَدْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدْرًا ﴿٣﴾

“...and whoever is conscious of God, He will create a way out (for them) and provide for them in a manner beyond expectation. And whoever relies on Allāh – then Allāh is Sufficient for him, indeed Allāh will accomplish His command; indeed Allāh has set a proper measure for all things.”

(Sūrah At-Talāq, 65:2-3)

Preface	1
Introduction	5
Chapter One	9
<i>All Roads Lead Somewhere!</i>	9
Chapter Two	17
<i>Tawakkul – The Ultimate Trust Fall</i>	17
<i>3 Points of Insightful Importance</i>	27
Chapter Three	33
<i>All’s Well That Ends Well</i>	33
<i>Choices! Choices! Choices!</i>	45
<i>Points of Insight</i>	50
<i>God’s Plan Comes to Light</i>	60
<i>Points of Insight</i>	62
Chapter Four	67
<i>When All Else Fails, God Prevails!</i>	67
<i>Testing Times?</i>	78
Chapter Five	81
<i>Unlimited Wi-fi</i>	81
<i>The Prophet ﷺ Speaks to His Lord</i>	86

<i>From Darkness into Light</i>	88
<i>Fire and Ice</i>	93
Chapter Six	99
<i>Trust in God, but Plan Ahead</i>	99
Chapter Seven	109
<i>Meet the Challenger!</i>	109
Chapter Eight	119
<i>The Missing Peace</i>	119
Chapter Nine	133
<i>How is your Heart with Allāh Today?</i>	133
Chapter Ten	141
<i>All Roads Lead to Him!</i>	141
Verses on Tawakkul in the Qur'ān	147
Forthcoming Publications by Author	148
<i>The Meccan Dawn</i>	148
<i>Signs & Conditions of the Hour</i>	148
<i>Agents of Fasād</i>	148
<i>Resource for Qur'ānic Research</i>	149

Preface

This particular book differs from some of the other titles I have been blessed with the honour of writing in the last few years, in the sense that it is not a scholarly nor academic account of the subject. Once the introductory aspects concerning our basic premise of the chapters take on a more practical approach by means of a *retrospective style of storytelling* based on narratives located in the Qur'ān and Sunnah

To my loving mother, who is my greatest fan, and whose duās (supplications) keep me afloat amidst the floods of life, thank you for your love and support. May Allāh Almighty grant you good health and blessings always.

To my beloved wife, Salma Mehtar, who made my Ramadhān so tranquil, thus allowing me to finish this book swiftly, may God Almighty grant you peace and blessings in your every step that you take.

To my children, Muhammad Hassaan Khan, Farhath Faatimah Khan, Hanzalah Khan, and Zuhayr Bayat, may God Almighty cause this book to guide you all and may His protection be upon you all in this temporary life, and may you all be guided by the example of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

To my colleagues and brothers at the *Islāmic Lifestyle Solutions*, Hadhrath Allāmah Mufti Omar Dawood, Hadhrath Allāmah Moulana Saleh Joosab Arbee, Hadhrath Allāmah Mufti Moin Moeeni, thank you all for your support always and may God Almighty bless you all and accept your efforts for the sake of this beautiful religion.

May Allāh Almighty reward brothers Shiraz Gany and his business partner, Abdul Hakeem Ilo, abundantly for sponsoring this book as a waqf, or endowment. May Allāh the Eternal grant forgiveness and elevate to the gardens of Paradise, the parents of Abdul Hakeem Ilo (Tajudeen Ilo and Jamilat Adebisi) as well as to all our deceased.

This book aims to inspire readers to reflect on the examples of those who affirmed their trust in Allāh Almighty. No matter the difficulty or severity of the choices before them, they overcame those challenges and were victorious due to their concrete conviction that Allāh, the Most Merciful, would never place upon a person such difficulty they would be unable to overcome, so long as they do what is righteous, and trust in Him.

Like our sponsors, who share a personal conviction in the trust of Almighty Allāh, they have been comforted by inspirational verses of the Qurʾān on the subject of Tawakkul, particularly from Sūrah At-Talāq (which has been elucidated in this book).

It is the intention for this message of *Tawakkul* to reach as many people as possible. Therefore, this book is intended for the ongoing reward of all. So, please share with as many as you can, to inspire, motivate, and uplift from the insightful information extrapolated from the Qurʾān and Prophetic way.

It is intended that the net proceeds from the sale of the book will be invested into a waqf (endowment fund) at AWQAF SA. Income from the investment will be used to support future books by the writer and other writers to inspire humankind. Electronic versions of the book will be made available for free, whilst those inspired will have the privilege to

make a waqf contribution to the waqf fund and participate in the ongoing reward of future publications.

I supplicate in the gracious court of Allāh Almighty for Him to accept this work, and for it to become a beacon of hope and a guiding light in times of darkness for my fellow Muslim brothers and sisters during turbulent times, and may it bring them ‘peace’ in this journey of life.

*Shaykh Faheem- Co-Founder and Head of Da'wah, Media, Education & Publications
Departments of the Islāmic Lifestyle Solutions. 27th Ramadhān 1441 – 20th May 2020*

The problem is and always has been one of choice. Most of the time, choices are made based on our own 'knowledge', but once we arrive at the realization that our knowledge is limited, and that God's knowledge is unlimited, then we will never question the choices we must make to fulfill the commands of God because we see only the *pixel*, while Allāh the All-Knowing has the full *picture*."

وَمَا لَنَا أَلَّا نَتَوَكَّلَ عَلَى اللَّهِ
وَقَدْ هَدَانَا سُبُلَنَا ۗ وَلَنَصْبِرَنَّ عَلَى مَا آذَيْتُمُونَا ۗ وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُتَوَكِّلُونَ

“And what is the matter with us that we should not rely on Allāh?
He has in fact shown us our ways; and we will
Surely be patient upon the troubles you
cause us; and those who trust
must, rely upon
Allāh.”

(Sūrah Ibrāhīm, 14:12)

Introduction

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ عَلَى اللَّهِ

Bismillāhi Tawakkaltu Alallāh

God in Whose name I commence, and upon whom I place my utmost trust and reliance.

Trust in God Almighty should be as easy as breathing for a believer, yet many who claim belief seem more inclined to place their trust in everything else besides God, and when things do not pan out the way they anticipate, then suddenly they begin to question the will of God.

Tawakkul is to place our utmost reliance upon God Almighty, yet at the same juncture, tawakkul is not to assume that since God Almighty is All-Seeing and also All-Powerful, that one should therefore be able to stand at the edge of a mountain and leap off without any landing aid in the expectancy that, since God 'is', that He 'will' break one's fall. That is an incorrect *perception* of tawakkul.

Rather, tawakkul is to prepare exhaustively, and after all of our efforts, to trust that if the intended outcome is what God Almighty wills to occur, then that is what shall come to pass, and if the entire world planned to do a thing with every exhaustive plan in place, and that projected outcome was not willed by God Almighty, then it shall not come to pass regardless of all the time, effort and finances invested in trying to bring it about.

Tawakkul is not to be annoyed and angry when the plan that one envisaged did not pan out accordingly! No! Tawakkul is taking the journey knowing that even though one has endured every effort in the planning process, that God's plan is not just the ultimate plan, but it is the only plan

which will come to pass, and to, therefore ‘accept’ the outcome of that plan because God knows better as He exists outside the finite confines of all created things, and is, therefore, the most suitable Decider to guide our path.

Tawakkul can easily be misunderstood by the way we perceive things, and so the perception of the ideal is of critical importance to submit to the plan of God. Failure to do so may cause an internal (spiritual) rupture, resulting in a decline of external attitude towards one’s faith.

Part of tawakkul is to be in a state of acceptance and gratitude towards God, as this acceptance is an exhibition of our *submission* to His will.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ explained in simple terms the basic mechanism in our pursuit to understand the subject of tawakkul,

عن أنس بن مالك قال رجل يا رسول الله أعقلها وأتوكل أو أطلقها وأتوكل قال صلى الله عليه وسلم أعقلها وتوكل

Sayyidunā Anas ibn Mālik رضي الله عنه reported, A man said, “O Messenger of Allāh, should I tie my camel and trust in Allāh, or should I leave her untied and trust in Allāh?” The Prophet, ﷺ said, “Tie her and trust in Allāh.”¹

The invaluable lesson elucidated here is that whilst we are commanded to place our reliance on God Almighty, we cannot become complacent or devoid of our God-given reason. We *must* make a concerted effort, and responsibly so, or else God Almighty will become the scapegoat for all our poor decisions in life. Such is the case with many who are uneducated on the subject and proceed to blame God Almighty for the ‘mishaps’ experienced in life when it is they who have not made the necessary effort.

¹ *Jāmi At-Tirmizhī, Book 37, Hadīth 2707*

Tawakkul is not to leave the doors of entry into your home wide open to the scheming eyes of thieves, and then to head off to bed thinking that God will protect you. This is illogical as Islām is a way of life premised on both faith and reason.

As an example, in countries where crime is high, the smart thing to do is to install an alarm system - if we possess sufficient means to do so - and then pray to God Almighty for our protection.

Tawakkul is not to run into a quarantine zone without taking the requisite safety precautions during times of an epidemic and to then say, “God is with me, therefore, no sickness can infect me”. This is preposterous, as the following narration clarifies,

أَنَّ عُمَرَ بْنَ الْخَطَّابِ - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ - خَرَجَ إِلَى الشَّامِ، فَلَمَّا جَاءَ بِسَرْعٍ بَلَغَهُ أَنَّ الْوَبَاءَ وَقَعَ بِالشَّامِ فَأَخْبَرَهُ عَبْدُ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنُ عَوْفٍ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ " إِذَا سَمِعْتُمْ بِأَرْضٍ فَلَا تَقْدُمُوا عَلَيْهَا، وَإِذَا وَقَعَ بِأَرْضٍ وَأَنْتُمْ بِهَا فَلَا تَخْرُجُوا فِرَارًا مِنْهُ ". فَرَجَعَ عُمَرُ مِنْ سَرْعٍ.

“Umar bin Al-Khattāb رضي الله عنه left for Shām², and when he reached a place called Sargh, he came to know that there was an outbreak of an epidemic (possibly of plague) in Shām. Then `Abdur Rahmān bin `Auf رضي الله عنه told him that Allāh’s Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم said, “If you hear the news of an outbreak of an epidemic (plague) in a certain place, do not enter that place, and if the epidemic falls in a place while you are present in it, do not leave

² Shām in the prophetic era consisted of Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Greater Syria. Today however ‘Shām’ refers only to Syria.

that place to escape from the epidemic.” So `Umar returned from Sargh.³

The narration explains that when an epidemic breaks out, people are to exercise common sense. If they are already in an infected area, then they should remain there to quell the spread of infection. If one has not reached a place in which there is an epidemic, then one should refrain from entering such a place as this could result in exposure to the disease. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ did not advise us to assume that since we are believers that no calamity or sickness can ever befall us.

Thus, part of tawakkul is to be *rational* and to take the necessary precautions whilst maintaining that whatever is beyond our control will be taken care of by God Almighty in the best possible way.

As such, the chapters in the book are based on stories located in the Qur'an which stand to exhibit the practical dimensions of the result awaiting those who affirm their tawakkul in God.

تَوَكَّلْتُ عَلَى اللَّهِ

“Upon Allāh do I Rely”



³ Al-Bukhārī, Hadīth Number 6973

Chapter One

All Roads Lead Somewhere!

“When wandering the unknown, one can easily veer off into a chasm of confusion if presented with even the most insignificant of hurdles. Such is human nature, which causes our panic-stricken minds to make a mountain of a molehill. All of this anxiety, stress, concern, etc. is due to our lack of knowledge regarding a simple path of navigation.”

You are on a *road*...you *know not* where it leads, except that it is a road, which implies that somebody must have built it, right? So, what do you do next? You look for the *signs to guide* you on your *journey*, knowing well that the slightest misjudgement or miscalculation could send you down a *treacherous path* of the unknown. Hence, caution is key!

As the journey unfolds and the visible signboards begin to indicate the proximity of your destination, suddenly you begin to notice a build-up in traffic...“Sigh!” is the now all-too-familiar remark, which has become your *tasbīh* (litany) along the way as you silently remark to yourself at the prospect of yet another *hurdle* en-route to your *destination*.

At this juncture, you can't quite understand the cause for the huge delays, and the *anxiety of not knowing* only adds to your *impatience*, creating further *stress*. After the enduring delay, you notice that there are traffic police who have set up a roadblock, presumably to run random checks ensuring that drivers are not in contravention of the law.

Immediately, anxiously, you begin to revisit in your mind all the possible reasons you may land in *hot water*. You realize that your tyres may not comply with roadworthy regulations, and naturally, your pressure rises even further as your vehicle edges closer to that police barricade. Your fingers are crossed, as you hope to bypass them.

At the front of the now snail-paced traffic, an officer informs you that the roadblock is not for mandatory checks, but instead, the roads are closed as it is unsafe to travel due to a possible landslide from the hills on either side of the mountainous road.

“Arrrrrgh!” is the cry from within you, but the officer assures you there is another route, which, if you abide by the specific instructions, the detour will have you right back on schedule! The officer hands you a pre-prepared route on paper to ease your understanding in the hope of helping you *navigate* the new path which lies ahead.

At that very moment, the anxiety and stress levels of earlier are already steadily decreasing. The directions were initially unclear, but once understood, they prove to be vital along this rather uncharted road of travel, and before you know it, you have reached your destination, safe and sound! You made it! As you enter your ‘road’ of familiarity, you turn up the dial on the radio, and you hear the headlines from the newsreader, “Destructive Landslide Buries Motorists!”, and at that moment, you realize that you could have been among them. You could have been on that road when the landslide occurred and you could have been buried deep within the mud, but thanks to the ‘foresight’ of those who ‘know’ better, and the dispatching of officers to ‘warn’ you, you are safe! All because you placed your ‘trust’ in the system!

The road in this story is analogous to the very world in which we reside. You see, as human beings, we ‘trust’ the road because we *know* that it was built by experts such as construction engineers, who mapped out the area and provided the best and simplest of routes for our ease of access.

Likewise, God Almighty created this earth for us to reside in, and just as how the roads we travel by foot and car lead us to a specific destination, the paths we choose to adopt in this life will determine the outcome of our time here. However, a wrong turn may herald detrimental effects and may lead us to our doom.

The difference is that *we so easily place our trust in the men* who break mountains to build roadways, yet the God who created everything from nothing advises us to place our trust in Him. He is the One who subjected the roads for us, yet why do we still question His wisdom and Might? Did he not subdue the roads for us?

وَتَقُولُوا سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ لَنَا هَذَا وَمَا كُنَّا لَهُ مُقْرِنِينَ ﴿١٣﴾ وَإِنَّا إِلَىٰ رَبِّنَا لَمُنْقَلِبُونَ ﴿١٤﴾

“... and say, “Glory to Him Who has subjected these to our (use), for we could never have accomplished this (by ourselves). It is to our Lord that we shall eventually return.”⁴

Not only did He subdue the roads for us by which to travel, but God Almighty has also subjected the seas for our ease,

وَهُوَ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ الْبَحْرَ لِتَأْكُلُوا مِنْهُ لَحْمًا طَرِيًّا وَتَسْتَخْرِجُوا مِنْهُ حِلْيَةً تَلْبَسُونَهَا وَتَرَى الْفُلْكَ مَوَاجِرَ فِيهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۗ وَلِعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

“And it is He Who subjected the sea for you, so you eat fresh meat from it, and extract ornaments from it which you wear; and you see ships ploughing through it and so that you may seek His munificence and that you may give thanks.⁵

When human beings commenced an era of great industry, they built their roads to coincide with the constellation as a means of navigation, but did they create those galaxies? Of course not! God Almighty took such great care of us, that not only did He subdue the roads for us, but He created an interstellar system for our benefit to find

⁴ Sūrah Az-Zukhruf, 43:13-14

⁵ Sūrah An-Nahl, 16:14

direction, and this was further reinforced by landmarks for us to navigate the path as the Qur’ān,

وَعَلِمَتْ^٦ وَبِالنَّجْمِ هُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ

“...and the landmarks—and by the stars, they are guided.”⁶

Analogously, the journey along the road represents our life experiences, and this sojourn may only be successful based on our actions, depending upon either beneficial or detrimental knowledge. An uncharted route on a perilous trek will always create scenarios of unrest based on all the ‘unknown’ possibilities.

And even when an ‘official’ sent to warn us of the dangers which lie ahead, our general response is a frustrated “Arrrghh” because in those moments, whilst the messengers have our best interest at hand, our selfish desires blind us because of all the ‘inconveniences’ that we must endure if we are to adhere to the warning.

In the above example, the roadblock was the inconvenience that stimulated a rather unnecessary train of thought based on ‘assumption’, during which the only thoughts that arose were those associated with self-benefit or self-detriment. It was only when the officer explained that he was there to save your life, and with that, to provide you *written guidance* exhibiting a step-by-step route to assist you along the journey, that you realized your mistake was simply an incorrect ‘mindset’.

This is precisely how the human being behaves when a hurdle which complicates his or her schedule is placed before them, because

⁶ *Sūrah An-Nahl*, 16:16

their vision is ‘*limited to the confines of the known*’ whereas God Almighty’s knowledge is unlimited, unconfined, and beyond the realm of the finite. Hence, He warns us of the ‘impending’ dangers which may arise if we do not adhere to His words.

When wandering in the unknown, one can easily veer off into a chasm of confusion when presented with even the most insignificant of hurdles. Such is human nature. It often causes our panic-stricken minds to make a mountain of a molehill. All of this anxiety, stress, concern, etc. is due to our lack of knowledge regarding a simple path of navigation.

The solution to the problem of the road untraveled, and how to avoid the little bumps along the way, lies in the acquisition of a comprehensive ‘roadmap’.

The roadmap here may be recognized as the divinely ordained guidance sent to humankind to *navigate* the road ahead. Adherence to the instructions indicated therein will not only guarantee safe passage to the destination (Paradise), but it may direct its holder to shortcuts and exhibit keys on the map which others may not decipher as a result of their ignorance of the knowledge located in the Book.

Retrospectively, the journey begins with ‘tawakkul’ or trust, whilst on the road, and along the way, one’s tawakkul opens up other avenues in understanding the road Maker’s wisdom in the placement of ‘signs’ as indicators and warnings allowing us to maintain the requisite speed. Travel too fast, and you could crash! Travel too slowly, and you could hinder the travel of others. Therefore adopt the middle lane,

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا

“And thus We made you a community (of the) middle way...”⁷

The greatest detriment to our understanding of tawakkul along the road of life is the lack of knowledge about the trajectory of the route, and still, we follow it to whatever end, based on ‘trust’ with the belief that the makers of the road knew better. Yet when God Almighty tells us that it is He who brought everything from non-existence into existence, and therefore our obedience ought to be to Him, unfortunately, we are more inclined to place our trust on the handy work of men, rather than in the mastery of the Creator.

Such is the idea and concept of tawakkul in Islām, to place one’s trust in God as the master planner who is guiding us along our journey, and even though what we may perceive to be hurdles or speed bumps along the way, are in reality there to regulate our pace, to prevent further injury, and most importantly, to test the roadworthiness of the journeymen along the route. The only request from this ultimate road official here is not a fancy vehicle, but ‘submission’ to His Mastery and Magnificence coupled with ‘tawakkul’ in His Wisdom in all regards. If all these checks are met, then He can cause our journey to end in an unimaginably amazing way.

⁷ *Sūrah Al-Baqarah, 2:143. It is intriguing to note that the Qur’ān was revealed via oral transmission and not in written form. Sūrah Al-Baqarah is the longest chapter of the Qur’ān which was revealed over many years and consists of 286 verses. This verse about being in the ‘middle’ is the 143rd verse which is also in the ‘middle’ of the chapter. This linguistic balance stands to prove the Qur’ān’s superiority and the wisdom of its revelation in the Arabic language.*

However, we must beware of the sly Satan, waiting to ambush the faithful along the straight road (Sirāt Al-Mustaqīm). Let not the wayward whispers of the devil cause our faith to dwindle in the depths of our doubtful hearts. Instead, let our tawakkul be forged in the furnaces of such unwavering faith and trust in God, that even fire can turn from foe to friend, as exhibited in the story of Prophet Abraham عليه السلام, which will be discussed in the section titled “Fire and Ice” in chapter five.

May God Almighty make our journey towards the hereafter one full of divine guidance!

توكلت على الله

“Upon Allāh do I Rely”



Chapter Two

Tawakkul – The Ultimate Trust Fall

Many people fail to acknowledge in this modern age today that sometimes, the path laid out for you is inescapable, and the more you run away from your destiny, the more you are running toward it, because the plan of God Almighty is such, that He can bring us full-circle and we will not be able to perceive it because *we obey the law, but the laws obey Him!*

“Get rid of every newborn boy from those wretched people!” was the command of the ruler after being informed by his ministers of a prophecy about a boy from their lineage who would bring about his destruction. And so began the great massacre of the time, and the ‘plan’ of the ruler was set in motion. His logic was unquestionable, and his men carried out his instructions without a modicum of sympathy for the innocent children and their parents.

The pregnant women were warned that if they bore a male, the child would be killed. The trauma of such news caused pregnant mothers at the time to become overwhelmed with fear, and instead of imagining the summer warmth that would come from the smiles of their sons, they felt only the chilled winds of winter creeping down their spines. Thus, parents had to face the possibility of having their innocent boys killed for no apparent reason.

One such mother began to prepare for that inevitability and at the time of her delivery, after enduring the grueling months of pregnancy, and the many hours of labour, a whisper heralds the dismal news, “It is a boy!” With tears in her eyes, knowing the fate that awaited her child, she turned to God and pleaded her case.

God Almighty hears the plea of the oppressed, and so He responded to inspire her with a solution. “Cast him into the river, but before that, suckle him”.

How is this even a solution, you may wonder. The woman in the story was in a predicament, as giving birth to a boy proved to be a great concern given the circumstances. Thus, in her desperation, she pleaded to God because she was about to lose her child, and the solution was what? To still lose her child nonetheless?

It is easy to balk at this as a solution via logical deduction when our vision is limited to a one-dimensional view of the narrative. You see, tawakkul is not to turn to God, and then question His command. Rather, tawakkul is to turn to God knowing full well that God's knowledge supersedes our own, by an infinite number of ways, and that whilst our vision is 'blocked' by numerous factors, His knowledge is 'beyond' everything which may smog our sight. Thus, He is best positioned to guide our journey, and as irrational as this may seem to us, He is the only One who is beyond the confines of the laws which govern our movement, simply because he is the master and commander of all laws!

