



SAILING THROUGH THE STORMS

Deal Better with Hard Times

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INTRODUCTION

In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

All praise and thanks are due to Allah, and peace and blessings be upon His Messenger, his household, and those who follow his path until the Day of Judgment.



"Life is difficult!" That is what you almost hear from everyone: from the poor and the rich, the young and the old, men and women, and from those who are highly educated and those who are not.

This should not be a surprise, though. Allah Almighty makes it clear in the Qur'an:

{We have certainly created man into hardship.}
(Al-Balad 90:4)

So, hardships, calamities and trials are part of the very nature of life. The fast pace of today's life even aggravates the challenge of coping and effectively dealing with the storms that hit us every now and then.

These hardships range from the personal ones: problems at work, failure in relationships, loss of a beloved one,



psychological problems, teenagers' issues, etc., to those large-scale afflictions hitting the Muslim *Ummah* throughout the world.

Who amongst us do not feel depressed for the plight of Muslims in Myanmar, Palestine, and Syria?

How do you feel when you read about the droughts hitting parts of Africa, causing starvation and deaths of thousands of peoples?

Still, is not it disappointing to see all those hate, anti-Islam speeches, articles, talk shows, films, etc., produced day and night by Islamophobes?

Why should life be like that?

Definitely, there is wisdom behind all of Allah's actions and decisions. The good news is that He Almighty has never left us alone to face life's trials defenseless, with no clue on why these ordeals occur or how to deal with them.

This book presents a roadmap for effective dealing with life challenges. The book starts with a discussion about life and its nature and why there are difficulties.

Chapter two explores different ways to deal better with life's hardships. Scholars, as well as specialists, present, in this chapter, tips and steps that nourish your soul, strengthen your moral and tell you how to successfully beat hard times.

You may feel frustrated due to the successive setbacks the Muslim *Ummah* is facing. You may wonder where the victory



promised by Allah is and how to achieve it. Chapter three deals with this topic in detail.

We ask Allah Almighty to accept this humble effort, to relieve any Muslim in distress and bless the Muslim Ummah with glory and victory. Amen.

OnIslam Shari`ah Team



A silhouette of a person climbing a rock face is positioned on the left side of the image. The background is a sky with a gradient from blue at the top to orange and yellow at the bottom, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The text 'CHAPTER ONE' is in white, and 'UNDERSTANDING LIFE DIFFICULTIES' is in large blue letters.

CHAPTER ONE

**UNDERSTANDING
LIFE DIFFICULTIES**



OUR ON-GOING TEST

By Harun Yahya

Nothing on earth is created in vain, but rather with wisdom. Understanding this fact depends on the wisdom of people themselves. One whose faith and consequently whose wisdom and prudence increase, will happen to grasp this reasoning much better in time.

One of the most important precepts is that we are being tested throughout our whole lives. Allah tests our sincerity and our faith on different occasions. He may give

favours to test whether we are grateful to Him or not. He may create difficulties, for us, to reveal whether we behave with patience or not:



{Every soul will taste death. And We test you with evil and with good as trial; and to Us you will be returned. (Al-Anbiyaa' 21:35)}

We are to be tested in various ways. This is explained in the Qur'an in the verse below:



{ And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient.} (Al-Baqarah 2:155)

Our lives have indeed been planned with the mystery of our being tested. First of all, we are being tested in our physical beings. The Qur'an states that:

{Verily We created Man from a drop of mingled sperm, in order to try him: So We gave him (the gifts of) hearing and sight.} (Al-Insan 76:2)

Consequently, everything we hear and see is actually a part of the test. In all kinds of situations, we will be tested to see whether we behave in accordance with the Qur'an or with our own vain desires.