Enter the story of the mother of the Prophet Moses عليه السلام. It was she who was placed in that 'seemingly' dismal position of having to experience her pregnancy in fear that if she bore a boy, the child would be doomed. The Pharaoh had given strict orders to kill all males born in that year in fear of a prophecy which he had dreamed, and which had indicated that a boy from the lands of Palestine would bring an end to his radical reign.

The Pharaoh planned meticulously, but little did he realize, that there was a 'mother' praying for the safety of her child the One true God worthy of worship.

God Almighty inspired her,

وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمِّ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ أَرْضِعِيهِ ۖ إِذَا خِفْتِ عَلَيْهِ فَاَلْتِيهِ فِي الْبَيْمِ وَلَا تَخَافِي وَلَا تَحْزَنِي ۗ إِنَّا رَأَوْنَاهُ إِنَّا بِنَاكُمْ
وَجَاعِلُوهُ مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ۚ

“And We inspired to the mother of Moses, “Suckle him; but when you fear for him, cast him into the river and do not fear and do not grieve. Indeed, We will return him to you and will make him [one] of the messengers.”⁸

Imagine the level of faith, conviction, and tawakkul she placed in God Almighty to follow through with this plan? This is a rare occasion in which the solution seemed just as bad as the actual problem itself. It is what people of logic would call a ‘lose-lose’ scenario. Ah! But this is what those who lack conviction in the plan of God would say. Hence this chapter aims to exhibit to the reader an example of what could be regarded as the ultimate *trust fall*⁹ in history.

A person who places their trust and tawakkul in God Almighty sees every situation as a ‘win-win’ scenario because ultimately, it is God’s will upon us and we are in submission of His decree, regardless of whether the situation is good or bad.

Resuming the discussion on the narrative, the mother of Prophet Moses ﷺ was not commanded to merely cast her son into the Nile! No! God Almighty is ‘Al-Hakīm’, the Wise, and so there is great wisdom in His plan. He commanded her to first ‘suckle’ the child and, when she feared that the Pharaoh’s soldiers would approach her, or if the situation became too risky, then she would have to cast her beloved baby into the river.

⁸ *Sūrah Al-Qasas, 28:7*

⁹ *A trust fall is commonly understood as a team building exercise in which a person deliberately allows himself or herself to fall, trusting the members of the group to catch them. Thus, they place their trust in the people around them!*

There are two great pearls of wisdom located in the command to suckle the baby before casting it into the Nile. One will be discussed as the chapter progresses; the other can be understood once we consider the situation itself, as it must have been intense. Imagine: soldiers are on the prowl looking for newborns, and newborns cannot be expected to understand the situation as they have just entered the world. Now, in a situation like that, the mother would have two basic problems. The first and most obvious is to safeguard her child, and the second would be to ensure that the child is hidden. However, a newborn can cry at any given moment, and he cannot be covered up and told to remain silent. Hence, the best possible means of maintaining the child's safety whenever the soldiers are in the vicinity was to 'suckle the child'. When the child is being suckled, it will ensure - for the duration the soldiers are nearby - that the child will remain silent, thus giving the mother a greater chance to maintain the child's safety. Such is the wisdom of the command of God Almighty for those who contemplate and reflect on the verses of His book. This may be viewed as a pearl of immediate wisdom inherent in God's plan.

As it happened, she was left with no choice but to *part ways* with her child, and with her trust and tawakkul in God's promise to 'return' him to her, she did what very few mothers would have the faith to do: she placed her trust in God before her love for her child!

Due to his paranoia of being overthrown by a boy from the Israelites, the Pharaoh had set in motion a series of seemingly unconnected events that sparked the killing of innocent male infants. As a result, the mother of Moses عليه السلام was left with no choice but to turn to God in supplication, and where did the Pharaoh's planning lead the child?

فَالْتَقَطَهُ آلُ فِرْعَوْنَ لِيَكُونَ لَهُمْ عَدُوًّا وَحَزَنًا إِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَمَانَ وَجُنُودَهُمَا كَانُوا خَاطِبِينَ

*Pharaoh's household picked him up—later to become an enemy and a source of grief for them: Pharaoh, Haman, and their armies were wrongdoers.*¹⁰

That very child the ruler was avoiding was now at his doorstep and with all of his claims to power, wealth, and even divinity, a simple baby's presence in his palace rendered all his efforts vain!

Many people fail to acknowledge in this modern age today, that sometimes, the path laid out for you is inescapable, and the more you run away from your destiny, the more you are running toward it, because the plan of God Almighty is such that He can bring us full-circle and we will not be able to perceive it because *we obey the law, but the laws obey Him!*

Time and again, people talk about how they were devastated after a failed marriage, only later to be married to someone they had known for decades. What about the supposed coincidences of a person who insulted religion only to find solace in the very ideals for which he previously harboured a deep hatred and enmity with for so many years? Or the child who 'hated' a specific task but who now, as an adult, owns a company which specializes in that once-hated task? There is a far greater hand at work my dear readers, and that is the undeniable power and wisdom of God Almighty.

Resuming the discussion, Pharaoh did not have a positive feeling about this boy and his paranoia must have been skyrocketing, but his

¹⁰ *Sūrah Al-Qasas, 28:8*

wife had no children of her own and saw the newborn as a positive sign,

وَقَالَتِ امْرَأَتُ فِرْعَوْنَ قُرْتُ عَيْنٍ لِي وَلَكَ لَا تَقْتُلُوهُ عَسَىٰ أَن يَنْتَفِعَنَا أَوْ نَتَّخِذَهُ وَلَدًا وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ

“The Pharaoh’s wife said (to him): ”(Here is a child that will be) a means of happiness for me and for you. Do not kill him. Maybe he will prove useful for us, or we may adopt him as a son.” They were unaware (of how the events were being prepared and how their outcome would turn to be in the end).”¹¹

The Qur’an points out that the wife of the Pharaoh was pleased with the child, and that she convinced her husband to accept him into their home as a son, but at that time they would not perceive the repercussions of their actions.

Thus far, concerning this story, the Qur’an has given us two contrasting narratives. On the one hand, we have a mother who loves her child but has to give him up in obedience to the command of God, and in the end, her child grows up to become the saviour of her people. On the other hand, we have another mother who cannot have children, and who is longing for a child, and she convinces her husband to accept a strange child into their home, but this child eventually becomes the means of the destruction of her husband’s reign. These two storylines stand to show two important things; how the selfish actions of one person can set off a series of events which can ultimately return to destroy that person in the end, and secondly, that sometimes the very thing you are running away from, is welcomed by you, yet you cannot perceive it.

¹¹ *Sūrah Al-Qasas*, 28:9

The difference between the two opposing narratives here is that the Pharaoh chose to take matters into his own hands on the assumption that he was in control. The mother of Prophet Moses عليه السلام submitted that she was in no position to do anything. Instead, she placed her trust and tawakkul in God Almighty! The result was clearly in her favour, as her child was safe.

So, turn to God, because if there is anyone who can create possibilities out of seemingly impossible scenarios, it is He, the Almighty, and what may seem impossible for us, is nothing is impossible for Him!

To resume the discussion: being a mother, the next morning restlessness was setting in and she required some kind of closure as per the Qur’anic explanation,

وَأَصْبَحَ فُؤَادُ أُمِّ مُوسَىٰ فَرِعًا ۗ إِن كَادَتْ لَتَشْدِيَ بِهِ لَوْلَا أَن رَّبُّنَا عَلَىٰ قَلْبِهَا لِتَكُونَ مِنَ
الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

“The next day, Moses’ mother felt a void in her heart—if We had not strengthened it to make her one of those who believe, she would have revealed everything about him—”¹²

This is the beauty of the truth of the Qur’anic message. It did not sugar-coat the story by depicting the mother of Prophet Moses عليه السلام as some kind of robot believer! She was a mother! She carried this child! Yes, she placed her trust in God, but she still had to deal with the human emotions of the situation, but God Almighty strengthened her

¹² Sūrah Al-Qasas, 28:10

heart, and as a result, her belief was affirmed once more. Here the Qur'an draws attention to;

- a) Human nature
- b) The heart
- c) Belief

Belief is something that resides in the heart and the heart must, therefore, be checked and rechecked constantly to keep things in perspective. The Qur'an also told us that to attain the much-coveted tranquillity which the human being is constantly searching for, the heart must be trained to remember God Almighty each step of the way,

الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ ۗ أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

“Such are the ones who believe (in the message of the Prophet) and whose hearts find rest in the remembrance of Allāh. Surely in Allāh’s remembrance do hearts find rest.”¹³

Humankind is constantly in search of either wealth or knowledge. The student wants a loan or a bursary to acquire knowledge in university, in order to pursue a career to acquire wealth, to find solace, yet wealth brings added stress and knowledge brings added responsibility and still, the pursuer is searching for solace! The Qur'an remedied this situation 1400 years ago when it informed us that tranquillity will only be attained in those hearts in which there is a deep

¹³ Sūrah Ar-Ra'd, 13:28

connection with God. Only then, will we be in a position in which we will readily ‘accept’ the laws decreed by Him!

Resuming the story of the mother of the Prophet Moses عليه السلام, she then sent her daughter to gather information on the whereabouts of her child (28:11). The daughter found out that her baby brother was now in the care of the very Pharaoh who had wanted to slaughter him. Even more concerning was the fact that the child refused to accept the milk of the wet nurses and was thus distressed.

This of course further distressed his foster mother (the wife of the Pharaoh) as she had adopted the baby as her own. Nurse after nurse attempted to feed him, but the baby refused to ingest the milk, and the anxiety of the foster mother must have increased until the baby’s sister found her way to the palace and made a suggestion, as explained in the following verse of the Qur’an,

وَحَرَمْنَا عَلَيْهِ الْمَرَاضِعَ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَقَالَتْ هَلْ أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ أَهْلِ بَيْتٍ يَكْفُلُونَهُ لَكُمْ وَهُمْ لَهُ نَصْحُونَ

“And we ordained that he refused to suckle at first, until (His sister came up and) said; “Shall I point out to you the people of a house that will nourish and bring him up for you and be sincerely attached to him?”¹⁴

Seeing as though she was in a desperate situation, the wife of the Pharaoh agreed for the baby to be suckled by the proposed person and now, unlike with all previous wet-nurses, the baby accepted the bosom of this supposed wet-nurse and finally ingested the nourishing milk. In this way, the baby was returned to the arms of his mother and the

¹⁴ *Sūrah Al-Qasas, 28:12*

promise of God Almighty was fulfilled in a previously unfathomable way!

At the beginning of this remarkable story, God's command to the newborn's mother was to cast the child in the river but not before 'suckling' him. This seemingly insignificant detail in the story turned out to be one of the most vital elements of the narrative because the command to suckle the baby not only ensured he would be silent and protected, but also that he would become familiar with the milk of his mother. He would, therefore, submit to the will of God by not accepting the milk of any other wet-nurse! Earlier in the chapter, the immediate wisdom of that command was elucidated, whilst the above outlines the ultimate wisdom within that promise.

This is just one of the 'endless' possibilities which can be experienced if one is willing to place one's absolute trust in the power and sheer wisdom of God!

3 Points of Insightful Importance - The outcome of the two main characters in this Qur'anic account is clear for the contemplative reader. The Pharaoh 'believed' that because he commanded a large army, and that the people upon whom he was targeting his oppression were unable to defend themselves, that he would fulfill his tyrannical objectives with relative ease. He placed his trust in his wealth and command. The mother of Prophet Moses عليه السلام on the other hand possessed no wealth or support as she was a slave of the Pharaoh, but she placed her trust upon the One who has ultimate control over the affairs of humankind in every regard!

The events of this narrative stand to further bring into perspective a vital verse about the reward of placing one's trust in God because the mother of Moses عليها السلام was;

- 1) in a desperate predicament from which there seemed no way out,
- 2) already in poverty (due to slavery.)

Human beings today find themselves at intermittent instances being in 'tight corners', feeling that there is no way out of their societal, psychological, or financial difficulties.

With the above two pointers in mind, as well as the story of the tawakkul of the mother of Prophet Moses عليها السلام, the Qur'an states,

وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا وَيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ ۗ وَمَنْ يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ

*"...and whoever is conscious of God, He will create a way out (for them) and provide for them in a manner beyond expectation. And whoever relies on Allāh – then Allāh is Sufficient for him."*¹⁵

In the end, not only was her child returned to her as per the promise of God Almighty, but her economic status was also elevated as she was now the nanny of the adopted child of the Pharaoh, and in effect again a present mother to her son. Glory be to God (Subhāanallāh) How amazing are His methods!

A few points of insight arise from the verse,

¹⁵ Sūrah At-Talāq, 65:2-3

Firstly, a believer is to place his unwavering trust and tawakkul in God Almighty for one's sustenance (rizq). One of the biggest concerns in the world today pertains to 'provision' for ourselves and our families. Thus, in the pursuit of financial stability, many Muslims tend to become distressed in their situation, and, depending on how bad the situation becomes, one, can sometimes 'gamble' one's Imān (faith) away by the decisions we make. As stated earlier, relying on God Almighty should be as easy as breathing for a believer, but when we place our reliance on natural causation, then we are bound to be disappointed, because the creation is unlike the Creator as we are limited by the confines which the Creator has decreed for His creation. Unfortunately, human nature is such that we think we are 'okay' as long as natural causation is in our favour, and only once things start going wrong for us, do we turn to God. When things normalize once more, then we suddenly 'forget' God. This is incorrect on our part. The Qur'an reminds us,

وَاللَّهُ خَيْرُ الرَّازِقِينَ

*"and Allāh is the best of providers."*¹⁶

All that is required is for us is to place our unwavering trust in Him. There are many Muslims out there who have been blessed with great wealth and have traveled the world showing no signs of ceasing their pursuit to explore it, yet they have made no attempt or intention to complete their obligation of performing the Hajj (pilgrimage) to the Holy City of Mecca. On the other hand, some people barely manage to pay their bills at the end of each month, and as per their admittance;

¹⁶ Sūrah Al-Jumuaḥ, 62:11

they say “Shaykh? I have been pining to complete my Hajj and I made the intention but only God knows where the money came from, and which people came forward to help me, and now I have come to tell you that I am leaving for Hajj!”

Secondly, a point of extreme importance arising from the story of the mother of Prophet Moses عليه السلام exhibits how her socio-economic status rose from being a slave in hiding, to being a resident in the palace of the Pharaoh. The previously cited verse (footnote 15) explained a matter of vital importance to believers in the modern age,

“And whoever is conscious of God, He will create a way out (for them) and provide for them in a manner beyond expectation. And whoever relies on Allāh – then Allāh is Sufficient for him.”

On face value, coupled with what has been explained thus far in the narrative, this verse seems quite straightforward to understand. However, upon contemplation of the precise placement of it in the Qur’ān, and furthermore when it is compared to many of the situations common in society today, it appears the true meaning of the verse has been forgotten amongst Muslims.

This particular verse is located in Sūrah At-Talāq, and Talāq refers to the Islāmic system of divorce. The secular judicial systems today have initiated a ‘maintenance’ court for spouses to claim the ‘rights’ of the spouse and child after divorce. What is sad to note is that former couples invest vast amounts of money and time to ‘fight’ their spouses who claim and then counterclaim, to get what they believe is their ‘due’. In the process, the children born from the marriage are caught between a rock and a hard place. Campaigns of vilification commence between

spouses, and the children become the audience in the entire ordeal, sometimes even having to appear in the court as well.

God Almighty is alerting the believer that it is better in the case of Talāq (divorce) or any other case in general, to rather place one's tawakkul in Him as the ultimate provider to find a way out of a distressing situation instead of placing our trust in a legal system which may be corrupted. If our dear sisters, in particular, place their tawakkul in God Almighty, considering His divine advice was revealed in a chapter dedicated to Talāq (divorce), then the courtrooms would be less frequented by Muslims - who are viewed - fighting each other for worldly means. Equally, if irresponsible and uncaring husbands were placed before the court of God Almighty, they would never be able to escape His judgment, and the fears of divorced mothers would be alleviated.

It is clear that 1400 years later, the Qur'ān is still schooling us on how to navigate the journey of life without the unnecessary stresses we bring upon ourselves. May God Almighty guide us to those choices which are pleasing to Him!

Thirdly, the narrative regarding one of the world's most revered mothers and her son further stands to prove that the only true promise is the promise of God, and just as how He brought a mother and baby together again from a seemingly impossible situation, He can do a great many marvellous things for you too.

So, take the ultimate trust fall, because even though the road may be misted, God will clear a path from an unknown source in an unimaginable way. All that remains is to be conscious of His presence

and to place your unwavering tawakkul in Him, and He will find a way out for you too!

تَوَكَّلْتُ عَلَى اللَّهِ

“Upon Allāh do I Rely”



لَوْ أَنَّكُمْ تَوَكَّلْتُمْ عَلَى اللَّهِ حَقَّ تَوَكُّلِهِ لَرَزَقْنَاكُمْ كَمَا يَرْزُقُ الطَّيْرَ تَغْدُو خِمَاصًا وَتَرُوحُ بِطَانًا

“If you were to rely upon Allāh with the reliance He is due, you would be given provision like the bird; They go out hungry in the morning and come back with full bellies in the evening.”

(Sunan Ibn Mājah, Hadīth 4303)

Chapter Three

All's Well That Ends Well

“Many of us have been in situations when our world has been rocked by the conspiratorial ways of evil people whose vile *plots and plans* stemming from jealousy, envy, and enmity cause others great harm in the process. Hence the story in this chapter acts as a beacon of hope for those victims of jealousy who must revisit this narrative and must place their tawakkul in God Almighty with the hope that His plan is the ultimate plan and will prevail in the end!”

“Leave me alone! Why are you doing this? What have I ever done to you?” are the repetitive cries of the little boy, as the village bullies carry him aloft whilst some of them attempt to muffle the echoes of his voice in fear of their plot being revealed. “Where are you taking me?” asks the boy again and again. “Kill him! Kill him now and be done with it!” says one of the ten boys. “Yes, Yes!” Agree some, but others argue, “No! We cannot!” And so, they tie him up and deliberate until they agree to cast him into The Hollow. “The Hollow?” asks one of the ten boys, for he is just as afraid as his prisoner is by the very mention of that name. Under the dark cover of night, the young scoundrels were provided with the perfect opportunity and they carry their little prisoner far beyond the borders of the village until they reach the infamously old and ghastly edges of the rim of The Hollow, the oldest, deepest, and therefore darkest well in all of the land! “Cast him in and let us have what is ours,” says one of them. And so, ten boys, deaf to the human cries of their little prisoner, cast the boy into the depths of the dark well...”

Many of us have been in a situation similar to this, whereby people stand against us with a collective enmity that sees them conspire to ‘work us out’ of the system. This happens in either our work environment, at school, or even in large families. Such people ‘muffle’ our voices by oppressing us, and by creating scenarios in which we cannot voice our opinions for fear of the repercussions. Their jealousy, envy, and enmity cause them to become blind to the human elements that bind us, as well as the implications of their actions. In the end, they leave us in a ‘dark state of mind’ suffering from depression and stress.

In other cases, people may ‘react’ to this situation in an aggressive way, and this too has its repercussions. Many people, who, when faced with evil envious folk reach a point of no return and engage their

detractors by an equally angry verbal or physical response, and in the process end up being baited into losing their jobs on account of their reaction.

Either way, psychological, and physical trauma is suffered by victims of jealous ‘colleagues’ and other bullies, but what if, just what if, there was a way to respond, without responding?

Allāh Almighty tells us that the Qur’an is a book which has been sent to fulfill various functions, one of which is,

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ

“Indeed, We have sent it down as an Arabic Quran so that you may exercise your reason”¹⁷

Incidentally, Sūrah Yūsuf is the very chapter in which the above verse is located, and it tells us through the story of Yusuf عليه السلام how to respond without responding. To understand how to accomplish that, one must place one’s tawakkul or trust in the message of this Qur’an whilst also exercising our God-given reason, and simply leave the rest to God Almighty!

According to the Islāmic tradition, Prophet Yūsuf¹⁸ عليه السلام was the son of Prophet Ya’qūb عليه السلام, who had ten sons from one wife and two sons from another. These 12 sons make up the founding fathers of the ‘Sons

¹⁷ Sūrah Yūsuf, 12:2

¹⁸Joseph the son of Jacob, son of Isaac who was the second son of Abraham and younger brother of Ishmael in biblical tradition as well as the Islāmic tradition.

of Israel' or 'Israelites', thus the chapter is located - for those who apply 'reason' - in the 12th juz (section) of the Qur'ān, at the 12th chapter and sub-divided into 12 rukū's or parts.

This story is uniquely narrated in the Qur'ān and is the only narrative that has been discussed in one chapter alone and in chronological order. Of course, the chapter named itself as 'Ahsanul Qasas' (the most beautiful of stories), and the analysis from the perspective of tawakkul alone is clear for its wondrous beauty. Hence, the story of Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام is explained with such detail and eloquence in the chapter that there was no need to repeat it elsewhere in the Qur'ān.

It must be clarified that this chapter in our book is in no way a historical account, nor an attempt to engage in exegesis (Tafsīr) of this Qur'ānic chapter. Rather, we will approach the narrative purely from the perspective of understanding tawakkul and reliance on God Almighty.

According to the scholars, Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام, was from his father's second wife and was believed to be a boy of exceedingly handsome countenance, who was dearly loved by his father. This caused his ten-step-siblings to harbour a fit of ingrained jealousy which eventually led to a deep-seated hatred that caused them to later plot his abduction and his death.

To prepare him for his test, the young Yūsuf عليه السلام was shown a dream by God in which he saw 11 stars, the sun, and moon prostrate to him (12:4). Being a prophet of God, his father was well-aware of the jealousy of his sons and advised young Yūsuf عليه السلام not to disclose his

dream to any of his brothers advising him that the devil is indeed an open enemy (12:5).

Here the Qur’ān teaches us to not disclose our dreams and plans to the world, because the cunning ways of the devil are such that he can make even your kin an enemy of yours at times.

The growing jealousy of the brothers caused them to plot the destruction of their younger stepbrother and whilst some had opted to kill him, others opted to instead banish him, so that the attention of their father would no longer need to be on young Yūsuf عليه السلام and would be refocused on them once more (12:9).

So, they agreed to approach their father and seek his permission to take young Yūsuf عليه السلام with them to play in the wilderness, and so they ‘played’ the part of ‘well-wishers’ to convince their father to allow them to do so.

أَرْسَلَهُ مَعَنَا غَدًا يَرْتَعِ وَيَلْعَبُ وَآثًا لَهُ لَحْفِظُونَ

“Send him out with us tomorrow that he may enjoy himself and play while we will be there, standing guard over him.”¹⁹

The Qur’ān divulges to its reader the conspiratorial traits of jealous folk. They are masters in false promises. When someone wants to bring you down, they will ‘promise’ to assist you in a work-related task, to make you believe they have your best interests at heart, but when the time comes to deliver on their promises, they present themselves to you

¹⁹ Sūrah Yūsuf, 12:12

with a prepared speech with all the acting methods they know (12:16-17) to convince you otherwise.

Resuming the discussion, against his better judgment Prophet Ya'qūb ﷺ allowed his beloved Yūsuf ﷺ to leave with the boys (12:13), and along the way, they removed his shirt to use as 'evidence' later (12:18). Thereafter they cast him into a deep dark well as the Qur'an states,

فَلَمَّا ذَهَبُوا بِهِ وَأَجْمَعُوا أَن يَجْعَلُوهُ فِي غَيَابَتِ الْجُبِّ وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِ لَتُنَبِّئَنَّهُمْ بِأَمْرِهِمْ هَذَا وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ

"So when they went away with Joseph and decided to cast him in the bottom of the dark pit, We revealed to Joseph: "Surely a time will come when you will remind them of their deed. They know nothing about the consequence of what they are doing."²⁰

Here, begins the deep lesson on tawakkul. People talk about this story, but do they ponder its deep meanings? If this story was a movie, Muslims would be blogging about this 'scene' and posting their comments on how emotional it was on their Twitter feeds and creating memes about it on Instagram to invoke an emotive message! "This is Oscar-worthy", they would say. Alas! The drama of this scene has been in 'script' for 1400 years for us to connect with on an emotional level to derive intellectual benefit as well. Yet we have failed dismally to connect with it.

Here is a boy, whose own 'family' left him for dead in the gutters. These are the people who should be taking care of him, but such is jealousy, that it blinds the intellect to all 'reason'. Can you imagine? This

²⁰ Sūrah Yūsuf, 12:15

young boy feeling good and confident about himself because he is out and about with his brothers, suddenly given a rude awakening to the harsh realities of life when his shirt is forcefully removed and his body exposed? And then before he knows it, he is all alone, cold in a deep dark well! Will he make it out of this well? Would he ever see his father again? So many questions must have gone through his young mind at the time!

Contemplatively, many of us have been in situations when our world has been rocked by the conspiratorial ways of evil people whose vile *plots and plans* stemming from jealousy, envy, and enmity cause others great harm in the process.

Hence this story acts as a beacon of hope for those victims of jealousy and enmity. Such people must revisit this narrative and place their tawakkul in God Almighty with the hope that His plan is the ultimate plan and will prevail in the end!

This story is also a reminder for the perpetrators too,

لَقَدْ كَانَ فِي يُوسُفَ وَأَخْوَتِهِ آيَاتٍ لِّلسَّالِفِينَ

“In Joseph and his brothers, there are certainly signs for the seekers.”²¹

Many readers fail to realize that whilst Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام is the protagonist of the story, God Almighty knows that even ‘jealous’ people may sometimes open the Qur’ān, and when they do, then the antagonists of this narrative may resonate with their personal behaviour, and so it acts as a warning for them as well.

²¹ *Sūrah Yūsuf, 12:7*

For the perpetrators, the story stands to remind them that sometimes the matter they pursue was never in their hands to begin with, irrespective of how meticulously they may have planned it. In the end, God is the ultimate planner and He will not allow the unjust to roam free without bringing their 'hidden' agenda to light. So, if you plot and plan against someone, beware! It will only be a matter of time before your exposure is at hand.

For the victims who are continuously oppressed verbally, emotionally, or physically by vile jealous archetypes, this story exhibits the possibility of what may become of your character arc in your story if you simply tread in the footsteps of this prophet of God because an analysis of the entire story of Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام reveals that never once did he complain about his situation, and every time the people around him planned his destruction, he reacted by placing his trust in God Almighty. As a result, he was victorious in the end. Thus, if you find yourself in a dark place, the advice is to bear patience and trust in God, for He sees from a vantage point beyond our limited periphery of perception.

In verse 15, God states that whilst Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام was cast into a dark pit of a lonely well, we are to remember that he was not alone! God was with him that day as He is with us now! He inspired young Yūsuf عليه السلام informing him that in the end, the matter would be set straight in a marvellous manner (12:15), and so it came to be in the end as we shall soon exhibit - God Willing.

Indeed, Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام placed his reliance and trust in God Almighty to such a degree, that if one is to read the remaining 96 verses from verse 15 onwards, not once does Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام launch an inquisition of 'revenge' or demand 'justice' against his brothers

throughout his life, even when he has the power to do so. This is because when a person truly places their tawakkul in God Almighty, then they leave the decree to Him and merely abide by His law for ultimate justice to ultimately prevail.

After leaving their brother for dead, they returned to their father and presented the shirt of Yūsuf عليه السلام to him stained with fake blood from an animal they had slaughtered to make the lie (that he had been attacked by an animal) more believable. The response of their father is recorded,

وَجَاءُوا عَلَى قَمِيصِهِ بِدَمٍ كَذِبٍ ۚ قَالَ بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ أَنفُسُكُمْ أَمْرًا فَصَبِرْ سَمِيلًا ۖ وَاللَّهُ الْمُسْتَعَانُ عَلَى مَا تَصِفُونَ

“And they brought his shirt stained with fake blood; he said, “On the contrary – your hearts have fabricated an excuse for you; therefore patience is better, and from Allāh I seek help against the matters that you relate.”²²

The response of Prophet Ya’qūb عليه السلام was one of distrust, but it is important to notice how he did not resort to interrogate his children, even over the disappearance of his beloved child. Instead, he chose to place his trust in God Almighty and to *remain patient* and forbearing as he believed that God would reveal the truth in time.

In the meantime, a passing caravan of people in search of water stopped by the well and after lowering a bucket into the well, soon realized there was a boy inside (12:18). As it turned out, they were slave traders, and they smuggled young Yūsuf عليه السلام out of Palestine and sold him in the slave markets of Egypt to one of its ministers (12:19). The

²² *Sūrah Yūsuf, 12:18*

minister took him home and introduced him to his wife, instructing her that he should be maintained honourably (21:21).

Retrospectively, it is important to note at this juncture that when Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام was cast into the well, he was a free person, and when he exited the well, he was now reduced to being a slave.

But it was at that moment when he entered the house of the Azīz (minister) of Egypt that God Almighty exhibits His Wisdom and Might in controlling the affairs of all things,

وَكُنَّا مَكَّنَّا يُوسُفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلِنُعَلِّمَهُ مِن تَأْوِيلِ الْأَحَادِيثِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ عَلِيمٌ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

“...Thus did We establish Yūsuf (Joseph) in the land, that We might teach him the interpretation of events. And God has full power and control over His Affairs, but most of men know not.”²³

This statement is profound since it explains the deeper mechanism of tawakkul. This story and the story of our lives are unfolding according to the plan of God, and He has a plan for all of us. We can run from it as much as we want but in the end, He has full control over His affairs. The presence of Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام in Egypt was always part of the plan of God Almighty as He stated “...Thus did We establish Yūsuf (Joseph) in the land, that We might teach him the interpretation of events...” clarifying that it was always the plan for him to be in Egypt, while simultaneously foreshadowing that his services in the interpretations of dreams may very well be the purpose for his presence there.

²³ Sūrah Yūsuf, 12:21

Before this, Prophet Ya'qūb ﷺ did not want Prophet Yūsuf ﷺ to disclose his dream in fear that his brothers may become 'jealous' and cause him serious harm. As advised by his father, young Yūsuf ﷺ did not disclose his dream to his brothers, yet still, their jealousy led them to harm him, and that which his father feared and tried to avoid - by advising young Yūsuf ﷺ - was rendered null and void in the end.

The brothers wanted to get rid of Prophet Yūsuf ﷺ because they were jealous of their father's great love for him. They thought that if he was out of the way, that their father would love them more (12:9), but their actions set off a series of events that caused their father to mourn the loss of his son and distrust them even more. Hence, the matter which they were seeking to dispel through evil deeds and their devious plot worked against them in the end.

God Almighty is reminding the reader of the Qur'ān to not be unmindful of His Power and Wisdom, and that no matter how much effort we may place upon a project to materialize, if God Almighty does not decree it so, it will not come to fruition.

Meanwhile, the minister's wife began to fall in love with Prophet Yūsuf ﷺ and one day, whilst her husband was away, she shut the door and invited him towards adultery. He rejected her offer, sought refuge in God, and reminded her of her husband, by informing her that people with unjust motives are never prosperous (12:23).

He raced towards the exit and she chased after him, grabbing hold of his shirt from behind, tearing it in the process. Suddenly they were met by her husband and another person accompanying him.

Caught in this predicament, the wife accused Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام of having an evil intention with her and demanded that he be punished for his actions (12:24-25). Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام objected that it was she who had acted upon evil intentions. A member of the household brought about a solution to this dilemma and exercised his *rational faculty* by stating that if the shirt is torn from the front then the wife is truthful (because it would prove that she tried fighting him off). If the shirt is torn from behind, then it means that Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام was telling the truth (because it proves that he was running away from her and she was pulling him towards adultery by the back of his shirt). When the minister saw that the shirt was torn from behind, he acknowledged the deception of his wife, thus conceding his wife's guilt and Prophet Yūsuf's عليه السلام innocence (12:27-29).

It must be clarified here that the minister did not take action against his wife because he was considered amongst the elite in society and such news about his family may have created a negative image, and in politics, it would have opened the doors of ruin to his credibility. Instead, he asked his wife to repent for her sins and for Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام to forget that the entire ordeal had ever occurred (12:29).

The news of the minister's wife having fallen in love with a handsome slave had reached the ears of some of the elite women folk who began to gossip about it (12:30). The minister's wife decided to invite them to her home to exhibit Prophet Yūsuf's عليه السلام beauty to them so that they could understand her reasons for loving him. As it happened, they were overwhelmed by his beauty, addressing him as an 'angel' (12:31).

They too were interested in engaging in unlawful acts with him and the minister's wife explained that, just like them, she had become weak

and that *he was innocent*. She further indicated that Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام would be ‘imprisoned’ (12:32). The choice to cast him into prison - knowing well that he was innocent - was in all probability to safeguard themselves from a smear campaign that might destroy their socio-economic status especially since the wives of other elite husbands were also implicated.

Choices! Choices! Choices!

It is at this point, that Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام knew that he was about to undergo yet another immense trial in life and, even though he was innocent, that he would be imprisoned. Logically, there is no way he could fight the system with the kind of contacts at the disposal of the ministers. Thus, he progressed to place his tawakkul in God Almighty once more,

قَالَ رَبِّ السِّجْنُ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِمَّا يَدْعُونَنِي إِلَيْهِ ۖ وَإِلَّا تَصْرِفْ عَنِّي كَيْدَهُنَّ أَصْبُ إِلَيْهِنَّ وَأَكُن مِّنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ

“He said, “O my Lord! Prison is dearer to me than the deed they invite me to; and if You do not repel their deceit away from me, I may incline towards them and be unwise.”²⁴

Analyzing the story thus far, the reader will agree that the one genuinely good guy in the narrative is the one who is constantly undergoing difficulty. Here, he is being tested with one of the most carnal desires of any human being, and still, for his ‘correct’ choice, he is being punished? It would seem so to someone who cannot see beyond the timeline for the ultimate result, and that is a position common to most of us when faced with tough decisions in life. We are often faced

²⁴ Sūrah Yūsuf, 12:33

with either making the ‘correct’ decision to appease others, or making the ‘right’ decision to please God Almighty.

Good people will always be tested with two paths. One path will earn the wrath of God in the Hereafter but bring about temporary goodness in the form of financial freedom and other comforts in this mundane world. The latter path may bring about difficulty in the world, but will earn the pleasure of God Almighty and herald rewards in the Hereafter as the Qur’an states,

وَهَدَيْنَاهُ النَّجْدَيْنِ

“And (have We not) Guided him to two paths (good and evil)”²⁵

The problem is, and always has been, one of choice. Most of the time, choices are made based on our own ‘knowledge’ of a situation, but once we realize that our knowledge is limited and that God’s knowledge is unlimited, then we will never question the choices we must make to fulfill the commands of God, because we see only the pixel and Allāh The All-Knowing has the full picture. The Qur’an reminds us of just how little we know about the ripple effects of the choices we make and how unaware we are of the inevitable outcomes;

وَعَسَىٰ أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ وَعَسَىٰ أَنْ تُحِبُّوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ شَرٌّ لَّكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

“...and it is possible that you hate a thing which is better for you; and it is possible that you like a thing which is bad for you; and Allāh knows, and you do not know.”²⁶

²⁵ Sūrah Al-Balad, 90:10

Somebody is presented with an opportunity to make a lot of money, but not necessarily the legal way. The person evaluates the situation by worldly gains and follows through with it, knowing that it is wrong in every way. Sure, the person makes a bundle of money, but maybe in five or even ten years later when the police come knocking on the door, then there is only remorse and regret for a decision the person knew they should not have made. The verse above is teaching us that we have no clue, nor power over the future, and that realization will become evident by the end of this chapter.

Resuming the discussion, when the minister initially purchased Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام from the slavers, he clarified that the young man should be treated ‘honourably’, yet now, when his own reputation is at stake, he is treating Yūsuf عليه السلام in a dishonourable manner. Such is the way of people at times. We will protect ourselves even at the expense of the innocent amongst us. Little did the ministers and their spouses realize that the plan of God Almighty was in motion.

Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام was placed in a very difficult situation, yet he chose to be an *innocent prisoner* instead of a *freed sinner* because this world is but a prison for a believer and a paradise for a disbeliever²⁷ so think carefully about the choices you make.

God Almighty heard the plea of Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام (12:34) and although the accusers had seen the ‘signs’ of his innocence, they imprisoned him, where he remained for a time determined by God Almighty (12:35).

²⁶ *Sūrah Al-Baqarah*, 2:216

²⁷ *Sahih Muslim*, Hadith Number 2956

He was viewed as a virtuous man by his fellow inmates (12:36) who had experienced some strange dreams and enlisted his expertise to decipher its deeper meaning. He advised that one of them would find themselves put to death and the other would gain freedom as well as the trust of the king (12:41). He requested the one who would gain his freedom to remember him in the company of the king, but Satan caused the man to forget his promise to Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام and so he spent a few more years in prison (12:42).

One night, the king saw a strange dream of seven thin cows eating seven fat cows and seven green ears of corn and seven dry ones. He demanded from his advisors an interpretation (12:43), to which they responded that it was proving to be a quagmire of confusion to them, admitting that the interpretation of dreams was beyond their skill-set (12:44). At this moment, the former prisoner who was freed finally remembered the ability of Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام to interpret dreams, and he asked the king to allow him to seek its interpretation on his behalf (12:45).

Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام interpreted the dream by clarifying that there would be seven years of good crops followed by seven years of drought, which would then be followed by a year of abundant rain (12:47-49). Impressed with the interpretation, the king sent a bearer to Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام summoning him to the palace,

وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ ائْتُونِي بِهِ ۗ فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُ الرَّسُولُ قَالَ ارْجِعْ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ فَسَأَلْهُ مَا بَالُ النَّسُوءِ الَّتِي قَطَعْنَا
أَيْدِيَهُنَّ ۗ إِنَّ رَبِّي بِكَيْدِهِنَّ عَلِيمٌ

“And the king said, “Bring him to me”; so when the bearer came to him, Yūsuf said, “Return to your lord and ask him what is the status of the women who had cut their hands; indeed my Lord knows their deception.”²⁸

Imagine being invited to a crime and then because of your rejection to that crime, you are then wrongfully imprisoned for several years, and finally, the most authoritative person in the land summons you to him - would you refuse that opportunity to regain your honour? Highly unlikely!

Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام was not interested in ‘freedom’ the way we view and covet it. Instead, his priority was to ensure that the truth prevailed. The king’s inquisition revealed his innocence as the minister’s wife admitted that she had attempted to entice him and not vice versa (12:51). Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام explained two basic reasons for his request to clarify the matter,

ذَٰلِكَ لِيَعْلَمَ أَنِّي لَمْ أَخُنْهُ بِالْغَيْبِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي كَيْدَ الْخَائِنِينَ

Said Yūsuf, “I did this so that the governor may realize that I did not betray him behind his back, and Allāh does not let the deceit of betrayers be successful.”²⁹

Firstly, he wanted to ensure that if the minister harboured any doubt upon his righteousness, that it should be removed in a just manner, and secondly, he wanted to remind those who plotted against him of how the plan of God Almighty prevails in the end.

²⁸ Sūrah Yūsuf, 12:50

²⁹ Sūrah Yūsuf, 12:52

Those who accused him, even after seeing the evidence, used the collective power at their disposal to cast an innocent man into prison to save their reputation. Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام placed his tawakkul in God Almighty and ‘accepted’ his predicament knowing that justice would eventually prevail if he relied on the ultimate Judge, instead of a corrupted system. In the end, the very thing which they feared became the fundamental factor that not only acquitted him of the false accusations against him, but also ensured he gained the goodwill of the king.

Once more, we notice that no matter how much we try to avoid something, in the end, if God Almighty wills for it to occur for us, then there is no stopping it, irrespective of how much effort it placed in attempting to avert it!

Points of Insight – Retrospectively, it is important to note two very profound aspects of this beautiful story.

Firstly, as mentioned earlier, when his brothers cast him into the well, he was a ‘free’ person. When he exited the well, he became a ‘slave’. Here, he entered the prison a ‘slave’ and exited a ‘free’ man. The lesson deduced is that we have no control over the situation we find ourselves in, hence we must submit to God Almighty and remain in acceptance of whatever situation we find ourselves in, knowing that our tawakkul has been affirmed in He who knows what is best for us.

Secondly, Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام entered the well as a result of unjustified hatred, and yet he also ended up being a slave. He entered prison as a result of love, and then ended up becoming a minister of the king.

The vital lesson here amongst the floriferous buds in the garden of tawakkul to be noted here is that although a situation may seem somewhat similar in different contexts, the outcome is reliant upon God Almighty!

Similarly, you may do something today and end up with a particular outcome and you may do the exact thing some years later and end up with a completely different outcome altogether. This is because there are so many cogs at work that are beyond human cognizance. Thus, we must place our trust and tawakkul in God Almighty to grant us the best possible outcome in all situations and at all times.

Who would have thought that a young boy from a different continent altogether would be needed to interpret the dreams of two prisoners, ultimately safeguarding countless lives from hunger and in the process, saving the kingdom from its doom? There is only one answer, and that is, it could only be by the divine directive of the One who has foreknowledge of every minuscule detail in the past, and every possible outcome required in the future, who has complete authority over all of those inter-connected matters. Such can only be said about God Almighty, who is in absolute control over the affairs of everything in existence!

Resuming the discussion on the narrative, the king took Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام as a personal advisor (12:54). He requested from the king that he be placed in charge of the treasury, and so he was now in a position of authority,

وَكَذَلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوسُفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ يَتَّبِعُونَ مِنْهَا حَيْثُ يَشَاءُ نُصِيبُ بِرَحْمَتِنَا مَنْ نَشَاءُ وَلَا نُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

“And this is how We gave Yūsuf the control over that land; to stay in it wherever he pleased; We may convey Our mercy to whomever We will, and We do not waste the wages of the righteous.”³⁰

Here, God Almighty exhibits to us the answer to the very question which puzzles the limited understanding of the human mind. Our lack of foresight causes us to speculate as to the outcome of every important decision, and so, we calculate risk factors and then decide whether or not to invest our time, effort, or wealth into a project or idea.

In the story of Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام, God Almighty has exhibited a prime example of all the possibilities which could occur from even what we may deem as the most terrible of situations. Sometimes, we may find ourselves tumbling down an abyss of emotional conflict, and when that happens, we must recollect this story and know that whatever difficulty we are facing, if we place our tawakkul in God Almighty, then even if the situation seems to ‘worsen’ on face-value, we should know there may be a bigger plan at play which is far beyond our faculties to fathom.

The story of Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام is further meant to teach us that, in this journey of life, there will be nasty and wicked people, but if we act in accordance to that which is pleasing to God, then He will cause us to rise from the ashes of our supposed defeat into glorious victory.

It further teaches us that the reward of the believer is never wasted, and ultimately the plotters and schemers of this world will be punished in the Hereafter, while the pious believers who affirm their unwavering trust and tawakkul in God will rejoice eternally in His favours. (12:57)

³⁰ *Sūrah Yūsuf, 12:56*

Prophet Yūsuf's ﷺ placement as head of the treasury was to administer preparations for the storage of the crops in anticipation of the seven years of drought foretold in his dream. During the seven good harvesting years, they distributed the crops sparingly to stock up sufficiently for the next seven years.

During that time of severe drought, people from far and wide sought favour from the king of Egypt as, unlike other regions, Egypt had been prepared. News of the additional stock in Egypt then finally reached the land of Palestine, where the brothers of Prophet Yūsuf ﷺ were still residing with their father. The brothers decided to journey to Egypt to acquire some food during this testing time,

وَجَاءَ إِخْوَتُهُ يُوسُفَ فَدَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ فَعَرَفْتَهُمْ وَهُمْ لَهُ مُنْكَرُونَ

“And Yūsuf’s brothers came and presented themselves before him, so he recognized them whereas they remained unaware of him.”³¹

Retrospectively, at the beginning of the story when the brothers cast him into the well, God promises in verse 15 that Yūsuf ﷺ would one day tell them about their dark deed, at a time when they will ‘not know’. Thus, to them, Prophet Yūsuf ﷺ was nothing but a forgotten memory locked deep within the well of their minds.

They did not know what had become of him and, when they arrived at the court of a great king, they had no reason to suspect the king’s minister of being anyone other than whom the king described him to be. Once more, the story proves that if you place your reliance

³¹ Sūrah Yūsuf, 12:58

and tawakkul in God, He will fulfill His promise in an extraordinary way.

Conversing with them, Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام devised a way to reunite with his younger brother, whom the others had probably mentioned when claiming the amount of grain they required. Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام informed them that he would not grant them their required amount of supplies until they returned with their other brother, to which they agreed. Being a 'just' person, he told his assistants to pack their supplies for them without them knowing, in the hope that it would prompt their swift return (12:59-62).

Upon reaching home, they explained the scenario to their father, Prophet Ya'qūb عليه السلام, saying that they would only be granted more supplies if they brought their other brother with them. They then realized that the treasurer of Egypt had nonetheless sent some supplies with them and if they returned with their brother, they could be granted more. Even though he had been generous with them, Prophet Ya'qūb's عليه السلام distrust in them had persisted, and he questioned whether they could be trusted -after they failed to protect his brother Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام before this (12:63-65).