Allah tests the steadfastness of the believers with various difficulties. One of the most important of these is the oppression of the believers by the unbelievers. All these misdeeds, like verbal attacks, mocking, physical oppression and even torture and murder attempts, are only a means of trial for the believers. In one of the verses; it is said:

{You shall certainly be tried and tested in your wealth and properties and in your personal selves, and you shall certainly hear much that will grieve you from those who received the Scripture before you (Jews and Christians) and from those who ascribe partners to Allah, but if you persevere patiently, and have *Taqwa* (consciousness about Allah) then



that is indeed a matter requiring strong resolve.} (Aal `Imran 3:186)

The most important point to comprehend is that all of these deprivations and misadventures are created by Allah as a special kind of test. One who does not understand this will become very superficial. The Qur'an cites a pertinent tale of certain Jews.

{Ask them concerning the town standing close by the sea; when they transgressed in the matter of the Sabbath. For on the day of their Sabbath, their fish did come to them, openly holding up their heads, but on the day they had no Sabbath, they came not: thus did We made a trial for them, for they were given to transgression.} (Al-A`raf 7:163)

Only the individual who has wisdom can realize that he is being tested, and can succeed in these tests by again using his wisdom. Therefore, a believer should not forget that he is being tested throughout his life. These tests cannot be passed or the heaven cannot be attained simply by saying 'I believe'.

{Do men think that they will be left alone on saying 'We believe', and that they will not be tested? We did test those before them, and Allah will certainly know those who are true from those who are false.} (Al-`Ankabut 29:2-3)

And in another verse Allah says:

{Did you think that you would enter Heaven without Allah testing those of you who fought



hard (in His Cause) and remained steadfast?}
(Aal `Imran 3:142)

** Taken with slight editorial modifications from "The Value of the Qur'an" by Harun Yahya, Goodword Press, India, 1999.*

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WHY DIFFICULT TIMES?

By Wael Hamza



Going through difficult times such as the ones we are going through as Muslims nowadays, it is quite comforting to read Allah's promise in the Qur'an {**Indeed with the difficulty there is an ease. Indeed with the difficulty there is an ease.**} (Al-Inshirah 5-6)

However a thought that comes to everyone's mind is, "Why do we have to go through difficulties in the first place? Why doesn't Allah make our life one full of ease? Why do people of the truth have to be tried, tortured, oppressed, and killed by the people of the falsehood? Why doesn't Allah grant His

people victory and support without having to suffer through tough times?

All the people of Makkah believed in the Prophet and became Muslims. Why would they oppose him, torture him and his companions, and fight Islam and Muslims for 23 years only to



become Muslims at the end? Wasn't it better to skip all these calamities?

Why do we have to see people in Syria killed and injured? Why is it not moving fast enough in the countries where revolution occurred? Why do they have to go so much of political struggle? Why do Muslims suffer the consequences of Islamophobia which take away their right or their spirit to say the least?

Reading the words of Allah in the Qur'an and those of His Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), one can find answers to those questions and understand a great wisdom behind this tradition.

■ **{And if Allah wills, he would have defeated them yet to test you with one another...}** (Muhammad 47:4)

Probably the first and the most important explanation of why people of the truth have to go through difficult times is explained by this eloquent verse above. Allah states that He can defeat His enemies without the help of the believers. He, sure, is capable of anything. However, the *sunnah* (law) of Allah is to do that through us so we would be tested. This life is nothing but a test. **{It is He who created death and life to test you ...}** (Al-Muilk 67: 2).

Part of this test is for Allah to show who would stand for the truth and support it. If it were not for these tough times, people will always claim they stand by the truth. These claims have to be verified by tests and tribulations. Allah says, **{Do**



people think that they will be left to say we believe and they will not be tried?} (Al-`Ankabut 29:2) Allah reminds us with the reason for these trials, **{And indeed Allah will know who is truthful and who is a liar.}** (Al-`Ankabut 29:3) Difficult times are decisive and differentiating. They show those who are truthful and those who are not.