قَالَ لَنْ أُرْسِلَهُ مَعَكُمْ حَتَّى تُؤْتُونِ مَوْثِقًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ لَتَأْتِنَنِي بِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ يُحَاطَ بِكُمْ فَلَمَّا آتَوْهُ مَوْثِقَهُمْ قَالَ اللَّهُ عَلَى مَا نُهَوَّوْا وَكَيْدٌ

“He said: “I will never send him with you until you swear by God that you will bring him back to me, unless all of you are overtaken (by misfortune).” When they had given their promise, he said: “God is witness to our conversation.”³²

At the first incident in the story, upon evidence of his son’s prophethood, when Prophet Ya’qūb ﷺ heard about his son’s dream, he advised Prophet Yūsuf ﷺ not to disclose it to his brothers as he feared some ill-intention on their part. As it happened, what he feared came to pass nonetheless, so the second time around, Prophet Ya’qūb ﷺ placed his tawakkul in God Almighty and exhibited the concept of tawakkul and reliance upon God Almighty by, stating that ultimately God is a witness upon their conversation, and it is He who will ultimately decree the outcome.

The lesson deduced here is that we must adopt this attitude in our daily lives if we wish to experience the best possible result. Thus, even in business transactions, whenever an agreement is struck in our daily dealings, after placing the necessary conditions we must trust in God Almighty and rely on Him for whatever outcome has been decreed. Prophet Ya’qūb ﷺ then advised his children on how to enter the city - for their safety - and then once more reiterated the necessity of tawakkul,

قَالَ يَا بَنِيَّ لَا تَدْخُلُوا مِنْ بَابٍ وَاحِدٍ وَادْخُلُوا مِنْ أَبْوَابٍ مُتَفَرِّقَةٍ وَمَا أُغْنِي عَنْكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِنَّ الْحُكْمَ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَعَلَيْهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُتَوَكِّلُونَ

“And he said, “O my sons! Do not enter all by one gate – and enter by different

³² Sūrah Yūsuf, 12:66

gates; I cannot save you against Allāh; there is no command but that of Allāh; upon Him do I rely; and all those who trust, must rely only upon Him."³³

This verse forms the very essence of the understanding of tawakkul as it exhibits that however much humankind may advise or plan for an expected outcome, there can ultimately be no purposive planning without complete conviction and resolute reliance upon God. This is because all command is His to control! Thus, faith in the supreme power of God Almighty is paramount to our perception and understanding of tawakkul, without which, one will never sincerely be able to develop our tawakkul in God because of 'doubt' regarding His wisdom in what is best for us, and His power to execute His plans.

The brothers adhered to the advice of their father and entered Egypt unharmed (12:68). Here, God Almighty is exhibiting to the reader the *different outcomes* that can be achieved when our tawakkul in Him supersedes the fear of our possible losses, as discussed previously in the comparison of Prophet Yūsuf's ﷺ dream and his father's fear of harm befalling him in contrast to the abovementioned event where he placed his tawakkul in the power and command of God. The latter situation yielded a completely different outcome.

At the first opportunity, Prophet Yūsuf ﷺ confided in his younger brother by revealing his identity, and in the process; reassured him that *all is well* (12:68). He then devised a plan to ensure that his brother remained behind and proceeded to place the king's chalice amidst his brother's traveling items. The guards halted the brothers and the accusation was that there was a thief amongst them (12:70). The

³³ *Sūrah Yūsuf, 12:67*

brothers retorted that their intentions were purely for supplies and nothing else (12:73). The agreed-upon punishment was that the perpetrator would remain behind (12:75) and so, the king's men began to search their belongings,

فَبَدَأَ بِأَوْعِيَّتِهِمْ قَبْلَ وِعَاءِ أَخِيهِ ثُمَّ اسْتَخْرَجَهَا مِنْ وِعَاءِ أَخِيهِ كَذَلِكَ كِدْنَا لِيُوسُفَٰٓءَ ۗ مَا كَانَ لِيَأْخُذَ أَخَاهُ فِي دِينِ الْمَلِكِ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ ۗ نَرْفَعُ دَرَجَاتٍ مِّنْ نَّشَاءٍ ۗ وَفَوْقَ كُلِّ ذِي عِلْمٍ عَلِيمٌ

“Then Joseph began searching their bags before searching his own brother’s bag. Then he brought forth the drinking-cup from his brother’s bag. Thus did We contrive to support Joseph. He had no right, according to the religion of the king (i.e. the law of Egypt), to take his brother, unless Allāh so willed. We exalt whomsoever We will over others by several degrees. And above all those who know is the One Who truly knows.”³⁴

God Almighty explains at this juncture that it is He who possesses the power to exalt in degrees whoever He decrees, and there is great wisdom in His decree over all things in every regard. When a false accusation is made, it is quite humiliating for the accused person, and Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام had already experienced a degrading false accusation made against him, and now, to the rest of the onlookers, his brother had been falsely accused as well. At this point, God Almighty states, *“We exalt whomsoever We will over others by several degrees”*. Meaning that even though something as terrible as a false accusation has been levelled against you, where you will end up as a result of that claim lies in the power of God Almighty. Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام was also accused and he wound up becoming a high-ranking minister. Now his brother is

³⁴ *Sūrah Yūsuf, 12:76*

accused, (as he was accused before), only this time, it was to become a means of goodness.

The lesson here in the subject of tawakkul is that God Almighty can raise you from a situation of utter humiliation to a station of praise. How is this possible? Well, the verse explains that above every possessor of knowledge, is someone more knowledgeable, and ultimately, God is the ‘All-Knowing’ above all. Consequently, we must submit to the fact that we can never truly understand how He plans an outcome as we are lacking in both power and knowledge.

The correlation between tawakkul and knowledge has been consistently highlighted throughout this chapter. This is because knowledge must elevate one’s understanding of things, and there is no greater subject of learning than one which draws us closer to God Almighty. Hence, for us to develop tawakkul, we must submit to the All-Knowing, and trust in His Wisdom to manage our affairs.

The ten brothers had initially spoken ill of their accused brother and even remarked about his brother before him (Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام) accusing him of theft as well. (12:77). This revealed their lingering hatred for him even now, after all these years.

They pleaded that their father was an old man and that it was imperative for them to return home with their brother as they had promised his safe return. They deliberated in private and an elder from amongst them reminded them of their oath they had taken with their father and that they had failed to protect Yūsuf عليه السلام before this. He then decided to remain behind (with the accused brother) and instructed them to tell their father that his son had been accused of stealing and that they were unaware of his actions in relation to the accusations

against him. Prophet Ya'qūb عليه السلام was understandably saddened and disappointed by this news, but once more preferred to adopt beauty in patience, knowing full well that God is not merely 'All-Knowing', but also 'All-Wise'.

Eventually, Prophet Ya'qūb عليه السلام was unable to withhold his grief-stricken state any longer and lamented his sorrow at the loss of Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام (12:78-84). The brothers responded,

قَالُوا تَاللّٰهِ نُنۡتَوٰى تَذَكَّرُ يُوۡسُفَ حَتّٰى تَكُوۡنَ حَرَضًا اَوْ تَكُوۡنَ مِنَ الْيٰۤاۤسِۦفِۦنَ

*They said, "By Allāh, you will keep remembering Yūsuf till your health fails you or you lose your life."*³⁵

The brothers were frustrated that their father was still drowning in the sorrows of losing Yūsuf عليه السلام so many decades later. Retrospectively, the brothers carried out that detestable crime against Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام because they coveted their father's love and attention. But whilst they had accomplished their plot of removing their brother from the close radius of their father, many years later, even with Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام out of the way, the very thing they had been trying to avert came to pass; because even now, it was clear their father would constantly mourn the loss of his beloved son.

Such is the plan of God Almighty; that if you attempt to do a thing, even though you may plot and consider all the 'possibilities' to obtain the result that you desire, God Almighty may have a different plan already set in motion. Thus, place your trust and tawakkul in Him, for He is the ultimate planner!

³⁵ *Sūrah Yūsuf* 12:85

God's Plan Comes to Light

Retrospectively, we stated at the onset of this chapter that the story of Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام and his brothers contains 'signs' for the inquisitor. Hence, we must also derive the lessons of tawakkul from the antagonist's angle before assessing the end-result from the perspective of the protagonist viz. Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام.

The brothers heeded the advice of their father and returned to Egypt, where they pleaded with the minister (Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام) for supplies.

It was at this moment that Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام must have given the brothers a rude awakening when he asked,

قَالَ هَلْ عَلِمْتُمْ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ بِيُوسُفَ وَأَخِيهِ إِذْ أَنْتُمْ جَاهِلُونَ

He said: "Do you know what you did to Joseph and his brother in your ignorance?"³⁶

That statement must have shaken the very foundations of their being as their deed had been done in secrecy, known only between themselves. By this example, the Qur'an depicts the ignorance of humankind, in that when we have a plan in mind, we exhaustively aim to accomplish our objectives regardless of the repercussions it will have on the people around us. Here, God Almighty teaches us that whilst we are ignorant of even the subtlest of things, He is All-Wise.

The brothers responded by asking,

³⁶ Sūrah Yūsuf, 12:89

قَالُوا أَأَنَّكَ لَأَنْتَ يُوسُفُ ۗ قَالَ أَنَا يُوسُفُ وَهَذَا أَخِي ۗ قَدْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْنَا ۗ إِنَّهُ مَن يَتَّقِ وَيَصْبِرْ
فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

*They exclaimed: "Are you indeed Joseph?" He said: "Yes, I am Joseph and this is my brother. Allāh has surely been gracious to us. Indeed whoever fears Allāh and remains patient, Allāh does not allow the reward of such people to go to waste."*³⁷

Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام revealed that he was indeed the very brother whom they had cast into the depths of the well all those decades ago.

Here, it is clear that those who practice patience are reminded that if they endure their tribulations having placed their tawakkul in God Almighty, then just like Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام, justice will eventually prevail by an unimaginable means, provided that we are patient and have tawakkul.

قَالُوا تَاللَّهِ لَقَدْ ءَاثَرَكِ اللَّهُ عَلَيْنَا وَإِن كُنَّا لَخٰطِئِينَ

*They said: "We swear by Allāh! Indeed Allāh has chosen you in preference to us and we were truly guilty."*³⁸

At the beginning of the story, the brothers had looked down upon Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام, seeing him as unworthy of their father's love. Now, after all they had endured, and upon seeing his accomplishments, and knowing that only God Almighty could have saved him from the predicament he was in, they deduced that he must be dear to God. Such is the wisdom of God Almighty, that He can cause a ripple effect of events which will necessitate great lessons via unseen means.

³⁷ Sūrah Yūsuf, 12:90

³⁸ Sūrah Yūsuf, 12:91

Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام depicted the cosmic difference between good and wicked people. Their hatred caused them to attack him and leave him for dead. However, after all their plots against him, he forgave them and prayed to God for their forgiveness (12:92). What would we do in this situation?

After inquiring about the health of his father, he was notified that Prophet Ya'qūb عليه السلام had lost his sight and was deeply saddened by the loss of his son, to which Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام responded,

أَذْهَبُوا بِمِصْرِي هَذَا فَالْقُوهُ عَلَى وَجْهِ أَبِي يَأْتِ بَصِيرًا وَأْتُونِي بِأَهْلِكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ

“Take along this shirt of mine and lay it on my father’s face, his vision will be restored; and bring your entire household to me.”³⁹

The brothers agreed, and the Qur’ān explains that Prophet Ya’qūb عليه السلام instantly recognized the fragrance of his long-lost son (12:94),

فَلَمَّا أَن جَاءَ الْبَشِيرُ أَلْفَهُ عَلَى وَجْهِهِ فَارْتَدَّ بَصِيرًا قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَكُمْ إِنِّي أَنَا مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

“And when the bearer of good news came, he threw Joseph’s shirt over Jacob’s face, whereupon he regained his sight, and said: “Did I not tell you that I know from Allāh what you do not know?”⁴⁰

Points of Insight - As we are informed, the shirt of Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام was placed upon the face of his father, and his eyesight returned. Here, three more invaluable lessons of tawakkul are exhibited.

³⁹ Sūrah Yūsuf, 12:93

⁴⁰ Sūrah Yūsuf, 12:96

Firstly, at the beginning of the story, Prophet Ya'qūb عليه السلام was told by his ten sons that Yūsuf عليه السلام had been eaten by a wolf. Whilst he did not believe his sons, he did not interrogate them and instead adopted sanctuary in sabr (patience) by placing his tawakkul in God Almighty. After enduring many decades of sorrow at the loss of his child and becoming blind in the process, and finally, he was rewarded. So too is the lesson for those who undergo difficulty; that if one adopts tawakkul and is patient, then God Almighty will reward you at a time when you least expect it.

Secondly, tawakkul demands that sometimes, even when God's decree may not seem 'logical', then our response to these 'supposed' illogical decrees are a test of our mettle. Is it not illogical that a mere 'shirt' possesses such properties of shifā (cure) that it can cure blindness? A person who is grounded solely in logic will dismiss the idea as 'preposterous'. However, a person who has complete faith in the power of God Almighty will know that God can even create a shirt as a means of a cure. Similarly, when in difficulty, know that God Almighty can create a means of help from even the most unlikely of objects, thus, instead of complaining about our situation, we must affirm our tawakkul in Him, with the hope that the rewards for our patience will arrive when we need it most.

Thirdly, when we revisit the entire narrative from start to finish, surveying the mention of the word qamīs (shirt) within the story, we find its mention at 3 junctures.

- 1) At the first juncture, it was used as 'evidence' of his death, but here, it was a lie.

- 2) The second time was at the accusation of adultery, and here too it was used as ‘evidence’, but ultimately proved his innocence.
- 3) Now, the third time, it is used as ‘evidence’ that he is alive and well.

Retrospectively, the first time they came to their father with the shirt, they did so to fulfill their plot, bearing bad news of their brother’s death. Now, they came to their father with a shirt, and this time, in a very different manner because they came bearing glad-tidings of him being alive. By this narrative, God Almighty reveals how a scenario can be turned on its head even when the same people and objects are involved. If a true servant of God turns to Him and bears patience, knowing that God knows better, then when the reward is granted, it will be one which is beyond our faculties of perception.

Prophet Ya’qūb عليه السلام and his family made haste for Egypt, and as he entered the city, he placed his trust in God Almighty by praying that they would all reach their destination safe and sound if indeed God Almighty had decreed so (12:99).

وَرَفَعَ أَبَوَيْهِ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ وَخَرُّوا لَهُ سُجَّدًا وَقَالَ يَا أَبَتِ هَذَا تَأْوِيلُ رُؤْيَايَ مِنْ قَبْلُ قَدْ جَعَلَهَا رَبِّي حَقًّا وَقَدْ أَحْسَنَ بِي إِذْ أَخْرَجَنِي مِنَ السِّجْنِ وَجَاءَ بِكُمْ مِنَ الْبَدْوِ مِنْ بَعْدِ أَنْ تَرَجَّعَ الشَّيْطَانُ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَ إِخْوَتِي إِنَّ رَبِّي لَطِيفٌ لِمَا يَشَاءُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ

“And he seated his parents on the throne, and they all prostrated before him; and Yūsuf said, “O my father! This is the interpretation of my former dream; my Lord has made it true; and indeed He has bestowed favour upon me, when He brought me out of prison and brought you all from the village, after Satan had created a

resentment between me and my brothers; indeed my Lord may make easy whatever He wills; undoubtedly He is the All-Knowing, the Wise.”⁴¹

The story of Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام concludes at the point where it began. It all started with a dream and ends now with the fulfillment of that dream⁴². The 11 stars, the sun, and the moon prostrating⁴³ before him had in fact symbolized his 11 brothers and his parents. Now, after all the hardships he had endured, his status as a chosen servant of God was recognized by his family and they honoured him by prostrating (in obeisance) before him.

The story of Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام stands to prove that nobody has control of the outcomes of any situation except that which is by the Will and Decree of God. At each turn of the narrative -aside from the prophets in the story-; everyone was in some way plotting and planning for their own purposes. In the end, all their plans backfired, and God’s plan prevailed. The brothers of Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام harboured immense hatred for him, and wanted him gone or even dead so that they could enjoy their father’s love. As it happened, their ‘plan’ was executed but they did not achieve their goal. In fact, it yielded the opposite;

⁴¹ *Sūrah Yūsuf, 12:100*

⁴² *In literary technique, this is known as ‘Ring Composition’. The Qur’ān has done so with such beauty, that modern writers would marvel at its mastery.*

⁴³ *It is important to note that the prostration here was not for worship but in honour. According to the Islāmic tradition, prostration to anyone besides God Almighty is forbidden. For more details see my book “Stories of the Prophets for the Modern Age – Volume 1 – Discussion under ‘The Rise of Man and the Fall of Satan’*

- His father loved him very much and did not want to be away from him, but in the end, that which he feared came to pass, and he was separated from his son.
- The minister purchased him in the hope that he would be ‘useful’ to them at some point, but in the end, Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام became the conduit through which their conspiratorial ways were exposed.
- The women wanted to solicit an illegal affair with him, and they ‘accused’ him of the very thing they desired of him. In the end, he was acquitted by their ‘admission’ of guilt and their plot was foiled.

All of their plans were, in the end, foiled by a simple dream delivered by God Almighty to the heart of a little boy. Such is the power of God. He can create a ripple effect of events that can educate diverse peoples from different regions over a vast period of time, all through the power of a dream. The plot to cast Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام into the depths of the well proved the saying that “*All’s Well That Ends Well*” is always applicable for those who, in the face of great difficulty, place their unwavering trust and tawakkul in God Almighty.

توكلت على الله

“Upon Allāh do I Rely”



Chapter Four

When All Else Fails, God Prevails!

“In life, we may sometimes be presented with difficult scenarios that test the very fabric of our faith, and at those moments, instead of losing hope by *parting ways* from the correct path, we must *part ways* with those notions that can lead us into the cunning clutches of the awaiting devil.”

“Hide!” whispered the guide, as he advised the already anxious prisoners to pass undetected. Sure, they were imprisoned, but that didn’t mean they were guilty of any crime. They were shackled by the manacles of slavery, and now, after decades, freedom was within sight. It was nightfall, and even though the lack of light made for ideal conditions for a hasty escape, the king’s guards were as vigilant as vultures, alert to even the briskest of winds. But after pulling off a grueling escape from their cells, the morale of the prisoners fluctuated between hope and hopelessness. At that moment, when freedom was merely a stone’s throw away, with the sea on the horizon, suddenly the unwelcomed sounds of the soldiers seemed to be gaining ground from behind. “Where have you led us?” asked some, whilst others agonizingly held their heads in their hands saying, “The way is shut, we are but doomed”. With the sea in front of them, and the soldiers behind, it was time for them to concede defeat as both paths offered nothing but death! An ocean of possibilities halted by the depths of its waters ahead, and a sea of soldiers flowing towards them from behind! Turning to their guide, with looks of sheer disbelief upon their faces, they knew, this was the end... Or was it?”

From a rational perspective, the end of that story appears to be quite clear. When a group of ill-equipped slaves are chased by a royal army and are cornered into ‘submission’, there can be only one outcome. However, to unravel the precise plot of this story, we must cast our attention to its the way it began, as discussed earlier in chapter two.

A ruthless and cunning leader known as the Pharaoh had seen in a dream of a fire blazing from Palestine that would eventually destroy his reign as a ruler. Fearing that prophecy, he decided to kill all males born from families tracing their lineage to Palestine. His kill-order then set off

a series of events in which one mother placed her trust in God, and was then commanded to cast her baby into the river. God Almighty guided the baby to the house of the very same Pharaoh in the end. The baby was adopted into his household as per the request of his noble wife, and he grew up to become the great Prophet of God, Mūsa (Moses) ﷺ!

After some years, this Prophet too had to flee due to an accusation made against him (26:15-21). He reached the area of Madyan, where he laboured for several years under the watchful eye of Prophet Shuayb (Jethro) ﷺ and eventually married his daughter (26:22-28).

Years later, when Prophet Moses ﷺ decided to return to Egypt, en-route during a storm he noticed a fire atop a mountain and he decided to investigate, and perhaps come back with it for his wife (28:29). Upon reaching, he heard a voice call out to him, and the voice said it was that of God, the Lord of All the Universe, who was communicating with him (28:30).

To prove it, God Almighty gifted him at the pivotal moment with a staff that transformed into a serpent, and when Moses ﷺ moved his right hand, it shone radiantly (20:17-22). All these supernatural wonders were not for entertainment. Rather, the objective was for Prophet Moses ﷺ to confront the Pharaoh (20:24), but not to fight him – rather to convince him with miracles. Instead of aggression, Prophet Moses ﷺ was directed by God Almighty to enter into dialogue with Pharaoh, perchance that he may mend his despicable ways (20:43-44).

The lesson to consider here is that although Prophet Moese ﷺ was backed by God Almighty, he was being taught to educate Pharaoh instead of eliminating him.

Contemplatively, what is being exhibited to us, is that just as how Pharaoh was the superpower of the time, commanding a great force and possessing all the riches a person could ever ask for, God Almighty can empower a supposed ‘nobody’ in society to annihilate the arrogant. Your riches, property, wealth, etc. are all a gift from God, and if they are not utilized correctly, then He can take it all away from you just as easily as He bestowed it all upon you, and He can do so at the hands of a supposedly ‘lesser’ person in your view. Thus, we must place our reliance and tawakkul in God, for it is He who controls the outcome of every scenario.

Nonetheless, equipped with only his miraculous walking stick, his radiant right hand and tawakkul in God, Prophet Moses عليه السلام embarked on a journey to take on the superpower of the time. But he had an additional challenge: he knew that to fulfill his task, he would also need to have eloquence and wisdom in speech⁴⁴,

قَالَ رَبِّ اشْرَحْ لِي صَدْرِي وَيَسِّرْ لِي أَمْرِي وَاحْلُلْ عُقْدَةً مِّن لِّسَانِي يَفْقَهُوا قَوْلِي

Said Mūsā, “My Lord, open up my breast for me (with wisdom). And make my task easy for me. And untie the knot of my tongue. In order that they may understand my speech.”⁴⁵

Firstly, imagine being told by God that he is giving you backing by arming you with weapons for the task. Should that not suffice? Yet Prophet Moses عليه السلام still supplicated to God Almighty? The lesson here in the subject of tawakkul is to never become arrogant based on one’s

⁴⁴ See *Stories of the Prophets for the Modern Age – Volume One* – for details on the speech impediment of Prophet Moses عليه السلام.

⁴⁵ *Sūrah Tāhā*, 20:25-28

power and standing in society. Furthermore, it is vital to note that we must continuously 'talk' to our Creator and engage in discussion with Him instead of focusing only on the Arabic supplications without knowing their meaning. The concept of talking to our Creator will be discussed in Chapter Five, God willing.

Secondly, whatever task we face in life, not only must we begin with the name of God for the sake of deriving blessing from it, but we must arrive at the base conclusion that in the end, the task at hand can only be an easy one if we place our reliance and tawakkul in God Almighty to make it easy for us. Without His help, there can be no help that can bring about true benefit from the task or project we have set forth for ourselves. That being stated, ease does not necessarily indicate success, but hardships may be endured as part of the plan decreed by God.

Thirdly, we must realize that 'knowledge is power'. God Almighty is teaching us that even when we are representing His mission, that the quest for knowledge is an ongoing one that does not stop because of a certificate or qualification. What degree could ever qualify one to be on the level of prophethood? None whatsoever! Yet Prophet Moses عليه السلام still supplicated for knowledge, and he did not ask for just any knowledge, but he requested that knowledge which is from his 'Rabb' (Lord).

In the modern age, the notion of being knowledgeable is associated with separation from God (secularism), and as a result, our trust and reliance are no longer in the wisdom of God's plan but on what we have been taught we 'know'. Consequently, our trust has been placed in the findings of men of science, but just as science continuously changes its stance, so too are we must adjust our stances with each change, and this is why we find ourselves in an inharmonious state. Contrarily, the knowledge one receives from God is one of conviction. It does not need

to change its position because there is no doubt in its premise! Hence God Almighty commenced the second chapter of the Qur'an by stating,

أَلَمْ ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ

“Alif-Lām-Mīm-, This is the Book about which there is no doubt, a guidance for those conscious (of God)”⁴⁶

The knowledge of God is one of *certainty* whilst the knowledge of humankind is full of *doubt*. At one stage, scientists believed the earth was flat and that if someone travelled to the edge, they would fall off. At that time, they were ‘certain’ of it. Today, scientists have retracted many statements of the past which they were certain of at the time and new data has refuted those previous ‘certainties’. How are we to believe that which they tell us is true today? How certain are they that it will not change in the future? No true scientist would agree that the data today will not change tomorrow. Hence, if we place our trust in science, then we will be like intellectual gypsies moving from one position of belief to a different one the next day. However, if we place our trust and faith in the knowledge bestowed upon us by God Almighty, we will remain on one trajectory of knowledge without the need to doubt its strength.

Resuming the discussion, Prophet Moses ﷺ explained to Pharaoh that he had transgressed beyond all means and that there was still time for him to repent, but such are the ways of the corrupted heart, that it sees only the threat to its existence instead of the benefit of others. Pharaoh rejected the advice of Prophet Moses ﷺ and misinterpreted

⁴⁶ *Sūrah Al-Baqarah, 2:1-2*

his advice as a challenge. This, despite the fact that God Almighty sent him many ‘signs’ to alter his ways,

فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الطُّوفَانَ وَالْجَرَادَ وَالْقُمَّلَ وَالضَّفَادِعَ وَالدمَّ آيَاتٍ مُّفَصَّلَاتٍ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا وَكَانُوا
قَوْمًا مُّجْرِمِينَ

“We therefore sent against them the flood and the locusts and the vermin (or insects) and the frogs and the blood – separate signs; in response they were proud and were a guilty people.”⁴⁷

To prove to the people that Pharaoh was not a supreme god as per his claim (79:24), God Almighty sent forth immense suffering to the people. Nine signs were sent,

وَالْأَخْلَإِ يَدَكَ فِي جَيْبِكَ تَخْرُجُ بَيْضَاءَ مِنْ غَيْرِ سُوءٍ فِي تِسْعِ آيَاتٍ إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ وَقَوْمِهِ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا
قَوْمًا فَاسِقِينَ

*“And put your hand inside your armpit – it will come out shining white, not due to any illness; a sign among the **nine signs** towards Fir’aun and his people; they are indeed a lawless nation.”⁴⁸*

These signs came to be known by ‘The Plagues of Egypt’. Naturally, the people sought the ‘help’ of their god, Pharaoh, who eventually sent them to request Prophet Moses عليه السلام to plead with his Lord for the removal of their punishment, and at each juncture, they pleaded that if the punishment was lifted, that they would believe in his message.

⁴⁷ Sūrah Al-A’rāf, 7:133

⁴⁸ Sūrah An-Naml, 27:12

However, every time a punishment was uplifted, they turned their backs on their word (7:134-135).

“A similar pattern emerges daily in the modern age. Many amongst humankind, (including Muslims) live their lives in pursuit of materialistic needs at the cost of forsaking God, yet when faced with difficulties; they find themselves turning to God with numerous promises. Once those afflictions are removed by God Almighty, they renege on their promise and return to their old habits. This forgettery may be due to weakness in faith, like that of the people of Pharaoh, who confessed belief in him, yet turned to Moses ﷺ for help! May God Almighty make us resolute in our faith!”⁴⁹

It must be reiterated once more that tawakkul can only be developed once faith is established under the notion of Tauhid (absolute monotheism), without which tawakkul cannot be nurtured because one would be unable to decide ‘which’ god to place one’s tawakkul.

Eventually, God Almighty directed Prophet Moses ﷺ to gather all of the Israelites for a mass exodus during the cover of night (26:52). Little did they realize; that they were being tracked by Pharaoh and his men,

فَاتَّبَعُوهُمْ مُشْرِقِينَ فَلَمَّا تَرَاءَى الْجَمْعَانَ قَالَ أَصْحَابُ مُوسَى إِنَّا لَمُدْرِكُونَ قَالَ كَلَّا إِنَّ مَعِيَ رَبِّي سَيَهْدِينِ

⁴⁹Stories of the Prophets for the Modern Age – Volume 1 – The Story of Moses and the Pharaoh, by Shaykh Faheem, Published by the Islāmic Lifestyle Solutions.

So the Fir'aun's people followed them at sunrise. And when the two groups saw each other, those with Mūsā said, "They have caught us." Said Mūsā, "Never! Indeed my Lord is with me, He will now show me the way."⁵⁰

We revert the reader's attention to the opening of this chapter, whereby the 'prisoners' were along the pathway of their escape and had reached the end of the road. The Red Sea was before them and so they could not progress further, nor could they turn around as Pharaoh and his soldiers were close behind. It is not surprising that some of the Israelites lost hope, thinking that since both the paths were blocked, their capture was inevitable. At that juncture, it was Prophet Moses عليه السلام who reminded them that God Almighty would guide them.

The lessons on tawakkul here are two-fold;

On the one hand, there is a group of believers who have attempted to tread the path of God, but in the face of possible capture concede defeat, because logically, it seemed the only way. On the other hand, Prophet Moses عليه السلام is on the same path, but his conviction and tawakkul in God are such, that even in a time of great hopelessness, he is confident of God's promise.

Such is the mindset of the truly faithful. Neither the depths of the ocean nor the force of the fierce enemies can ever be viewed as opponents to the All-Powerful God.

⁵⁰ *Sūrah Ash-Shu'arā*, 26:60-62

At that moment, when they were caught between the devil and the deep blue sea, God decreed a ‘tenth sign’ to manifest Qur’ān elucidates,

فَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ اضْرِبْ بِعَصَاكَ الْبَحْرَ فَانْفَلَقَ فَكَانَ كُلُّ فِرْقٍ كَالطَّوْدِ الْعَظِيمِ وَأَزَلَّمْنَا ثُمَّ
الْآخِرِينَ وَأَنْجَيْنَا مُوسَىٰ وَمَنْ مَعَهُ أَجْمَعِينَ ثُمَّ نَعَرْنَا الْآخِرِينَ ۝

“So We sent the divine revelation to Mūsā that, “Strike the sea with your staff”; thereupon the sea parted; so each part was like a huge mountain. And We brought the others close to that place. And We saved Mūsā and all those with him. Then drowned the others.”⁵¹

And so, God Almighty *parted a way* along the pathway of their escape in an unimaginable manner which manifested at the hands of Prophet Moses عليه السلام, and drowned the insolent Pharaoh and his followers in the process.⁵²

The lesson for Muslims here is that tawakkul in God Almighty is such, that if you truly believe in God, then you will affirm the belief that He can cause a stick to shift the current of the oceans to favour the believers because ultimately, He is the Lord and Creator of everyone and everything.

In life, we may sometimes be presented with difficult scenarios that test the very fabric of our faith, and at those moments, instead of losing

⁵¹ Sūrah Ash-Shu’arā, 26:63-66

⁵² This incident is known as ‘Āshūrā’ within the Islāmic tradition. For more information on this matter, the details pertaining to the pharaoh, kindly see my earlier book, “The Beginning of the End – An Eschatological Endeavour to Unravel the Mysteries of the Modern Age”

hope by *parting ways* from the correct path, we must *part ways* with those notions that can lead us into the cunning clutches of the awaiting devil.

The story of Prophet Moses عليه السلام and Pharaoh in light of the subject of tawakkul stands to further remind us that in times of great difficulty, even when solutions are seemingly impossible, we must never lose focus on our tawakkul in God because, just like in the narrative itself, when the people lost hope, it was the tawakkul of one person that saved everyone else. Likewise, during our struggle through life's seemingly impossible tasks, we must maintain our tawakkul in God, and –God Willing- if we require rescuing, then who better to protect us than the ultimate Protector?

After analyzing this narrative, with the hindsight of the story in chapter two regarding the incident of the mother of Prophet Moses عليه السلام, another amazing lesson in the subject of tawakkul emerges. We realize that his mother feared losing him to the kill-orders of Pharaoh. God Almighty inspired her to *part ways* with her child and to place him in the *water*. That same child grew up and *parted a way between the seas* to grant freedom to all his people, destroying Pharaoh in the process. All of this occurred because one person turned to God Almighty with sincerity and did not question His command, even when the solution seemed just as bad as the actual problem itself. If we too can be patient in these testing times when logic seems to dictate our mindset, then - God willing -; our actions may set off a series of events which will not only save us but rescue an entire people in the process!

Testing Times?

The story of Prophet Moses عليه السلام in light of our analysis of tawakkul stands to corroborate an extremely important message of the Qur'an about the difficulties one may experience in this temporary life. That message is embalmed in the following verses,

فَإِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا إِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا

“So, verily, with every difficulty, there is relief. Verily, with every difficulty, there is relief.”⁵³

Every human being, regardless of their socio-economic status, will at some point endure difficult times. Be it financial, familial, or on an emotional level, every person on this earth can retrospectively say that they have endured difficulty at some point in the past; or are doing so presently.

Currently, as these words are being penned, the world is experiencing a global pandemic in the form of the Covid19 virus which has left many deaths in its wake. Nonetheless, verses like the above grant solace to the believer that in such times, God emphasizes that ease will follow and that we must therefore patiently bear these difficulties.

The above is a rare moment in the Qur'an whereby there is an absolute repetition of one statement after the other. In hindsight, this is God's divine consoling to us, because even when we as human beings come across someone who has experienced a tremendous loss in their lives, we respond by saying, “It's going to be okay! It's going to be

⁵³ *Sūrah Al-Inshirāh, 94:5-6*

okay”. And we do so to comfort the person. Likewise, God Almighty is reassuring His servants that when testing times are upon us, we can rest assured that terrific times will follow.

The story of Prophet Moses عليه السلام stands to prove that a group of people who were enslaved and who underwent immense difficulty for many years, were rescued from their pitiful predicament and freed from the shackles of slavery because they placed their trust and faith in God and His messenger.

Likewise, in our own experiences, if we are to endure any kind of difficulty, God Almighty will be testing our resolve by reminding us that He has promised ease after difficult times. Those who have tawakkul in God, based on that brought to us by Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, then for them, the difficulties of life are to be experienced in anticipation of God’s promise for ease.

The story iterates that Muslims must be constantly aware of the infinite power of God, by placing our tawakkul in Him, knowing that *when all else fails, God prevails!*

توكلت على الله

“Upon Allāh do I Rely”



فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ

*“..and when you decide upon something, rely upon Allāh;
indeed Allāh loves those who trust (Him).*

(Sūrah Āl-Imrān, 3:159)

Chapter Five

Unlimited Wi-fi

“The *connection* that we share with our Creator traverses beyond any of the man-made gadgets or inventions in which we readily place our trust. Whether we are soaring high above the clouds, or deep in the sea, we must be cognizant of the fact that God Almighty shares a connection with us which is so strong, that it never loses signal. All that is left to do, is to take a leap of faith, and to connect with Him because He is nearer to you than you think!”

“As he drove around the block, Zuhayr could not believe what he was seeing. It was the largest crowd his fuzzy little eyes ever saw. He began to count...1...2...3...100...500, “Mum?” shouted the little boy. “There are too many people here! What’s going on? Are we also going to follow these crazy queues?” “Well son”, responded his gentle mother lovingly. There is a huge sale taking place on unlimited Wi-Fi access, and you know very well how much Wi-Fi you and your brother Hassaan use every day now don’t you?” “And me!” said Hanzalah, the youngest of the 4 children, whilst Farhath was too busy listening to her online Qur’ān to even notice the conversation. Hassaan and Zuhayr looked at each other worriedly as they realized that their love for Wi-Fi meant that they were left with no choice but to endure the endless queues if they wanted to enjoy their time at home talking to their friends over the net.”

Such is the case with most households all around the world. The moment there is a sale, everyone hurries to get their ‘deal of the decade’ done to enjoy the benefits, and whilst there is absolutely nothing wrong with trying to save on some of our hard-earned cash in these financially trying times, the dilemma lies in our inability to discern the true value of the most important deal when it is staring us in the face.

Unfortunately, the majority of human beings seem to value only those objects which hold earthly value, whilst devaluing those things in life which are invaluable.

Imagine the commotion and sheer chaos in the streets if any service provider offered a deal in which the customer was offered unlimited Wi-Fi access free with the only condition being that you had to tell everyone that you ‘believed’ in the brand? In this writer’s view, such a

brand would take over the world and would have more followers than most religions.

Little do many of our Muslim brothers and sisters realize; that Our Lord made such an offer to humanity over 1400 years ago⁵⁴, yet we have paid no interest in the offer whatsoever, merely because we are unable to immediately experience its earthly benefits.

God Almighty states,

وَقَالَ رَبُّكُمْ ادْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ

*“And your Lord says, “Call upon Me; I will respond to you...”*⁵⁵

When is the last time that we genuinely called upon Allāh Almighty? When is the last time that we lifted our hands and spoke to our Creator? When is the last time that we poured our deepest darkest secrets to He who is aware of our innermost thoughts? If we ponder upon the aforesaid verse, we will deduce that the God of Islām is amazingly incomparable!

Imagine a multimillion-dollar corporation with its CEO at the top of the pyramid and the cleaner at the bottom of that pyramid. What are the odds of the CEO and the cleaner having an established connection? The CEO is the busiest person and has a personal assistant just to manage the schedule for the day. The CEO does not have the time to wander about going door to door checking on the well-being of his

⁵⁴ It must be restated that Islām as the name of the final monotheistic religion traces its name 1400 years ago, but its teachings originate with that of the first man and first Prophet of God, Ādam ﷺ.

⁵⁵ Sūrah Ghāfir, 40:60

employees. He is paying them well; and that’s already enough for them to be ‘grateful’ to him!

In Islām, a person who submits to the Godliness of Allāh Almighty is known as an ‘Ābid’ (Servant, Slave, Worshipper) or Abdullāh (Servant of God) and Allāh Almighty is our ‘Rabb’, the one who nourishes and takes care of us.

The difference between the scenarios though, based on the above verse, is that the ‘Rabb’ of the entire universe has so much of time for you, that He is saying to you, “Call unto me, and I will respond”. That is amazing! Which CEO in the world can offer an open-door relationship to all his staff members without any time constraints, and without any conditions? None whatsoever, but God Almighty, has done so - and yet we are shying away from the possibilities each day.

Even with our technology and Wi-Fi – to which we seem to have grown an uncanny addiction - we marvel at its invention, yet we fail to see how utterly ‘dependent’ it is on fallible things.

Right now, at this very moment, your device is *dependent* on Wi-Fi or network access to allow accessibility to the other programs or applications one wishes to utilize. That device is *dependent* on a signal, which is *dependent* on a router, which is then *dependent* on another signal from a satellite which is *dependent* on another signal from high above the stratosphere. Such are the weaknesses of the inventions we so covet, but God Almighty states,

وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ ۖ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ ۗ فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لِي
وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا بِي لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ

“And when My servants ask you, [O Muhammad], concerning Me - indeed I am near. I respond to the invocation of the supplicant when he calls upon Me. So, let them respond to Me [by obedience] and believe in Me that they may be [rightly] guided.”⁵⁶

Not only are we being offered *unlimited access* to the Master and Creator of the entire universe, but unlike all the dependencies associated with technology today, God Almighty is ‘As-Samad’, meaning that He is not dependent on anyone for anything but everyone is dependent on him for everything. Hence, when we call upon Him, there is nothing that may interrupt our connection with Him.

All that is left for us to do, is to place our tawakkul in Him and to believe that if we call unto Him, with the belief that He is ‘All-Hearing’ and that He will respond, He will do so in a way that is best for us.

Of course, being human, we always require some evidence that when a person turns to God in supplication, does God respond? The answer to this lies in the very wisdom behind why prophets and messengers were sent to humankind; because, without their exemplary conduct, there would be no practical models to learn from.

We present one example from the life of the Noble Messenger ﷺ which stands to validate quite simply the significance of conversing with our Creator, and the value of believing and placing our trust in Him, to experience how He will respond to us in a way that will supersede our expectations.

⁵⁶ *Sūrah Al-Baqarah, 2:186*

The Prophet ﷺ Speaks to His Lord

When the message of Islām began to spread beyond the control of the Meccan hierarchy, they decided to assassinate the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, albeit after advice from a devilish old man from Najd.

The Prophet ﷺ was informed by God of their plot and was commanded to leave his home and migrate to the city of Medīna. Now, on the cusp of a new era, seeing as though he would be departing from his birthplace, the city of his parents, his family, his friends, and his memories, did he panic? Did he question God and rebel, saying “I did everything you asked of me and now I am being chased out of my home?” Did he complain about his situation? If anyone felt that they had a right to complain it would have been him, but instead he raised his hands and spoke to his Lord,

وَقُلْ رَبِّ اَدْخِلْنِيْ مُدْخَلَ صِدْقٍ وَّاَخْرِجْنِيْ مُخْرَجَ صِدْقٍ وَاَجْعَلْ لِّيْ مِنْ لَّدُنْكَ سُلْطٰنًا تَّصِيْرًا

“And say (O Muhammad): My Lord! Let my entry (to the city of Al-Madinah) be good, and likewise my exit (from the city of Makkah) be good. And grant me from You an authority to help me”⁵⁷

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ placed his tawakkul and faith in God Almighty and spoke to his Lord regarding his situation. Muslims are being educated here via the example of the Messenger ﷺ that in times of distress, instead of complaining about our situation, we are to place our reliance on the fact that God Almighty knows every outcome. We must, therefore, supplicate to Him to change our situation for the better,

⁵⁷ Sūrah Al-Isrā, 17:80. This verse is advisable to be recited prior to moving from one's home or homeland etc.

because He is the All-Powerful, but He is also the All-Wise and He decrees things for us at the time best suited for us.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ supplicated to God Almighty for two things here,

- 1) A good exit from the city of Mecca
- 2) A good entry into the city of Medina

Regarding his first supplication, given the situation, it is amazing that he even asked such a thing. This is the quintessence of ‘positive thinking’ when tawakkul is firmly grounded in the power of God, to not only overcome but to grant ease and a positive outcome in difficulty. Retrospectively, the people were making an attempt on his life, and as a corollary of that assassination attempt, he was forcibly removed from his home. Yet still, he was beseeching God for a good exit, and God Almighty responded by protecting him at every juncture along the journey by unimaginable means. Indeed, even though expert trackers were on his trail to collect the handsome bounty of 100 camels which was placed upon his capture, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ reached his destination safely!

At the same juncture, the Meccans did not realize at the time, that their supposed ‘forcible’ removal of the Messenger ﷺ was about to set off a series of events which was beyond their faculty to fathom, and which would end up in his return eight years later to conquer the very ground from which they forcibly ousted him. That event came to be known as ‘The Conquest of Mecca’. Such is the power of prayer, that when the Prophet ﷺ turned to God Almighty, he was exiting the city

as a persecuted member of society, and yet God returned him a few years later to the same city as its undisputed leader for all time!

Regarding his second supplication for a goodly entrance in the city of Madīna, the answer to that prayer was such; that when the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ exited Mecca, it was because his authority and leadership were utterly rejected, yet when he entered the city of Madīna, without even seeking out a position of leadership, he was regarded as the *de facto* leader by the people who were awaiting his arrival in huge crowds at the entrance of the city.

The supplication of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is one which Muslims must familiarize themselves with before moving home, country, when journeying on a flight, or even just leaving home to embark the daily routine, because sometimes we may assume that we are making a calculated decision for the betterment of our future, but we know not what the future holds. Thus, instead of investing in the unknown by calculated guesses, we should instead speak to our Rabb and beg of Him to make both; our exit from our departure point, as well as our entry into the destination area, successful. Tawakkul in God Almighty seems to have a greater significance in our daily lives than we realize.

From Darkness into Light

Duā, or in this case, raising our hands and ‘talking’ to our Creator possesses such transformative power that it can cause a flock of birds to destroy an army of elephants⁵⁸, and as we are about to exhibit, it can

⁵⁸ See *Sūrah Al-Fil*, Chapter 105 of the *Qur’ān*. According to the books of *Sīrah* (prophetic biography), the Prophet’s ﷺ grandfather supplicated to God

rescue you from the deepest darkest places, but the key ingredient has to be tawakkul; the certainty that if what you seek is best for you, then God Almighty will surely grant it, and if it is not granted to you, then He knows best how to reward His servants.

Millennia ago, a prophet of God was sent to a people who were engaging in numerous vices, and even though he invited them to monotheism exhaustively, they refused to heed his call. He continued to warn them that if they failed to do so, there would be a dreadful punishment and still they refused to believe in his message, until one day, disgusted at their condition, he boarded a boat and left.

In the meantime, the skies began to turn fire-red and the people realized that the man, Prophet Yūnus (Jonah) ﷺ had indeed been telling the truth, and so they repented to God Almighty for their evil ways.

In the meantime, at sea, a storm began to brew with waves rising as high as mountains and breaking with great force upon the boat in which Prophet Yūnus ﷺ was aboard. The crew had ordered the people to throw their belongings overboard to lighten the weight, and being a polytheistic folk, they decided to draw lots; whoever's name was drawn, that person would have to be sacrificed to the ocean, and so, they were gambling with the lives of the passengers.