■ **{When is the victory and the support of Allah?...}** (Al-Baqarah 2:214)

This statement was made by a group of believers and their messenger when they were touched by difficulty and they were shaken on their path to Allah. Allah said to His Messenger, to the believers, and to all humanity that the path to Allah is full of these tough times:

{Or do you think that you would enter the garden while yet the state of those who have passed away before you has not come upon you; distress and affliction befell them and they were shaken violently, so that the Messenger and those who believed with him said: When will the help of Allah come? Now surely the help of Allah is near!} (Al-Baqarah 2:214)

As the verse reiterates that it is inevitable to face difficulty, it brings the readers' attention to three important beliefs:

- 1) Victory belongs to Allah,
- 2) It is very near,



3) Call upon Him to bring it about.

Difficulties help attach the believers to Allah in a comprehensive way. Their hearts will be attached to Him and their hopes will only be in Him. Difficult times nurture *tawhid* in the hearts of the believers in ways not possible at the times of ease.

■ {And to help purge the believers...} (Aal `Imran 3:141)

After the battle of Uhud when a partial defeat happened to the Muslim army, verses came down on the believers to comfort them, correct their mistakes, analyze the event, and explain what happened. It was really a tough time that Allah described it by the word *mosibah* (calamity). While explaining the reason for Allah to allow such a calamity to happen to His beloved Prophet and his companions, He said {**And to help purge the believers ...**} (Aal `Imran 3:141)

The believers needed it and it indeed did purge them. It purged each individual from all impurities. It purged them from the love of this *dunia*, the main reason for their defeat. It purged them from the thought of turning away from supporting the truth. It purged them from the sins they possessed prior to the difficulty.

Allah calls those trials *fitnah*. The linguistic meaning of the word implies the use of fire. *Fitnah* is tough as fire is. Fire can't damage gold. It only purifies it and makes it more beautiful. Similarly, *Fitnah* can't damage the believers. It only purifies them.



Another important aspect of this 'purging' is when the believers ask about the reason for calamities. Allah brings their attention to the most important reason: **{It has come about by your own selves}** (Aal `Imran 3:165). This helps the believers to look into themselves, improve their performance, and fix their mistakes.

■ **{And to know those who are hypocrites ...}** (Aal `Imran 3:167)

In addition to the individual level, the other form of purging is on the group level. Allah said, also while talking about the battle of Uhud,

{And what happened to you when the two armies met is by the Will of Allah and to know the believers. And to know those who are hypocrites...} (Aal `Imran 3:166-167)

Hypocrites exist in almost every society. They claim to side with the truth and they work so hard to deceive people. When the battle of Badr happened and Allah granted a great victory to His Messenger, a group of hypocrites emerged. The presence of such a group in any society can damage it. They look for worldly benefits and have no interest in supporting the truth. Often times, they actually side against the truth and fight it from within.

The times after the battle of Badr reminds us with the times after the Arab revolutions happened and gained partial success. Everyone sided with the revolution including those



who aggressively opposed it. However, when the revolutions started facing difficulties and it became obvious that no worldly gain is going to be achieved, many people went back to opposing it. Hypocrisy is not necessarily in faith. It is also in character. Difficult times disclose all types of hypocrites and protect the society from their harm.

■ {I have not created jinn and men except to worship Me...} (Adh-Dhariyat 51:56)

It is the ultimate purpose to worship Allah. Yet worship in Islam is not just a set of rituals one does. Worship in Islam is comprehensive encompassing all types of actions, both emotional and physical. There are very valuable aspects of this worship that barely show outside the time of difficulty.

Sabr, a very comprehensive concept that includes patience, perseverance, and steadfastness, shows itself tremendously at the times of hardship. *Tawakul*, complete reliance on Allah, is practiced the most when times are difficult. Humility before Allah shows itself the most when we are faced by tribulations. Repentance is one of the first resorts during difficult times. It needed Yunus (peace and blessings be upon him) to go in the darkness of the belly of the whale to call upon Allah, **{There is no god but You. Glory be to You. I have been among the unjust}** (Al-Anbiya' 21:87)



■ {To take martyrs of you...} (Ra'i 'Imran 3:140)

Finally, sacrifices that take place at the times of tribulations to side with the truth and support it are very appreciated by Allah. As a matter of fact, He allows it to happen so that He elevates the degree of those believers and show how much they support the truth. He selects some of them and grants them a sacrifice with the most valuable thing in their lives; that is their very lives. He then grants them a high degree in Paradise and gives them what He does not give others. May Allah have mercy on the martyrs and grant victory to the truth!

■ {Indeed with the difficulty there is an ease. Indeed with the difficulty there is an ease.} (Al-Inshirah 5-6)

Those who fail to see the wisdom behind the difficulty will also fail to see the ease. May Allah show us the truth and help us to follow it. May He grant us *Sabr* when times are difficult, and grant us ease in this life and in the hereafter.

Wael Hamza is a Muslim writer, thinker and an active figure in MAS (Muslim American Society), U.S.A.



WHY DOES ALLAH ALLOW SUFFERING IN THE WORLD?

Q. I was wondering if you could possibly help me resolve some conflicting issues. If God is All-Powerful, He must be able to prevent evil. If God is All-Good, He must want to prevent evil. But evil and suffering exist. How is it possible for God to be both All-Powerful and All-Good and still allow a world in which evil and suffering exist? I would greatly appreciate a response.



Consultant: Dr. Muzammil Siddiqi

A. In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

All praise and thanks are due to Allah, and peace and blessings be upon His Messenger.



Dear brother, in Islam, thanks for the question you posed, it's very interesting, and that is why we also try our best to furnish you with appropriate answer.

In response to your question, **Dr. Muzammil H. Siddiqi**, Director of the Islamic Society of Orange County and President of the Islamic Society of North America, states:

"Indeed Allah is All-Powerful (Al-`Aziz) and He is able to do all things (*`ala kull sha'in qadir*). The Qur'an has mentioned this hundreds of times. It is also mentioned in the Qur'an that Allah is the Creator and He is the Best Creator. **{Glory be to Allah, the best Creator.}** (Al-Mu'minun 23: 14)

But then the question comes: why do pain and sufferings exist in the world. We find sickness, old age and death. We see things that are ugly, people who are insane and foolish. There are storms, earthquakes, floods, draught and famine.

We also see people commit sins, show disloyalty, unfaithfulness, greed and insincerity. We see people commit rapes, murders; they fight and make wars.

We know all these and many more problems. There are evils caused by human beings and there are natural disasters. There are suffering for individuals and there are those that involve a large number of people.

But we also know that this is not the whole story. Besides all these negative things, we also see beauty, health, prosperity, life, birth, wisdom, intelligence, growth and progress.



We also see goodness among people, faith, sincerity, charity, love and the spirit of sacrifice. We also see a lot of virtue and piety.

It is wrong to see one side of the coin and not to see the other side. Any philosophy that concentrates on one aspect of the creation and denies or ignores the other side is partially true and partial truths are no truth at all.

It is also the fact that the element of good is more in the creation than the element of evil. We all see that there are more people who are healthy than those who are sick. There are more that eat well than those who starve.

There are more that lead decent life than those who commit crimes. Goodness is the rule and evil is the exception. Virtue is the norm and sin is the aberration. Generally trees bear fruits, the flowers bloom, the winds move smoothly.

But then the question is why does Allah allow these exceptions to the rules?

Let us ask this question to understand Allah's ways in His creation. The Qur'an tells us that good, evil and whatever happens in this world happens by Allah's Will (*mashi'at Allah*). Only Allah knows fully His Will. We finite beings cannot grasp fully His infinite Will and Wisdom. He runs His universe the way He deems fit.

The Qur'an tells us that Allah is Wise and everything that Allah does is right, just, good and fair. We must submit and surrender to His Will. The Qur'an has not given us all the details about Allah's Will, but it has enlightened us with the guidance that is useful and sufficient for us. There are several



points that we should keep in our mind to understand this issue:

1. First of all, Allah did not make this world a permanent world. This is a temporary world and everything here has a time limit. When its times comes it will die, come to an end and finish. Neither the good things of this world are forever, nor the bad things eternal. We are here for a short time and we are being tested. Those who will pass this test will find an eternal world that is perfect and permanent. Those who will fail this test shall see the evil consequences of their sins and corruption.