As the people waited nervously, the lots were cast and the first name to be drawn was that of Prophet Yūnus ﷺ. However, they knew him to be an honourable man and decided against doing away with him.

to protect the Ka'bah from the army of Abrahā who marched with massive elephants to destroy it. His army was defeated by the tiny birds.

They cast the lots once more, but yet again, the same name was drawn. Still, they were not satisfied to sacrifice such a man to the sea and they cast another time, and astonishingly, for the third time, the name was that of Prophet Yūnus عليه السلام, who now realized that this must be a sign from God, and so he prepared to enter the turbulent waters.

Little did he realise, that God Almighty had commanded a huge sea creature (whale or giant fish) to track the boat, and upon his entry into the water he was swallowed by this massive sea-dwelling creature.

One can only begin to imagine the kind of distress he must have been under when he awoke to find himself in the dark, amidst the acidic digestive juices inside the belly of this huge fish, but such is the mettle of the true servants of God, that even in the worst of situations, they turn to their Rabb and beseech Him. The Qur'an states,

فَنَادَى فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ

“...he therefore called out in the realms of darkness, saying, There is no God except You, Purity is to You; I have indeed committed a lapse.”⁵⁹

The allusion to his experience in the realms of darkness here is two-dimensional,

The first dimension alludes to the literal perception of ‘darkness’. Contemplatively, three layers of darkness enveloped him. The first of which is the darkness he experienced in the stomach of the giant fish. The second being the darkness at the depths of the sea, and the third being the darkness of the night.

⁵⁹ *Sūrah Al-Ambiyā, 21:87*

The second dimension being analogous to his psychological state of mind as a result of the predicament in which he found himself. That analogy will resonate with many of us today when we recall the words of people suffering from depression who say, “I feel like I am in a really dark place right now”. This story is exactly for those people who are at a *cul-de-sac* in life and do not know what to do because there seem to be no rays of hope through which they can be guided out of their predicament.

In those times, we must recollect the story of Prophet Yūnus عليه السلام who, in the depths of darkness placed his tawakkul in God and turned to Him through the supplication of duā. The above verse is therefore recommended to all those who are suffering from stress, anxiety, etc. as a means of turning to God Almighty with the hope of removing their grief-stricken state, as He did for Prophet Yūnus عليه السلام.

God Almighty responded to his plea as the Qur’ān states,

فَأَسْتَجِبْنَا لَهُ وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْعَمِّ ۖ وَكَذَلِكَ نُنْجِي الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

“So We responded to him and saved him from the distress. And thus do We save the believers.”⁶⁰

Such is the inevitably amazing outcome awaiting those who, in the face of great difficulty, place their trust in God Almighty by turning to Him in supplication.

By the command of God, the giant fish dislodged Prophet Yūnus عليه السلام from its stomach onto the shore. He was weak and now required

⁶⁰ *Sūrah Al-Ambiyā, 21:88*

further protection from the sun to escape dehydration and regain his strength.

Technically, this should be his problem to manage as he only supplicated to God Almighty for freedom from the belly of the fish. However, when God Almighty takes care of His servants, He takes every aspect into account,

فَبَدَّلْنَاهُ بِالْعَرَاءِ وَهُوَ سَقِيمٌ وَأَبْنَيْنَا عَلَيْهِ شَجَرَةً مِّنْ يَّخْطِينِ

“We then put him ashore on a plain, and he was sick. And We grew a tree of gourd above him..”⁶¹

God caused a gourd tree to grow over him, shading him from the sun and it was also a means of sustenance for him until such time that he regained his strength. Such is the reward of those who place their tawakkul in God Almighty that even the ‘aftercare’ of your recovery will be tended to.

The story of Prophet Yūnus عليه السلام teaches us that the *connection* we share with our Creator traverses beyond any of the man-made gadgets or inventions in which we readily place our trust. Whether we are soaring high above the clouds, or deep in the sea, we must be cognizant of the fact that God Almighty shares a connection with us which is so strong, that it never loses signal. All that is left to do, is to take a leap of faith, and to connect with Him because He is nearer to you than you think!

God Almighty makes this abundantly clear in the Qur’ān,

⁶¹ *Sūrah As-Sāffāt, 37:145-146*

وَمَنْ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ حَبْلِ الْوَرِيدِ

“...and We are nearer to him (mankind) than the jugular vein”⁶²

However, despite the dark emotional space we find ourselves boxed into at times, we must affirm our reliance and tawakkul in the belief that He can deliver us *from darkness into light*.

Fire and Ice

A similar account of tawakkul and the astonishing results awaiting those who, in times of tribulation, raise their hands and speak to God Almighty, may be understood from the famous story of the Prophet Abraham عليه السلام as a young boy.

As a young boy in the region of Ur, Babylon, he was dissatisfied with the state of his people who were dedicated to the worship of the sun, the stars, and the moon (6:76-78). Additionally, he found it irrational that the people were worshipping idols created by their handy work. He began to invite them be ‘reasonable’, and to acknowledge that the idols could not harm nor benefit them, but they refused to listen to the young man. One day, whilst they were away celebrating, he decided to clarify his point of view.

The following excerpt from one of my earlier books explains,

⁶² *Sūrah Qāf, 50:16 The allusion here is not to literal space in measurable distance as God Almighty is free from time, space and places. Anthropomorphism is abhorred according to Islāmic tradition.*

“Thereafter he began to strike the idols one at a time until he arrived at the big idol, but chose – in the name of da’wah- to leave it alone in order to appeal to the people’s common sense. When the people returned from their merrymaking, to their horror, they found their idols in utter ruin, save the big one. Upon investigation, they suspected young Abraham ﷺ as he was the only culpable candidate absent from the feast. The interrogation, followed by the genius usage of rationale on the part of Prophet Abraham ﷺ is recorded as follows, They said, “Did you do this to our Gods, O Ibrāhīm? Said he, “Rather, their chief may have done it; so question them, if they can speak. So, they turned towards their own selves and (inwardly) said, “Indeed you yourselves are unjust.” Again, they were inverted upon their heads; saying, “You know well that these do not speak. He said, “What! You worship, instead of Allāh, one that neither benefits you nor harms you? Disgrace be upon you and all the idols whom you worship instead of Allāh; so do you not have sense?” (21:62-67)⁶³

Enraged, the people demanded that he be punished and so they prepared a blazing fire to appease their gods for the blasphemy committed by young Abraham ﷺ against them (21:68). They wanted to make an example of him so that nobody after this would ever question the gods, and so they constructed a huge furnace (37:97). Once the fire was lit, the flames were so enormous that nobody could get close enough to cast him into the fire and so, the catapult was invented to thrust him into the fire.

⁶³ *Stories of the Prophets for the Modern Age – Volume One – The Story of Prophet Abraham and the Dichotomy of Faith & Reason, Page 197-198, by Shaykh Faheem, Published by the Islāmic Lifestyle Solutions.*

The townsfolk watched as young Abraham عليه السلام was placed into the catapult, and it was at that moment, that instead of crying for mercy or being dissatisfied at his predicament - for attempting to right the wrongs of society - he turned to his Lord in supplication, beseeching Him, and by affirming his tawakkul in his Rabb,

حَسْبُنَا اللَّهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيلُ

"Allāh is Sufficient for us – and what an excellent (reliable) Trustee (of affairs) is He!"⁶⁴

True believers, after making the concerted effort for the right reasons will always be willing to accept the decree of God to whatever end it takes them. Here, even though he is a young boy, Abraham عليه السلام never once complained about the predicament in which he found himself. Instead, He placed his unflinching trust in his Creator to deal with the situation in the best possible way, to whatever ends.

It must have been a sight to behold when the executioner released the catapult in the presence of the congregated townsfolk, who, in a moment of silence, were eagerly anticipating the agonized shrieks of the boy, and to witness his suffering for the 'crimes' he had committed against their gods. Instead, the deafening silence must have created much confusion for them. "Why isn't he screaming? What happened?" must have been their confused thoughts at the time. The answer to that question is located in the following verse of the Qur'an,

فُلْنَا يَا نَارُ كُونِي بَرْدًا وَسَلَامًا عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ

⁶⁴ Sūrah Āl-Imrān, 3:173

“We said, “O fire, become cool and (a means of) safety upon Ibrāhīm.”⁶⁵

The nature of fire is to burn, and this is known by children even. However, God Almighty is the creator and master of the heavens, the earth, and everything within them, including fire, and so He commanded the fire to function against its very nature. The power of God though, is not without wisdom! If God Almighty merely commanded the fire to ‘be cool’, there would be no telling as to how low a temperature it would be required to maintain. It could even –by the power of God Almighty’s command– reach icy temperatures. Instead, God takes such great care of His servants, that not only did He command the fire to function in opposition to its nature, but He also ordered it to maintain a temperature that would be ‘safe’ for Prophet Abraham عليه السلام.

Contemplatively, the people were invited to gather to witness a spectacle of this young man’s ‘punishment’, but instead, their plans were foiled and the very opposite occurred. The people witnessed the miracle of God and His sheer power. What they saw was certainly not by the power of their many false gods, but indeed a manifestation of the

⁶⁵ *Sūrah Al-Ambiyā, 21:69. This is corroborated by the narration in Al-Bukhārī, Hadīth Number 4564,*

عَنْ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ ، قَالَ كَانَ آخِرَ قَوْلِ إِبرَاهِيمَ حِينَ أُلْقِيَ فِي النَّارِ حَسْبِيَ اللَّهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيلُ

Narrated by Sayyidunā Abdullāh Ibn `Abbās رضي الله عنه “The last statement of Abraham when he was thrown into the fire was, “Allāh is Sufficient for us and He is the Best Disposer (of affairs for us).” (3.173)

power of the One true God, to whom young Abraham عليه السلام had invited them on several occasions, yet they had rejected.

The above narrative initiates two further talking points,

Firstly, the fire may be viewed for us analogously as the trials and tribulations in life. We can either complain about it or place our trust in God, knowing that He can change the very nature of things even when it is beyond our rational faculties to comprehend. What is important are the choices which we make. We can either be in the catapult and place our tawakkul in Him, and then see our stock rise in His presence from an unimaginable means, or we can be like the onlookers and place our trust in the flames before us. Choose wisely; our choices bear consequences!

Secondly, we learn that ‘onlookers’ tend to gather in times of difficulty but the lesson is to be like Prophet Abraham عليه السلام, who did not focus on ‘what the people would say’. Instead, his focus was firmly grounded on what his Rabb would think of him. Since people and their opinions may be important to us, we must understand that ultimately in life, the destination is the Hereafter and if we succumb to the standard set by society, then we are heading for the Fire because that standard is not premised upon the way of God. As the story of young Abraham عليه السلام shows, the way of God is the only way; in which a servant of God can experience coolness in the raging fires of life.

All it takes to commence on the road to achieving such peace and distinction is to raise our hands in supplication to God, place our trust in Him to whatever end, and trust that His response is the best one!

If we can turn to Him with conviction, then He will respond at the best possible time when we may least expect it. Though it has to begin somewhere, and that somewhere is at the juncture between tawakkul and effort. We have a free-range connection to make use of, so let us utilize this connection we have been gifted, and talk to our Creator, not tomorrow, but today, this moment...now!

توكلت على الله

“Upon Allāh do I Rely”



Chapter Six

Trust in God, but Plan Ahead

“In life, the Muslim must be well-grounded in faith, but must also be a thinking person who possesses the ability to discern the repercussions of one’s actions before it is too late. Tawakkul, then, must be understood as the ark which rests upon the sea of sabr (patience) guided by the current of belief in absolute monotheism of God!”

“In ancient Mesopotamia, it was a time of great tribulation. The droughts have been ongoing for as long as I can remember, and the parched lands have caused the people great unrest. The chieftains though, with their wealth and power, have amassed sufficient supplies to survive, and they make sure that we, the poor, never forget it. They are respected, not because they command it, but because they demand it! Failure to do so may result in our rejection of their affection, and these days, we cannot afford that. So, we must *obey our elite masters* if we are to survive each scorched day with the blazing sun hovering above our dehydrated bodies. Every day, at the peak of the sun’s power, at high noon, the chieftains address us, flaunting their cups of water. On one such day, there was a man who came forth claiming that he had an idea which would save our city from destruction. Naturally, he was asked to elaborate on this idea of his, when suddenly, in one breath, all of the chieftains laughed. Seeing their leaders laugh; -not knowing why they did - the people laughed with them and mocked the man. You see, in a time of drought, the man was selling something called an ‘umbrella’, and its purpose was to shelter its user from being drenched in the heavy rain. “Mad man! He is a mad man!” they remarked, and yet every day, the man turned up at noon, claiming that those who took shelter under his umbrella would be saved, but each day, he was met with the same ridicule to which he was accustomed. Many years later, he was dubbed the village madman. The townsfolk met every day, even in the heat of summer, but at that time, the man did not show up with his message. “Finally, he has given up his nonsensical claim!” they said. When suddenly, they noticed that the sun’s rays had been shrouded by an array of clouds, dark and heavy clouds too. The sheer thunder from the sky caused the panicked crowd great unrest, yet this is what they had been waiting for all those years. But they knew better! This was no ordinary rain they were about to experience. This was a storm unlike

any other. Immediately, the people turned away from their chieftains and their eyes were scouring the distances for the ‘madman’ because finally, they realized that they needed his umbrella! But it was all too late, and with one final thunderous crack from the skies above, the promised storm arrived ... And now we know why, the ‘madman’ was absent that day. If only we heeded his call, but it was too late for us all!”

The above is the similitude of how human beings tend to ‘follow’ the orders of the elite in society who ‘control’ the vast majority of resources. When a warning is sent forth to the people by God, the natural response is one of rejection, based on ‘logic’.

Such was the case in the story of the great messenger of God, Prophet Noah عليه السلام, whose life-long mission to call the people to the path of God and his subsequent warning about the impending floods were ridiculed and rejected by the people for the majority of his life, except by a few.

The story of Noah عليه السلام is one which teaches us the all-important lesson: that faith does not necessarily require proof, and once faith is found, then tawakkul in God Almighty will ultimately reveal that inevitable truth and safeguard us from the unforeseen dangers which lie ahead in life.

The fact that 28 of the 114 chapters of the Qur’ān have mentioned the story of Noah عليه السلام is proof of its significance to the Ummah today, yet we are more focussed on the latest gossip available on social media to acknowledge the life lessons which can be drawn from the subject of tawakkul from the Qur’ān.

Prophet Noah عليه السلام was sent by God to combat shirk (polytheism) by propagating the true message of pure monotheism as being free from any contamination. Humanity had strayed from the straight path due to the gap of approximately 10 qurūn (centuries or generations) between Prophet Adam عليه السلام and Prophet Noah عليه السلام, during which time people had been deceived by Satan into worshipping false gods (71:23).

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ فَلَبِثَ فِيهِمْ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ إِلَّا خَمْسِينَ عَامًا فَأَخَذَهُمُ الطُّوفَانُ وَهُمْ ظَالِمُونَ

“And indeed We sent Nūh to his people – he therefore stayed with them for a thousand years, less fifty; so the flood seized them, and they were unjust.”⁶⁶

The Qur’an tells us that Noah عليه السلام spent 950 years preaching to his people, and after enduring all those years of ridicule, he was left with merely a handful of followers.

Logically, the lack of following makes sense; to the people, he was a man whose mission was *against the current flow* of things and his primary sales pitch was essentially selling an umbrella during a drought!

Imagine the level of tawakkul of the followers of Prophet Noah عليه السلام during those 950 years? Here is a man who has ‘promised’ them that a great flood is coming, and yet every year the days and nights passed by and no flood came! Imagine the questions and doubts which could have gone through the minds of the people? More so, the disbelieving camp of the chieftains and their followers must have been quite smug

⁶⁶ *Sūrah Al-Ankabūt, 29:14*

with their decision to ridicule him for his message because the floods did not seem likely at all.

So too, today, in the modern age, people are in doubt as to whether the ‘promise of God’ will come to pass. They wonder whether life after death does indeed exist, and whether there is such a thing as paradise and hell, and so on.

The story of the immense patience, endurance, unshakable faith and tawakkul in God, His messengers, and the messages they brought, stands to prove to us today that even though we cannot prove the reality of our beliefs in the afterlife, if we place our trust in the power of God, then the rewards for us in that afterlife will be plentiful.

Prophet Noah عليه السلام called his people and warned them day and night, in public and in private, but they were an arrogant people who refused to obey (71:5-9).

And yet, how different are we today from these people? A glance at the state of the Ummah reveals that the majority of Muslims are currently like the foam of the ocean as prophesized by the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.⁶⁷ We are merely moving along with the *ebb and flow of each wave* with no real purpose except to go with the force of whichever wave overpowers us the most.

This writer affirms, that until we do not look to the Qur’anic narratives with the added dimension of developing our tawakkul in

⁶⁷ See “*The Beginning of the End – An Eschatological Endeavour to Unravel the Mysteries of the Modern Age, with reference to Sunan Abū Dāūd, Hadīth Number 4297*”

God Almighty, then we too must prepare for the ‘storm of life’ to annihilate us.

Prophet Noah عليه السلام was ridiculed because he was preaching the idea that God was One and Absolute. In addition to that, he was mocked and ridiculed because for 950 years because he had warned the people about something which was becoming increasingly difficult to prove. Thus, each passing day caused his message to become even more doubtful.

However, Prophet Noah عليه السلام was no ordinary human being! He was a resolute messenger of God Almighty, and those who believed in his prophecy possessed a conviction unlike many today. The disbelievers mocked him even more because he was building an ark thousands of kilometers inland, and this supposedly irrational approach was yet another reason for the spiritually blind disbelievers to taunt him.

What a great lesson the Qur’ān is teaching its readers! God Almighty, in His infinite and unrivalled Power, could easily have created the ark for Noah عليه السلام, and within seconds his detractors would have believed, but belief requires us to have faith in the message even when we cannot see the physical evidence or manifestation of its wonder!

The all-important lesson which we are being taught via the story of Prophet Noah عليه السلام is to *plan ahead*, because it was not raining when he built the ark. The rain eventually poured down, and had he not planned, then his people would have been destroyed.

In life, the incorrect perception of tawakkul is to assume that just because you are a believer, that God Almighty will shower golden drops

of rain upon you! Alas! It is the opposite! The Qur'ān tells us that believers will be tested, and in the wake of those tests, we must bear patience and be grateful to God Almighty for what we still have!

In life, Muslims must be well-grounded in faith, but must also be a thinking person who possesses the ability to discern the repercussions of their actions before it is too late.

Tawakkul, then, must be understood as the ark which rests upon the seas of sabr (patience) guided by the current of belief in absolute monotheism.

There are thousands of stories on the internet about people explaining how a mere 'chance' encounter became a defining point in their lives. At one point they were planning the next step of their home-based job, and before they realized it, they found themselves in a different country altogether! A Muslim who is well-grounded in his faith knows better that we do not subscribe to the notion of coincidence!

Do you think that some of the people who helped you along your journey wound up being there by coincidence? Or that the accident you only just avoided was by sheer luck? No! By God no! Events that have unfolded and people who have crossed our paths are by the will of God!

In this journey of life, we have no clue whether we will be alive by the end of the day. Hence, like any journeyman, we must prepare for the destination, which, in the case of Muslims, is the promised reward of Paradise for those who possess belief as well as righteous deeds (85:11).

Every day in the life of a Muslim is part and parcel of that preparation from the moment we awaken till the time of sleep. We are advised by the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to immediately reflect on life and death from the moment we awaken and to be grateful to God Almighty for gifting us with the blessing of life. A Muslim's day begins with the dawn prayer and ends with the night prayer taking the name of God before we sleep.

The Story of Noah عليه السلام further teaches us that nothing is in our control, regardless of the power or wealth or *following* we may possess. The chieftains of the people were quite proud and content with their way of life and therefore rejected and ridiculed him for his message, but in the end, their lack of belief in his message caused them to be unprepared for that destructive scenario.

The story of Noah عليه السلام guides us towards more than we could ever hope for in the lessons of preparing well is life, premised on our trust and reliance on God. The message is particularly relevant to those in the field of da'wah (inviting towards Islām). This is easily deduced from the following fact,

وَأْتَلُ عَلَيْهِمْ بَنَاءُ نُوحٍ إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ يَا قَوْمِ إِن كَانَ كَبُرَ عَلَيْكُمْ مَقَامِي وَتَذِكْرِي بَيِّنَاتٍ لِّلَّهِ فَعَلَى اللَّهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ
فَأَجْمِعُوا أَمْرَكُمْ وَشُرَكَاءَكُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَكُنْ أَمْرُكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ غُمَّةً ثُمَّ اقْضُوا إِلَيَّ وَلَا تُنظِرُونِ

“Read to them the story of Noah when he told his people, “O my people – if my standing here and reminding you of Allāh’s signs have been intolerable for you – so I have trusted only Allāh – then work jointly and strengthen your work along

with your false deities, leaving no doubt regarding your work – then do whatever you can to me, and do not give me respite.”⁶⁸

Prophet Noah عليه السلام preached for 950 years, and even after his exhaustive effort to invite people to the oneness of God Almighty, whenever he was challenged by the people, he met those challenges by ultimately acknowledging that the only way to overcome all the hurdles placed before him, was by affirming his tawakkul and reliance of God!

His tawakkul in God Almighty can even be noted when the ark embarked,

وَقَالَ ارْكَبُوا فِيهَا بِسْمِ اللَّهِ مَجْرَاهَا وَمُرْسَاهَا إِنَّ رَبِّي لَغَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

“And he said, “Board it – upon Allāh’s name is its movement and its stopping; indeed my Lord is surely Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”⁶⁹

Prophet Noah عليه السلام possessed such faith in his message that he was embarking upon an ark not knowing where it will stop. He did not have the modern technology which we possess today in the form of satellite navigation etc. It was his tawakkul in the ‘guidance’ from God which navigated him during the storm! Hence, he said that its movement and its destination are dependent upon God Almighty.

Today, we too are on a journey in which our direction is rather uncertain, but what determines the final abode of the soul of this body

⁶⁸ Sūrah Yūnus, 10:71

⁶⁹ Sūrah Hūd, 11:41

on this journey depends on how much emphasis we place on our trust and faith in God.

The inherent meaning of the above verse should be a blueprint for Muslims in whatever ‘journey’ we undertake. Be it the journey of a new business venture, the search for a new home, or the study of a new subject, it is all a journey in the sea of life and the Muslim must place his unwavering tawakkul and reliance on God Almighty to steer us toward the best possible ending of that journey. It is only when Muslims begin to include God and the notion of absolute reliance upon Him in all our affairs, that we will –God Willing- experience a level of peace and tranquillity in those dealings. Let us plan ahead with purpose before the storm of God’s wrath descends upon us when it is too late! During that time, no high mountain top will be able to rescue us (11:43) from the depths of the waters in which we are pinning ourselves so deeply underneath.