2. Allah has placed a physical law and a moral law in this universe. Allah allows suffering to occur when one or more of these laws are broken. The physical law is based on cause and effect. Sickness comes if one does not take care of one's health or is exposed to infections. A car accident occurs when one is not alert, or drives in a careless manner, or if the cars are not checked, roads and freeways are not made and kept in right shape, or the traffic laws are not right or not properly enforced. Study of causes and effects is very important to facilitate safeguards.

Even here we should keep in mind that Allah often saves us and He does not let us suffer from every negligence. How many times it happens that we are not careful and still we reach safely to our destinations. The way people drive in some cities, it is a miracle that more accidents do not happen and more people do not suffer. Allah says:



{(Allah) Most Gracious! It is He Who has taught the Qur'an. He has created man: He has taught him speech.

The sun and the moon follow courses (exactly) computed; and the herbs and the trees both (alike) bow in adoration.

And the Firmament has He raised high, and He has set up the Balance (of Justice), in order that you may not transgress (due) balance. So establish weight with justice and fall not short in the balance.

It is He Who has spread out the earth for (His) creatures.} (Ar-Rahman:1-10)

The way we exceed the measures set by Allah and violate His laws of cause and effect is incredible. It is really the mercy of Allah that we are saved. Strictly speaking, the question should not be why does Allah allow suffering, but how much Allah protects us and saves us all the time in spite of our violations and negligence. The Qur'an says:

{If Allah were to punish people according to what they deserve, He would not leave on the back of the (earth) a single living creature: but He gives them respite for a stated Term: when their Term expires, then verily Allah has in His sight all His servants.} (Fatir 35:45)

But sometimes Allah does punish people because of their violations of His laws whether they are physical or moral. The



Qur'an tells us that many nations and communities were destroyed because of their sinful lifestyles:

{If they treat thy (mission) as false, so did the Peoples before them (with their Prophets), the People of Noah, and `Ad and Thamud. Those of Abraham and Lut; and the inhabitants of Madyan; and Moses was rejected (in the same way). But I granted respite to the Unbelievers, and (only) after that did I punish them: but how (terrible) was My rejection (of them)!}

How many populations have We destroyed, which were given to wrong-doing - so it is [now] fallen into ruin- and how many wells are lying idle and neglected, and castles lofty and well-built?} (Al-Hajj: 42-45)

3. Suffering can also be a test and trial for some people. Allah allows some people to suffer in order to test their patience and steadfastness.

Even Allah's Prophets and Messengers were made to suffer. Prophet Ayyub is mentioned in the Qur'an as a Prophet who was very patient.

Good people sometimes suffer but their sufferings heal others and bring goodness to their communities. People learn lessons from their good examples. Martyrs die for their faith, soldiers give their lives for their nations and this brings liberation and freedom for their people.



4. Allah sometimes allows some people to suffer to test others, how they react to them. When you see a person who is sick, poor and needy, then you are tested by Allah. Allah is there with that suffering person to test your charity and your faith.



In a very moving Hadith Qudsi (Divine Hadith) the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said:

"Allah will say on the Day of Judgment,

'O son of Adam, I was sick and you did not visit Me.'

He will say,

'O my Lord, how could I visit You, when you are the Lord of the Worlds.'

Allah will say,

'Did you not know that My servant so-and-so was sick and you did not visit him? Did you not know that if you had visited him, you would have found Me there?'



Allah will say,

'O son of Adam, I asked you for food and you fed Me not.'

He shall say,

'O my Lord, how could I feed you and you are the Lord of the Worlds?'

And Allah will say,

'Did you not know that My servant so-and-so was in need of food and you did not feed him? Did you not know that if you had fed him, you would have found its reward with Me.'

'O son of Adam, I asked you for water and you did not give Me to drink.'

The man shall say,

'O my Lord, how could I give You water, when You are the Lord of the Worlds?'

Allah will say,

'My servant so-and-so asked you for water and you did not give him to drink water. Did you not know that if you had given him to drink, you would have found its reward with Me.' (Muslim, Hadith no. 4661)



Prophet `Isa (Jesus), peace be upon him, is also reported to have said something similar. (See *Matthew* 25: 35-45)

So to summarize, we can say that sufferings occur to teach us that we must adhere to Allah's natural and moral laws. It is sometimes to punish those who violate Allah's natural or moral laws. It is to test our faith in Allah and to test our commitment to human values and charity. Whenever we encounter suffering we should ask ourselves, "Have we broken any law of Allah?" Let us study the cause of the problem and use the corrective methods. "Could it be a punishment?" Let us repent and ask forgiveness and reform our ways. "Could it be a test and trial for us?" Let us work hard to pass this test.

Believers face the sufferings with prayers, repentance and good deeds. The non-believers face the sufferings with doubts and confusions. They blame Allah or make arguments against Him.

May Allah keep us on the right path, Amen!

Allah Almighty knows best.



CHAPTER TWO

A WAY OUT?

REAPING THE FRUITS OF AFFLICTIONS

By Muhammad Fathi

Abu Sa'id and
Abu Hurairah
(May Allah be
pleased with
them) reported
that the Prophet
(peace and
blessings be upon
him) said,



**"No fatigue, nor
disease, nor
anxiety, nor
sadness, nor hurt, nor distress befalls a Muslim, even if
it were the prick he receives from a thorn, but that
Allah expiates some of his sins for that" (Al-Bukhari and
Muslim).**

This world is no more than a test in which all humans are bound to face some hardships and challenges that reveal their patience and steadfastness. The forms of this test are numerous and diverse: Some people suffer poverty, some suffer physical illnesses, some live in a state of insecurity, some are deprived of their cherished and beloved ones, and



still others suffer psychiatric disorders. Referring to this fact, Allah says:

{And surely We shall try you with something of fear and hunger, and loss of wealth and lives and crops; but give glad tidings to the patient, Who says, when afflicted with calamity: "To Allah We belong, and to Him is our return": They are those on whom (descend) Blessings from Allah, and Mercy, and they are the ones that receive guidance.} (Al-Baqarah 2:155-157)

In another verse, He Almighty says:

{He Who created Death and Life, that He may try which of you is best in deed: and He is the Exalted in Might, Oft-Forgiving.} (Al-Mulk 67:2)

Since trials and hardships are inevitable, Islam does not let them pass by without instructing Muslims on the best course of action or by guiding them to the safest and most appropriate attitude.

A lot of the Prophet's Hadith cited at the opening of this article reveal one dimension of Islam's recipe for successfully dealing with life's challenges. In order to balance the negative effects posed by afflictions, Islam draws our attention to their expected fruit. Problems and troubles serve as means to expiate sins and elevate the believer's rank in the Hereafter. This optimistic and positive approach safeguards one from falling prey to despair and grief.

Here, it is fitting to cite some Prophetic hadiths that emphasize this concept:



Abu Yahya Suhaib bin Sinan (May Allah be pleased with him) reported: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said,

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

Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with him) reported: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said,

"He whom Allah intends good, He makes him to suffer from some affliction" (Al-Bukhari).

Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with him) reported: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said,

"A Muslim, male or female, continues to remain under trial in respect of his life, property, and offspring until he faces Allah, the Exalted, with no sin record" (At-Tirmidhi).

The above hadiths should not be mistaken for a call to fatalism and defeatism. The message the hadiths convey is that every Muslim should expect hardships and prepare to weather them. This point makes a distinction between one who trusts in Allah and believes in His mercy and one who feels that he is alone in this world, that he faces its formidable challenges isolated from any source of support or assistance. So, these hadiths are meant to infuse the Muslim with hope and vigor and drive away the destructive thoughts of failure



and hopelessness. To get a better understanding of them, they should be considered light of the following hadiths:

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

The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said,

"A strong believer is better and dearer to Allah than a weak one, and both are good.