تَوَكَّلْتُ عَلَى اللَّهِ

“Upon Allāh do I Rely”



Chapter Seven

Meet the Challenger!

We must remember that whilst the pathway may be laden with mist, that does not mean the road does not exist! Just because we cannot see the path, does not mean that there is no path! In situations which are beyond our control, we are to leave it in the care of He who is not just perfectly suited to help us navigate the path, but who is also the *master and commander of the path* and everything that lays ahead!

“As he stood atop the mountain awaiting the people, the morning alarm could be heard sounding off meticulously like the echoes of a mockingbird. As each citizen heard the secret alarm call, they resounded it till the next one did the same, and the ripple effect continued until everyone gathered at the assembly point, eagerly awaiting his message. What were they to expect? Were they about to be attacked? Was there a plague in the city? What could it be? There were signs of great unrest in the city.

The man atop the mountain was an honest source, and they knew that whatever he was about to reveal to them had to be the truth. Though, he had never spoken out in public before, well, not to this extent of an audience anyway. And then, he spoke. “O, People! If I told you that behind this mountain was an army ready to attack, would you believe me?” “Yes!” was the thunderous response. “Then hear me when I say that there is no God but Allāh! And I am his Messenger!” No thunderous response this time. Instead, his call was met with a stone-cold wall of silence followed by murmuring whispers, as many of them turned to each other not knowing what to make of the statement they had just heard. There he was, *challenging* everything they had ever held dear when suddenly, his views were strongly *challenged* by the heavyweight of the time. “May your hands perish! Is this what you call us for? May your hands perish!” said the man’s uncle. And so, the man atop the mountain did not receive the response he had hoped, for he was viewed as a challenger to the cause, but so began another great challenge that day. A challenge from his uncle, the undefeated ‘Abū Lahab’, who vowed to disprove his nephew’s *word*...”

The above is an imagined account of the initial public invitation from the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ which aroused great concern

amongst the Meccans, particularly from his uncle. Abū Lahab was thereafter infamously *determined* to destroy the religion of Islām *by any means necessary*. We may be so bold as to state that he could be regarded as the first ‘Islāmophobe’, as his sheer hatred and animosity towards the religion was evident from his threat and scheming plots to demonize the religion, its Messenger ﷺ and the Message (Al-Qur’ān), is more than sufficient to prove this particular point.

Abū Lahab would often shadow the Messenger’s ﷺ movements by keeping a close eye on whoever he conversed with whilst preaching his message. Shortly after the Messenger ﷺ would leave, Abū Lahab would attempt to undo the Messenger’s ﷺ work by reminding them about the religion of their pagan forebears. His mission was to make them believe that the Qur’ān was a ‘lie’, and the religion of Islām was ‘false’.

Abū Lahab was quite proud of what he had achieved in this sojourn of life, hence his power and wealth caused him to insolently interject at the Prophet’s ﷺ initial message by announcing his dismay at the reason for their assembly. To him, they could have been ‘investing’ that time in their businesses instead of listening to a message calling them to desist from worshipping their idols. Thus, he *challenged* the Messenger’s ﷺ claim based on his social standing achieved due to his power and wealth.

In response to his insolence, God Almighty revealed Sūrah Lahab echoing the very sentiments against him which he had previously stated to the Prophet ﷺ. The chapter revealed the following reply,

May the hands of Abu Lahab be perished, and perished is he. (1) His wealth will not avail him or that which he gained. (2) Surely, he will be cast into a Flaming Fire (3) And his wife [as well] - the carrier of firewood. (4) Around her neck is a rope of [twisted] fiber. (5)⁷⁰

Retrospectively, the Qurʾān responded to Abū Lahab by stating that in reality, it was not the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ whose hands were nearing ruin, as per his claim. Rather, it was Abū Lahab who would soon experience the definition of divinely ordained ruin.

At this moment, the reader may be wondering why the subject of Abū Lahab's insolence is being discussed in a book dealing with the subject of tawakkul?

Admittedly, on face value, the Sūrah does seem as though it is a simple reprimand to an arrogant Abū Lahab who insulted the Messenger ﷺ. God Almighty responded directly to this situation to divinely admonish him, and in so doing, the wisdom of His plan, and the depth of the message of the Qurʾān was exhibited, albeit after deep contemplation.

When we reflect on the chapter, we conclude that the Qurʾān declared Abū Lahab as being 'Hell-bound'. Most Muslims who read Sūrah Lahab today fail to realize that the chapter was revealed during the 'lifetime' of Abū Lahab and not after he died.

God Almighty declared to all the doubters of that age, and all the doubters of coming generations, that when a person questions the

⁷⁰ *Sūrah Lahab / Masad, 111:1-5*

power and wisdom of revelation, then he or she should return to this chapter to realize the great Wisdom of the plan of God.

In the chapter, God Almighty placed Abū Lahab in the most ideal situation he could have ever asked for! This is because he had dedicated much of his time visiting those interested in accepting the religion of Islām by *alleging that the Qurʾān is a lie*, and thus the religion and its message are false. God Almighty responded by *challenging* him with two options,

Option 1 - Abū Lahab is given the perfect opportunity to prove his views to be true (that the Qurʾān is a lie). To achieve this, all he had to do was to 'accept' Islām. If Abū Lahab accepted Islām, then the Qurʾān is indeed as false as he had been suggesting for a time. How would his acceptance of Islām disprove the Qurʾān? Well, the revelation states that Abū Lahab would become a 'dweller of the hellfire'. Meaning that Allāh Almighty foretold; that he would not accept Islām, and as a result (of his rejection) he would die as a disbeliever, and he would remain dwelling in hell for it.

Thus, to prove his theory about the fallacy of the Qurʾān, God Almighty gave him the 'freedom of choice' to destroy its entire message with a simple shahādah (testimony) to accept the religion. If Abū Lahab accepted Islām, then on that day, the Qurʾān would have been proven to be nothing but a forgery, and Abū Lahab would be correct, and the Qurʾān false, as per his claim.

Option 2 - Alternatively, Abū Lahab could remain in his current state of disbelief and when he died as a disbeliever upon the religion of his forefathers, then the Qurʾān would be proven as the ultimate truth

because it would have *foretold the future of Abū Lahab, and the inevitable end of the culmination of his life choices from that moment onwards.*

History bears testimony to the well-known fact that Abū Lahab did not embrace Islām. He died exactly as the Qur’ān foretold many years before, clinging onto the pagan beliefs of his forebears.

Why would the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ take such a gargantuan risk of allowing Abū Lahab to destroy the very foundations of his mission if he was not certain that his message was indeed from God?

God Almighty displayed to all during that time, and to all of us in the modern age, that even though He has given us the freedom to choose, *ultimately*, He is well aware of our choices in advance.

Muslims and non-Muslims are urged to come to terms with the wonder located in the story of the choices of Abū Lahab. Even though he was presented with the perfect opportunity to single-handedly destroy the foundations of the message of Islām, he could not do so, because it was already declared ‘aforetime’ by God Almighty that he would die as a disbeliever *by his own choices*, which is precisely what came to pass.

In this succinct, yet profound chapter, God is teaching the reader of the Qur’ān to *trust in His promises and His plans*, because whilst we are ‘limited’ in our knowledge and lack the ‘foresight’ to understand the wisdom of His decrees, His knowledge is ‘beyond all limitations’ and cannot be fathomed by our finite capacity to comprehend such Infinite Wisdom.

When the reader submits to these realities, then he or she will never again question the decree of God in every facet of life, because then, life,

as it unfolds, will be viewed as the plan of the One in whose hands belongs the Power and Will to see beyond the spectrum of time which clouds our earthly and limited outlook.

We must remember that whilst the pathway may be laden with mist, that does not mean the road does not exist. Just because we cannot see the path, does not mean that there is no path! In situations which are beyond our control, we are to leave it in the care of He who is not just perfectly suited to help us navigate the path, but who is also the *master and commander of the path* and everything that lays ahead! We must always place our tawakkul in God because He knows the ripple effect of our choices!

Human beings remain in a quandary of uncertainty because we have no clue regarding the outcome of our decisions or choices in life. As a result, we tend to bring about unnecessary stress based on matters which are beyond our control. If the outcomes do not pan out according to our plan, then we tend to become depressed and agitated around people during that time.

Imagine if we were visited by someone from the future who was able to prove that they possessed knowledge of the future by foretelling an event from our future? If such a person asked us to 'trust' them after the presentation of that proof, we would be duly inclined to do so.

The story of Abū Lahab's insolence stands to prove that we don't know what is best for us, because he dedicated his life to bring about ruin to Islām, when in fact it acted as a conduit to his ruin, and even when he was given a clear opportunity to utterly destroy it, he could not bring himself to do so.

Likewise, God Almighty has exhibited to us that He knows the outcome of what lies ahead in our future. Thus, instead of questioning His decree, it will serve us better to submit to His will and place our trust in Him, for He is beyond the confines of time which limits our knowledge!

In retrospect of the modern age, God Almighty was also declaring to the world that nobody is in a position to ‘challenge’ Him because He can place us in such a paradoxical situation, that our own choices will inevitably become the architecture of our downfall.

A prime example of this may be seen from the British luxury cruise ship called the ‘Titanic’ which sailed its maiden voyage on the 10th April 1912. It’s ‘creators’ marvelled at its magnificence, and all of the collective efforts to make it the spectacle that it came to be at the time. It was deemed the ‘unsinkable ship’ but only five days into its maiden voyage, it crashed into an iceberg and sank.

Comparatively, thousands of years before, Prophet Nūh عليه السلام sailed upon a simple ark made from wood, but the difference is that its captain commenced the journey relying on God Almighty to guide it, knowing well that He alone possesses the power to guide them to safety.

Another example may be seen from the fact that in 1984, NASA launched a program in which the space shuttle was called “The Challenger”, and the result was that within 73 seconds after launch, it crashed.

In the end, many of us fail to realize that we are actually ‘challenging’ God Almighty daily by placing our trust and faith in everything else besides Him, the Only who is worthy of our trust and faith.

It is high time that we make a u-turn from our wayward stances and come back to our ‘God-given’ senses, and realize that until and unless we do not desist from challenging God in this manner, then we may soon find ourselves in the same paradox in which the first challenger of this Ummah (community) viz. Abū Lahab found himself in. God forbid that ever happens, but if it does, then we will have nowhere to turn to, and when everyone has left us, God will still be there!

تَوَكَّلْتُ عَلَى اللَّهِ

“Upon Allāh do I Rely”



“Do not belie yourself oh eyes! You see only what He Wills you to see! His plan for you is as real as the air all around you! So Trust in He who takes care of the finest of details in the story of Life.”

(Shaykh Faheem)

Chapter Eight

The Missing Peace

“...and so we must place our trust in the ultimate author of life, whose pen knows no deviation and its ink never dries. His creativity to structure the best ending is immeasurable, and His knowledge of all the characters in our story is infinite, and He wrote our story down by the sacred pen before all of creation was even a thing of existence!”

“It was over a millennium ago, in Persia, a young man lived in a village in Isfahān called Jayy. Its people were Zoroastrians and worshipped fire. He was a sharp young man and the son of the chieftain of the village. His father loved him dearly and never allowed him to leave the village as the roads were frequented by the treachery of slavers. His father committed the young man to a very responsible task of being the keeper of the fire. Of course, when you worship fire, the keeper of the fire must ensure that the fire of the tribe remains alight always, and so, in this way, he was tasked to remain in the village permanently.

One day, his father was busy seeing to the affairs of the people and he called for his son, “Salmān? I need you to take care of some matters of my estate out of the village”. Surprised by this request, and given the first opportunity to leave the village, young Salmān spared no time in leaving to fulfill his duty.

En-route, he stumbled across a strange building and decided to peek into it as he heard the sounds of people emitting from it. It was a monastery of the Christian people. The young man had never before experienced any other religion, so intrigue was understandable. He was so taken aback by their method of prayer that he lost track of time and before he realized that it was already sunset. He asked the priest, “Where did this religion originate?” “In Shām”⁷¹ answered the priest. Little did young Salmān realize that his father had grown distressed

⁷¹ As mentioned earlier, the area of Shām in the prophetic area included a vast region consisting of Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon and Damascus and not to be confused with modern-day Shām denoting just Syria. In this instance though, the reference is to Palestine, as that is where Isā (Jesus) ﷺ was born, and from where his teachings spread.

with worry at his absence and had sent a search party to locate him. He then returned home, to the delight of his father and explained his reasons for his delay. He stated that the religion he had encountered was far better than the one they were currently practicing. This angered his father very much and, realizing his fears -of letting his son out of the village-, were materializing, he decided to place his son under house-arrest and shackled him until he had denounced his affinity for the newly found religion.

But young Salmān managed to sneak a message to the priest, saying that if there ever was a caravan leaving for the region of ‘Shām’, he was to be notified. After some time, he was informed of a caravan and he plotted his escape from his native village in Persia and eventually joined the caravan to Shām.

Upon reaching Shām, Salmān began seeking out the high priest until he found him. Salmān requested to be in his service, asking nothing in return except to learn and remain close to him. To his dismay, this priest turned out to be a conniving man who hoarded the charity of the people under his bed for himself. Upon his death, Salmān could not bear the people’s praises for him and disclosed his deceptive ways. The people had high regard for their priests and demanded evidence for his claims. Salmān took them to his coffers stashed beneath his bed. Infuriated by his deceptive ways, the people crucified him as an example to others.

In his place, the new priest was an honourable man who, according to Salmān, prayed daily. After a prolonged service with him, at his deathbed, Salmān inquired from the principled priest where he could find another just like him. The priest replied, “There aren’t many like me anymore, but go to Iraq, there is another like me”. Salmān then

embarked on the gruelling journey to Iraq, and here he located the priest and served him well until his deathbed. Once more, Salmān inquired, “Is there any other like you that I can serve after you?” The priest replied saying that there weren’t many like him left, but he knew of one other in Shām.

Salmān once more took to the road for no worldly reason aside from serving what he believed to be the truth until he reached Shām once more. Again, he served nobly, until at that priest’s deathbed he once again inquired about another just like him. The priest responded that he knew only of one more, in the land of Nusaybin (Turkey).

Salmān then traveled to Nusaybin where, not only did he serve the priest honourably, but he also commenced a business venture in cattle herding and breeding. When the priest was at his deathbed, Salmān once more, not satisfied with his service and travel thus far, enquired as to the whereabouts of another man just like the priest.

Now though, he received a very different response. The priest said, “O my son, by God, I do not know of anyone else who follows our way to whom I can advise you to go towards. But now it seems that the era of prophethood is upon us.” Intrigued by this information, Salmān inquired more details. The priest explained that,

“He will be sent with the religion of Abraham. He will appear in the land of the Arabs and will migrate to a land between two rocky tracts of mountains between an oasis of palm trees. He will bear characteristics that will not be hidden. He will eat of what is gifted to him, but he will not eat of charity, and between his shoulder blades is the Seal of Prophethood.”

“If you can go to that land then do so.” advised the priest.

One can only begin to imagine the cascade of thoughts triggering through the mind of Salmān when he heard such a glad tidings.

Nonetheless, he remained in the land of Nusaybin for a time until he was made aware of a group of Arab traders from the Kalb Tribe who were heading back in the direction he sought to journey towards, in search of that final prophet. He located them and struck a deal with them saying that he would pay them everything he owned to be transported to the Arab lands.

He left Nusaybin and journeyed with them but once they reached the area of Wādī Al-Qurā, seeing as though he was a Persian man with no wealth, no land or family to claim him in the Arab lands, the Banū Kalb tribe betrayed him and sold him as a slave to a Jewish businessman.

Still optimistic, Salmān recollected in his mind the description of the land which the priest had given him, and he noticed that the land of his new master was surrounded by date-palm trees. “Could this perhaps be the prophesied area?” Salmān wondered, but there was no way to be sure. Now; a slave, Salmān continued to toil through his days until he was sold to his master’s cousin from the Banū Qurayzah clan and was taken to the city of Yathrib (Madīnah). When he saw the palm trees, he must have thought, “By God, I recognize this place from the description”.

Here, he continued his chores as a slave, and one day, whilst working atop a date-palm tree with his Jewish master taking shade at its foot, the raised voice of his master’s cousin was heard from the distance

cursing, “May God kill Banū Qaylah!⁷² By God, right now they are gathering in Qubā to welcome a man who has come from Mecca today, and they say that he is a Prophet.” Hearing this, Salmān admits, “When I heard that, I began to shiver so much that I thought I would fall on top of my master. I came down from the tree and inquired from my master’s cousin; “What are you saying, what are you saying?” Salmān’s master became infuriated by his interjection and struck him with his fist saying, “What has it got to do with you? Go back to your work!” After all, he was now Salmān the slave! And so, he said nothing in return, but he wanted to make sure that he was not dreaming up what the man had been saying about a prophet of God being so close to them.

Restlessness enveloped him from that moment; and remembering the characteristics of the final prophet who would emerge, that night; Salmān took with him some dates and snuck off from his master’s estate to test the priest’s theory.

Upon reaching Qubā, he inquired about this prophet and was directed to a man named Muhammad ﷺ! Salmān went up to him and said, “I have heard that you are a righteous man and that you have companions who are strangers and are in need. This is something that I have to offer you in *charity*, and I see that you are more in need of it than anyone else.” Salmān then presented it and watched closely for he knew that the Final Messenger ﷺ would not accept charity. He watched as the Messenger ﷺ said to his companions: “Eat!” but he refrained from eating. Salmān said to himself, “This is criteria number one.”

⁷² The Jews of Madīnah addressed the local Arabs as such.

He returned to his master and continued his daily chores and once again, during the cover of night, Salmān snuck out making his way to Qubā. This time, meeting the man who claimed to be a prophet, he said, “I see that you do not eat (food which is given in) charity; therefore accept this as a *gift* with which I wish to honour you with.” and once again Salmān watched closely, but this time the Prophet ﷺ ate some of it and told his companions to eat as well. Now, Salmān said to himself, “This is criteria number two.”

Once more, Salmān returned to his master’s estate and continued his chores as a slave, and yet again, at night, he snuck off to Qubā. Thus far, he knew that all the criteria he had learned from his teacher had been met. Muhammad ﷺ was an Arab, he preached the religion of Abraham ؑ. He migrated to this region of Madīnah which was located between two tracts of mountains and known for its date-palms. He does not accept charity but accepts gifts. The only criteria left to assess is the seal of prophethood between his shoulders.

But how would he ever be able to validate this part of the theory?

Upon reaching Qubā, he found the people in a very sombre state as one of the companions had passed away. Muhammad ﷺ was wearing two garments (upper and lower) and so Salmān decided to try and seat himself behind him in the hope of getting a glimpse of the area between his shoulders. Salmān later admitted that it seemed as if the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ knew exactly what Salmān was looking for, and for no apparent reason, he lowered his upper garment ever so slightly, revealing that which Salmān lost his freedom in search of; the “Seal of Prophethood” was staring Salmān in the face. Ecstatic at what he had just seen, he grabbed the Messenger ﷺ, and kissed the seal to which the blessed Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, ‘O Salmān! Turn Around!’ and

so Salmān turned around and explained his entire story to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ

Salmān Al-Fārsī (the Persian) remained a slave during the battle of Badr and Uhud and eventually the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ advised him to manumit himself to freedom. This was no easy task obviously, because who would want to lend a helping hand to a slave? His master requested 300 date palm trees and 40 Ūqiya⁷³ of gold. As Salmān feared, his master requested from him an impossible task. How would he acquire so much gold? And where would he obtain 300 seedlings from? Even if he could find the seeds to plant so many, where could he possibly plant them? The most fertile land was already taken, and the marshy lands would be unsuitable and far too great a risk to take.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said to his companions, “Help your brother” and so they assisted him by contributing seedlings. “Thirty small trees from me,” said one companion, and another gave twenty, and another gave fifteen, and another gave ten, each man gave according to his affordability until they had collected three hundred small trees for Salmān!

Now, what remained was the obstacle of locating fertile land to plant them. Once again, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, “Go, O Salmān, and dig the holes where they are to be planted. When you have finished, come to me and I will plant them with my hand.” And so Salmān dug the holes and awaited God’s Messenger ﷺ who planted each of the trees with his blessed hands, and when the trees matured,

⁷³ Ūqiyah is the name of the historical Arabic unit of weight and corresponds approximately to the ounce, but varied regionally.

Salmān exclaimed “By God! Every single tree grew to its full and none of them died”.

Salmān then handed ownership of the garden of dates⁷⁴ over to his master who accepted the trees, but he was still unable to pay the remaining gold. Some time had passed, and a piece of gold the size of an egg was brought to the Messenger ﷺ from one of his campaigns. He inquired from his companions, “What happened to the Persian who had a contract of manumission?” And so Salmān reported to the Messenger ﷺ who then gifted him that portion of gold and said, “Take this and pay off what you owe, O Salmān.” As grateful as Salmān was, he was a businessman in the distant past when he roamed the earth freely and so he asked, “How could this pay off everything I owe, O Messenger of God?” “Take it, and God will help you to pay off what you owe,” replied the Noble Messenger ﷺ. So Salmān took it, even though he knew that it did not conform with logic, and when he weighed it for his master, he exclaimed with sheer jubilation, “And by the One in Whose hand is the soul of Salmān, it is forty Ūqiyahs!” Salmān paid off his dues and after enduring years of agonizing slavery, he was finally set free.”

This was the story of Salmān Al-Fārsī⁷⁵ ﷺ the one who, in pursuit of the truth acquired *the missing peace* he sought so much in life and was now an erudite companion of the promised Prophet ﷺ about whom he had been informed, thousands of miles away!

⁷⁴ The historical site of this blessed garden remains a famous location of tour in Madīnah to this day unlike most historical sights demolished by the authority of Saudi Arabian government.

⁷⁵ His famed story is located in numerous books of prophetic biography as well as the books chronicling the lives of the companions.

From the time we are children, we are taught about fairy tales such as ‘Snow White and the Seven Dwarves’, or ‘Beauty and the Beast’ or ‘Sleeping Beauty’ etc. and through these narratives, every child begins to fantasize about a life that ‘could be’, a life of endless possibilities because these stories are all about happy endings. You see, the pursuit of happiness is embedded in us from childhood, but what nobody tells us is that the reason we pursue it is because we are constantly seeking peace and solace in life. Human beings react negatively to distress and discomfort, thus we are constantly in search of that *missing peace* in the journey of life. Hence our pursuit of it persists, whether it is through the fulfillment of a life-long passion or acquiring our dream object of wealth.