Adhere to that which is beneficial for you. Keep asking Allah for help and do not refrain from it. (If you are afflicted in any way), do not say: 'If I had taken this or that step, it would have resulted into such and such,' but say only: 'Allah so determined and did as He willed.' The word 'if' opens the gates of satanic (thoughts)'' (Muslim).

In line with this hadith comes the Prophet's advice to his cousin Ibn `Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) to know that with patience comes victory, with distress comes relief, and with hardship comes ease.

In this respect, one idea may be a source of worry and disturbance. How can we approach afflictions with such optimism when they are clear signs of Allah's wrath and manifestations of His punishment? Has not Allah said,

{Whatever misfortune happens to you, is because of the things your hands have wrought, and for many (of them) He grants forgiveness} (Ash-Shura 42:30)?



Actually, this question haunts many people, especially the practicing ones when they are afflicted with a calamity, deprived of a cherished person, or plagued with an illness. The problem is that in many cases this thought becomes a source of frustration and depression. Instead of being an incentive to hastening to Allah and drawing closer to him, the idea serves sometimes as a dispiriting factor. So, let's see how the Companions viewed the above verse and how they took it positively and optimistically.

In his comment on this verse, Imam Al-Qurtubi reports that `Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) said,

"This verse is the most hopeful one in the Qur'an; if my sins are to be expiated through afflictions and calamities, and in addition to that, Allah forgives many other sins, then what will remain after such expiation and forgiveness?"

True, life's disasters leave hearts broken and loved ones deprived, but the bright believer knows how turn them into a source of determination and a fountain of strength. I conclude with the beautiful authentic hadith in which the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) tells us that the people who face the harshest trial (*bla'*) are the prophets, then those next to them (in faith and devotion), and then the next. Everyone will be tried according to his level of faith; one who has strong faith will undergo a harsh trial and one who is of weak faith will receive a weak trial. And the affliction will encompass one until he becomes free of sins altogether.

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PROPHETIC STRATEGIES TO SUCCESSFULLY DEAL WITH DIFFICULTIES

HOW TO BEAT HARD TIMES

By Wael Hamza

Whether you are a Syrian suffering from oppression and massacres by a criminal regime, an Egyptian fearing the brutal attacks of the corrupt supporters of the former government, a Palestinian who has lived his whole life under



occupation, a Bengali who faces government crackdowns due to your political views, an American facing guilt by association and discrimination, or someone who observes all of these with a heavy heart, you are just an example of the difficult times our global Muslim community is going through. You may not be going through those trials but you may be faced with personal calamities, such as losing loved ones, facing financial difficulties, or dealing with family conflicts.



Difficult times are part of Allah's laws in this universe; they are part of the tests that people go through. They are not necessarily something evil, however. A difficulty we go through, on the contrary, could be a learning experience, a reminder, purification from sins and mistakes, a test of patience and perseverance, or all of these together.

We can emerge from difficult times closer to Allah, stronger, united, more skilled, and more guided, but only if we know how to live through them and respond to them.

There is no one to learn from who better responded to difficult times other than our beloved Prophet, Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him). Not only was he a great man with noble character, he was also guided by revelations from Allah Almighty. Following his footsteps is essential to live a successful life and is part of us being Muslims. By definition, Muslims are the ones who bear witness that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is His Messenger. Therefore, following his example is an integral part of Islam.

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) went through a lot of difficult times both on a personal and a community level. His life was extremely successful, yet it was the most challenging. By the will and the guidance of Allah, he was able to meet all the challenges he faced and come out of difficult times much stronger than ever before.

In this article, we will learn from our prophet some of the guidance to help us through difficult times we are going through and to enable us to use these challenges to our advantage.



■ The Prophet Facing Tough Times

We read the Prophet's story hundreds of years after it was over. It is a successful story that contains one victory after another with a very positive final outcome. This positive experience masked all the difficult times in his life and we tend to overlook them when reading or relating the story, especially in the absence of deep analysis.