Contrarily, there are hundreds of media reports exhibiting many multi-millionaires who, despite their wealth, have committed suicide, resorted to drugs, or drunk themselves to death. There are even reports of workaholics who have followed their chosen career path, and as a result, cannot find the basic time to sit down for a meal with their family and who feel as if they cannot find the time to ‘breathe’.

Sure, they have achieved their life-long dreams, but what have they got in return besides added stress and the loss of life, hence we must ask ourselves as to what is really important to us? The story of Salmān Al-Fārsī رضي الله عنه, in this account of the subject of tawakkul, illustrates that, even though we may tread a certain path, in essence, we have no way of knowing where the path will lead. Salmān Al-Fārsī رضي الله عنه pursued a path for no worldly reason other than in search of the correct worship of God, and little did he realize that, as perilous as his journey was, he was being re-routed by the ultimate GPS at the time...and what may have seemed like a ‘huge mistake’ for us, culminated as the greatest choice Salmān رضي الله عنه ever made *unknowingly*.

God Almighty states in the Qur’ān,

وَالَّذِينَ اهْتَمَلُوا زَادَهُمْ هُدًى وَآتَاهُمْ تَقْوَاهُمْ

“As for those who have accepted God’s guidance, He strengthens them in guidance, and gives them piety and protection from sinning.”⁷⁶

The story of Salmā Al-Fārsī رحمته الله may be viewed as the manifestation of the promise of the aforesaid verse because he was in search of God at whatever the cost. He spoke out against his father knowing that there would be repercussions and for this, and he was placed under house arrest. Yet he continued to search for that guidance, for that state of peaceful submission to God.

In 2020, the global populace experienced ‘lockdown’ due to the Covid19 outbreak, and some suffered psychological breakdowns, even though people were allowed to leave home to purchase essentials, etc. Salmān, on the other hand, was shackled like a prisoner in his own home. He could have easily given in to his father’s demands and continued with his life. He would have probably become the leader of his people like his father before him, but he was in search of that *missing peace* in his life which could not be filled by any worldly means.

Without flinching, he traveled from Persia (Iran) to Shām, to Iraq, and back to Shām, then to modern-day Turkey, and eventually to Arabia. In the process, he lost his freedom and was reduced to the lowly position of a slave! Nobody would ‘believe’ and ‘trust’ in God after enduring those circumstances! Herein lies the fundamental difference between a true believer and a superficial one. An outward or weak

⁷⁶ *Sūrah Muhammad, 47:17*

believer is strong in his or her faith so long as natural causation works in their favour. The moment their situation begins to worsen for them, then they begin to ‘question’ God’s plan. A true believer, on the other hand, is in harmony with whatever situation is placed before him as he knows that the plan of God is far superior to his or her understanding of the mechanisms of life.

If you trust in Him, God Almighty can raise you from a lowly position of being a slave and cause you to become the leader of the people. Salmān Al-Fārsī’s ﷺ actions, attitude, and astounding tawakkul were so beloved to God Almighty; that some 1400 years later Muslims are still remembering him, to the point that his story forms an example of tawakkul in the modern age as a chapter of a book!

Little did he realize that he would traverse from being ‘Salmān the Slave’ to becoming ‘Sayyidunā’ (Our leader) Salmān Al-Fārsī ﷺ.

His story teaches us that our story is not being written by us, and so we must place our trust in the ultimate author of life, whose pen knows no deviation, and its ink never dries. His creativity to structure the best ending is immeasurable, His knowledge of all the characters in our story is infinite, and He wrote our story down by the sacred pen before all of creation was even a thing of existence!”

Is such an author of creation not befitting of our absolute conviction? So, let us place our trust in Him, and let us submit that we are being steered in a direction for which the destination is decreed by the one who is worthy of every decree!

The missing peace in the journey of life which we ceaselessly stress about is not located beyond the horizons of some distant land, but it is located

within ourselves, deep within our chests! It is within this heart of ours, which, if aligned to God Almighty, then peace will be the permanent experience of every passing moment in the sojourn of this temporary life!

توكلت على الله

“Upon Allāh do I Rely”



“Tawakkul is not to be annoyed and angry when the plan that one envisaged did not pan out accordingly! No! Tawakkul is taking the journey knowing that even though one has endured every effort in the planning process, that God’s plan is not just the ultimate plan, but it is the only plan which will come to pass, and to, therefore ‘accept’ the outcome of that plan because God knows better as He exists outside the finite confines of all created things, and is, therefore, the most suitable Decider to guide our path.”

Chapter Nine

How is your Heart with Allāh Today?

“To develop our tawakkul in God, the heart needs to be trained daily. This is why, from the moment we awaken, Muslims are taught to recite Duā (supplications). These are not to be done merely as ‘rituals’ but should be done to incorporate God’s remembrance to receive ‘spiritual’ benefit.”

“This morning I woke up and opened two gifts...my eyes! I inhaled and exhaled, unlike thousands of others who had lost their lives this past night. I heard the songs of the birds in perfect rhythm, and smelt the fresh air when I opened the window. I felt my children’s embrace; and enjoyed the taste of the food in the kitchen! These are priceless gifts given to us as an amānah (trust) by God, yet we only value its worth when it no longer functions at optimum.

All around us are such wonders from the gifts of God, yet they are neglected each passing day and traded for cheap thrills and for ‘paper’ money which we ‘value’ as the most meaningful acquisition in life.

Is there any knowledgeable person who can deny the grandeur of the cosmos in its perfect order? We are reminded, and, by reminded, I mean repetitively in the Qur’an, by a verse which is meant to hammer this very point into the mind of its reader,

فَبِأَيِّ آءَالَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ

“So which of the favours of your Lord will you deny?”⁷⁷

God Almighty wants us to understand His perfection through the perfection of His creation. He provides for us the means to contemplate and reflect upon His numerous bounties, even though they are incalculable,

وَأَنْ تَعْبُدُوا عَمَّةَ اللَّهِ لَا تُحْصُوهُمَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَعَلِيمٌ رَحِيمٌ

⁷⁷ Sūrah Ar-Rahmān, 55:13

“And if you enumerate the favours of Allāh, you will never be able to count them; indeed Allāh is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”⁷⁸

Yet, human beings tend to calculate all the items not in their possession, to determine the scale of our ‘wealth’ - when in fact we are rich with the innumerable gifts God has showered upon us. To develop our tawakkul in God Almighty, we must adopt an *attitude of gratitude* because, to complain is to be dissatisfied with what we have, and if we are in a state of dissatisfaction, we will never be in harmony with God’s plan for us because of our constant desire for more.

An example of this may be viewed from the young career-driven individuals out there. Many years ago, when a person was mature enough and was earning an income, that person was considered to be ‘marriageable’. This was because Muslims were well aware that marriage is considered half of ‘faith’. Today, however, a person can already be in a position of professionalism, or, in possession of a good business, but the mindset has changed. It seems to constantly border on the lines of, “Once I accumulate lots of money, then I will consider marriage”. In many cases, the ‘young’ man (or even woman today) are so driven by their professional ambition, they choose not to get married, and pursue those ambitions instead. After a few years, these ambitious people realize that perhaps the business or career path they had chosen did not work out for them as ‘planned’, and in the process, they lost their youth, or perhaps even their wealth, and now, they want to consider marriage. If they had believed that God Almighty is indeed the Provider and Sustainer, and that He can provide from

⁷⁸ *Sūrah An-Nahl, 16:18*

unfathomable means, then they would have always chosen the path which fulfilled an aspect of Imān (faith) first.

In this manner, each passing day, the ‘choices’ we make seem to be contrary to our human nature, since human nature is naturally aligned to the path of truth. If you don’t believe so, then consider the invention called the ‘lie detector’. A human being may lie outwardly, but our nature is such that our body reacts to lies. When we lie, our ‘heart’ becomes erratic. We begin to perspire and feel somewhat uncomfortable. And if we continue to tread this path of lying to ourselves by making daily choices that turn us away from our Creator, then at the end of each day, we will be at a loss!

Human beings are beautiful and are therefore attracted to things of beauty, hence God Almighty has beautified this world for us to recognize that if the creation is as beautiful as we say, then what about the Creator? He creates trees to provide an *invisible* source of life for us called oxygen, yet we have no qualms in cutting down those trees to manufacture other objects of need? He gives us the gift of water as a natural energy drink, yet why are we are obsessed with man-made artificial products? Who can deny the splendour of the rays of the sun on a winter’s morning or the coolness of a breeze in the heat of summer? Or the serenity of the ocean when we are stressed? So, which of the favours of your Lord will you deny?

To maintain the strength of heart, we must embrace the knowledge of the power and presence of God in our everyday life through His remembrance (Zikr). God Almighty tells us that there is great knowledge in the nature of things (3:190) but the knowledgeable are those who combine the following two aspects as per the Qur’anic directive,

الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَمًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ رَبَّنَا
مَا خَلَقْتْ هٰذَا بٰطِلًا سُبْحٰنَكَ فِقْتَنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

“(the erudite are those) who remember God (whilst) standing, sitting, and lying down, who reflect on the creation of the heavens and earth: ‘Our Lord! You have not created all this without purpose- You are far above that!- so protect us from the torment of the Fire.’⁷⁹

The verse advises that for us to truly be knowledgeable about God’s power and perfection in the nature of everything around us, we must incorporate Zhikr (His remembrance) and enhance that with the concept of Fikr (deep contemplation) upon His creation.

To develop our tawakkul in God, the heart needs to be trained daily. This is why; from the moment we awaken, Muslims are taught to recite Duā (supplications). These are not to be done merely as ‘rituals’ but should be done to incorporate God’s remembrance to receive the spiritual benefit. Whether we are sitting, talking, walking, driving, etc. we are advised to enhance our connection with God Almighty and in so doing, our hearts will become inclined to Him, thus, easing our tawakkul in His power and might. This Zhikr (remembrance) is also to be achieved via the constant recognition of the splendour of His creation. When we see the sun setting upon the horizon with an array of natural colours and lights in the distant sky, instead of focusing on one’s ‘self’ by taking a ‘selfie’, take that picture and say,

⁷⁹ Sūrah Āl-Imrān, 3:191

فَتَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنُ الْخَالِقِينَ

“...So blessed is Allāh, the best of creators.”⁸⁰

Instead of using God’s creation as an excuse to parade ourselves, we could have easily contemplated the beauty of God’s creation and directed all attention to Him in our thought process! This is true remembrance of God, and if we can apply it daily, the heart will become alert to His presence and –God Forbid– if we are to experience times of great difficulty, we will therefore easily deduce that everything around us is a slave to His command and thus, He can change the order of things if He so wills.

The beauty of having a sound heart is that when it is trained to recognize our Creator, then it acknowledges that He is ‘Al-Akbar’ (The Greatest) and everything else is insignificant. This, in turn, creates the opening for understanding the subject of tawakkul, because why would any knowledgeable person place their trust upon insignificant things, when we can place our trust in the “Greatest” in all regards?

We can search from east to west for a God who can take care of our every need but that search will yield no results because there is not a single person in existence on the face of this earth who has complete control over everything within creation because only the absolute God can maintain absolute control in all regards,

رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَاتَّخِذْهُ وَكِيلًا

⁸⁰ Sūrah Al-Mu’minūn, 23:14

“Lord of the East and Lord of the West – there is no God except Him, therefore make Him your sole Trustee of affairs.”⁸¹

The question which the reader must ask, after deep introspection upon the points raised in this chapter is, *“How is your heart with Allāh today?”* Is it in reliance or defiance to He who has given you the very air which you are breathing right now?

توكلت على الله

“Upon Allāh do I Rely”



⁸¹ Sūrah Al-Muzammil, 73:9

“Bear patience Oh anxious heart, for your story has been written by
the Greatest of writers!”

(Shaykh Faheem)

Chapter Ten

All Roads Lead to Him!

“...there will be times when things won't necessarily go in accordance with 'our plan', but if we are patient upon the situation, and believe that the knowledge of God Almighty has foreseen this particular path to be the best possible route for us, then when His plan is executed, it will yield flawless results either in this life or the next.”

You are on a *road*...but now you *know exactly* where it leads. All roads lead to Him, to God the Almighty. So how do you get there? You look for His *signs to guide* you on your *journey of life* knowing well that if you abide by His laws, and rely on Him, even if someone tries to divert you down a *treacherous path*, He will send help from unimaginable means, if you but trust in Him!

The discussions on our quest to understand the subject of tawakkul thus far have caused us to travel through a cascade of narratives from the lives of the chosen Prophets of God as well as examples from other pious servants. All of this has been exhibited to highlight to the reader the following points:

Firstly, our knowledge is limited and as a corollary of that limitation we are confined to knowing only what is 'here and now' whilst God's knowledge exists beyond the concept of time. Hence, He is aware of every ripple effect of every choice that we made, every choice which we make, and those choices we are yet to make. His knowledge accounts for every human being alive and every human being who lived and will be born, including in this moment and in every moment in time which has not yet come to pass.

Every knowledgeable person knows that when one is about to delve into uncharted territory for anything in life, then the smartest thing a person can do is to seek advice from a professional, or someone who is much more experienced in the field we wish to explore. When we want to invest, we seek advice from the banker. When we want to plan a holiday, we seek advice from a travel agent. When we want to send our children to a particular school, we seek the advice of teachers. This is the normal process. Why? Because we understand the tremendous value in the matter in which we wish to invest our time, effort, or finances. Why

then do we place such minimal to no effort when it comes to investing in the future of our Imān? Why can't we do the 'knowledgeable' thing in this crucial matter and seek the advice of the one who possesses the knowledge of every outcome of our future? Once we submit to the fact that knowledge, or the lack thereof, is one of the primary reasons why human beings question the plan of God, then we will always be mindful to never question God's plan for us because we will cognizant of the fact that our knowledge is limited and His knowledge is infinite, and therefore we must place our trust in Him, knowing that the outcome is hazy for us, but clear for him! This was depicted from the lessons in the chapter entitled 'Meet the Challenger', in which Abū Lahab's future was placed on exhibition for all to see and acknowledge, that God Almighty possesses such foreknowledge that even when He presents us with the choices, He is well aware of which choices we will make, thus the inevitable end is cloaked in a cloud of mystery for us, but it is clear for Him. Therefore, we must trust in Him!

Secondly, in pursuit of understanding the subject of tawakkul, we are taught to be patient and forbearing in every situation. Sure, there will be times when things won't necessarily go in accordance to 'our plan', but if we are patient upon the situation, and believe that the knowledge of God Almighty has foreseen this particular path to be the best possible route for us, then when His plan is executed, it will yield flawless results either in this life or the next.

In addition to the numerous examples of the virtue of being patient and applying the mindset of tawakkul, another archetypal example of this may be understood from the celebrated story of Prophet Abraham

ﷺ and the ‘sacrifice’.⁸² All of his life he was tried in different ways, but he surpassed these tests with distinction (2:124). He pleaded for a son (37:100) and was granted Prophet Ismā’īl ﷺ towards the sunset of his life. After his son reached a mature age, God Almighty commanded him to sacrifice his child, and the child agreed to this, saying that he would be forbearing and patient (37:102). At that most testing time, when he was about to sacrifice his son, God Almighty declared that he had passed the trial (37:103-105). As a result of his great patience and tawakkul in God Almighty (to even consider such a thing), today, all around the world, Muslims remember this great sacrifice annually. Thus, when we are faced with trials and tribulations, we must place our trust in God Almighty and bear patience so that we too can pass with distinction. If we are patient and place our tawakkul in Him, then certainly we will be pleasantly surprised at the result which God Almighty brings forth for us.

Thirdly, tawakkul is to rely on God Almighty, even when everything and possibly everyone is against us. This is because even though we may seem to be ‘alone’, God is ever-present and closer to us than our jugular vein. The story of Prophet Yūsuf ﷺ clearly elucidated that God Almighty can bring so many different pieces of the puzzle together in a manner that is puzzling to the limited mind. Even when Prophet Yūsuf ﷺ was all alone in the well, God Almighty caused a series of events to occur which led him to eventually be amidst the leaders of Egypt and in the process, the plot of the evildoers was exposed and he was thus absolved from all blame.

⁸² For an Islāmic account on the question of ‘Who was the Sacrificial Child? Ismā’īl of Is’hāq?’ see “Stories of the Prophets for the Modern Age – Volume One” by Shaykh Faheem, published by the Islāmic Lifestyle Solutions

In life, people may plot against you and how you react is vital. If you ‘choose’ to trust in Him instead of reacting emotionally, then He will grant you victory in a way that is most fitting! All that is required, is to be patient and to trust Him.

Fourthly, Tawakkul is premised on the importance of making every concerted effort to optimize the results. We cannot be of those who dive from a plane without a parachute saying, “God is, and will therefore catch me.” That would be an incorrect perception of Tawakkul. The story of Prophet Noah عليه السلام exhibited that one must prepare thoroughly in whatever permissible action we intend to pursue, and when the matter is beyond the one’s control, then trust that whatever the outcome, it will be in one’s best interest! Thus, tawakkul is premised upon true trust in God Almighty, but also with the correct application of our God-given senses. This ‘faith-guided reason’ is what will help us on our journey in maintaining a healthy intellectual and spiritual balance, to attain peace in this sojourn of life.

Fifthly, God Almighty has left an open connection between us and Him, and He has requested us to approach Him with our problems in the form of Duā (supplication). We must therefore never assume that just because we prepared thoroughly, that it is sufficient. God Almighty can foil the plans of anyone to teach us these lessons.

Who does unfamiliar with the name ‘Titanic’ today? It was a remarkable ship that was deemed ‘unsinkable’ because of the immense effort, technology, thought, and toughness behind its creation, yet and on its maiden voyage, it sank! On the other hand, an ark made from wood thousands of years ago, which faced one of the greatest storms in history, reached its destination because, when it moved, the captain recited a supplication to God Almighty to guide it towards its

destination. In the same manner, on our journey in life, we too must talk to our Lord and engage with Him in all that we do so that He can guide us along the way. Plan accordingly, but in the end, we must acknowledge that until and unless God Almighty does not Will or Decree the outcome for us, our efforts may be in vain. Thus, we must rely upon Him in every task!

May Allāh ﷻ grant us the ability to recognize His greatness and to cause that recognition to resonate with every beat of our hearts, so that we may be conscious of His presence at all times, and in so doing, trust that He is the One upon whom our tawakkul and reliance must be directed at all times!

In the end, I say...

توكلت على الله

“Upon Allāh do I Rely”



Verses on Tawakkul in the Qur'ān

“On Allāh do I Rely” - (9:129), (10:71), (11:56), (11:88), (12:67), (13:30), (42:10)

“On Allāh do we Rely” - (7:89), (10:85), (60:4), (67:29)

“Why should we not Rely on Him?” - (14:12)

“Reliance on Allāh” - (3:122), (3:160), (5:11), (8:49), (9:51), (12:67), (14:11), (14:12), (39:38), (58:10), (64:13), (65:3), (8:2), (16:42), (16:99), (29:59), (42:36)

“Rely on Allāh!” - (3:159), (4:81), (5:23), (8:61), (10:84), (11:123), (25:58), (26:217), (27:79), (33:3), (33:48)

“Al-Wakil – The Best Disposer of All Affairs” – (3:173), (6:66), (6:102), (6:107), (10:108), (11:12), (12:66), (28:28), (39:41), (39:62), (42:6), (4:81), (4:109), (4:132), (4:171), (17:2), (17:54), (17:65), (17:67), (17:86), (25:43), (33:3), (33:48), (73:9)

Forthcoming Publications by Author

The Meccan Dawn – forms the second volume of the “Stories of the Prophets for the Modern Age” series and focuses on an academic rebuttal to some of the heinous allegations made by apologists on the *Sîrah* (prophetic biography) of the Meccan era. The primary rebuttal focuses on the allegations made by the Canadian archaeologist, Dan Gibson who claims that Mecca is not the Qiblah of Muslims and that the more sound opinion points towards the ancient city of Petra. This false notion, as well as many others, such as the infamously devious Satanic Verses, and Robert Spencer’s ‘Did Muhammad Exist?’, will be refuted -God Willing- by 2020 as well.

Signs & Conditions of the Hour – This work will continue where ‘The Beginning of the End’ left, but with particular focus on the subject from the perspective of ‘cause and effect’, elucidating how the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ foretold the world as we see it today with precision. The book is due to be launched sometime in 2021 inshā Allāh (God Willing).

Agents of Fasād –A book dedicated to proving that the world has fallen into the hands of a corrupt few. The analysis will be done employing intellectual probing into the subject of the implied methodology of the infamous characters known as Gog and Magog (Ya’jūj and Ma’jūj), who will reign upon us an age of Fasād (corruption). The book will be premised on strict adherence to the Qur’ān and Sunnah exploring the global corruption prevalent today as an indication of the true puppeteers who are pulling the strings of pandemonium and chaos.

Resource for Qur'ānic Research

A compilation of resource material for students studying Islām that will provide references to various topics covered in the Qur'ān ranging from animals, locations, peoples, tribes, historical figures, to celestial bodies. The objective is to provide a resource to students allowing them the opportunity to locate subject matters in the Qur'ān indexing the location of those particular topics to the appropriate verses and the inter-related connectivity between.

From the time we are children, we are taught about fairy tales such as 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarves', or 'Beauty and the Beast' or 'Sleeping Beauty' etc. and through these narratives, every child begins to fantasize about a life that 'could be', a life of endless possibilities because these stories are all about happy endings. You see, the pursuit of happiness is embedded in us from childhood, but what nobody tells us is that the reason we pursue it is because we are constantly seeking peace and solace in life. Human beings react negatively to distress and discomfort, thus we are constantly in search of that *missing peace* in the journey of life. Hence our pursuit of it persists, whether it is through the fulfillment of a life-long passion or acquiring our dream object of wealth.

Thus, *Tawakkul – The Missing Peace in the Journey of Life* is an attempt to exhibit to the reader a glimpse into the mastery of God's plan, via a retrospective style of story-telling sourced from the Qur'an and Sunnah. Our methodology is premised on the idea of a practical demonstration of the concept of placing trust in the plan of God Almighty as elucidated in the Qur'anic corpus, and if understood, then we can achieve peace by the fact that once we place our ultimate trust in the plan of God Almighty, then we will never find ourselves 'questioning' our condition. Instead, we will find solace in the fact that God Almighty's plan is beyond our finite capacity to comprehend, and so we must submit to His Will and turn to Him for guidance in all spheres of life.

An Islamic Lifestyle Solutions Publication
South Africa

© Islamic Lifestyle Solutions Publications
www.islamiclifestylesolutions.co.za
ils@hotmail.co.za

MRK PRODUCTIONS - 083 793 9730