The fact of the matter is that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) went through a lot of challenges and difficult times throughout his whole life. In one year, his uncle and his wife, who both supported him emotionally and physically, died. In the very same year, he was subjected to physical abuse from the people of Makkah. The following story, as narrated by one of the Prophet's companions, Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud, tells you how he was treated during this very tough year:

Seven from the leaders of Makkah were gathering next to Al-Ka'bah while the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) was praying. He elongated his prostration. Abu Jahl, one of those leaders, said,

"Who would bring the innards of the camel so-and-so family just slaughtered? We can put it on top of Muhammad while prostrating!"

`Uqbah Ibn Abi Mu'ait, the most idiot amongst them, brought it and put it on the back of the Prophet while prostrating. The Prophet did not move and I (`Abdullah is talking) could not dare to do anything, for I have no clan to protect me.



Fatimah, the Prophet's young daughter, came and removed the dirt and insulted all of them. The Prophet then raised his head and started supplicating to Allah against them all.

He was also challenged as a messenger tasked by Allah to convey His message. He was called a liar, a sorcerer, a poet, and a fortuneteller, and people started calling him *Mudthamam* (dispraise worthy) while his name is Muhammad (praise worthy).

His reputation was attacked, and his companions were tortured to the extent that people stopped listening to him. For two consecutive years before he migrated to Medina, only four people believed in him, two of whom died shortly after.

His trip to the neighboring city of Ta'if was just another example of those tough times. He traveled, walking, for over fifty miles to deliver his message to the people of Ta'if and ask for their support. Not only did they mock him, disbelieve in him, and let him down, but also asked their slaves and youngsters to throw stones at him for a few miles until his sandals turned red from his bleeding.

Even after migration to Madinah, his life wasn't easy. He suffered the curses and the disrespect of the hypocrites in Madinah. His noble wife `Aishah was subject to an ugly rumor spread in the society for days.

Madinah under his leadership was challenged by war from almost every single tribe in Arabia. He witnessed the killing of seventy of his companions among whom was his dear uncle Hamzah.



He faced a siege of ten thousand soldiers, an attack on which his whole city, where all the believers lived, was about to be destroyed.

He faced treason from Jewish tribes in Madinah: some plotted to kill him and others betrayed him to side with an attacking army.

Many of the messengers he sent to teach people Islam were killed in cold blood and he grieved for them for months, seventy of them in one incident and twelve in another.

■ Learning from our Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him)

How did the Prophet manage to face all these challenges?

How was he able to come out of them stronger and with even more influence?

How did he develop such a community that was able to be steadfast in the face of difficult times during his life and after he died?

Below are a few simple, yet very effective, concepts that the Prophet embraced and taught his Companions.

These concepts are extremely important for us to understand and embrace. While going through the ideas below, you will realize that they are a mix of:



- Personal qualities the Prophet and his Companions displayed
- Ideas taught by the Qur'an and the words of the Prophet
- Practical actions taken by the Prophet to face difficult times

1. Difficulties are inevitable tests

This is the first and the most important concept one should believe in: going through difficult times is almost inevitable.

{Do people think they will be left alone and they will not be tried? ...} (Al-'Ankabut 29:3)

When you claim to believe in Allah, stand for what is right, oppose what is wrong, support justice, or fight oppression, these claims will all be tested. Allah will show who is truthful and who is lying.

This is the tradition of those on the straight path at all times. The Prophet and his companions were asked in the Qur'an, a question that is also asked to all of us,

{Do you suppose that you will enter Paradise untouched by the suffering endured by the people who passed before you?}

They were afflicted by the misery and hardship and they were so convulsed that the Messenger and the believers with him cried out: "When will Allah's help arrive?"} (Al-Baqarah 2: 214)



2. Difficulties happen by the Will of Allah

It is very important to know and believe that nothing will happen to you except what Allah has decreed for you. The Prophet was asked to say {**Nothing will befall us except what Allah has decreed for us**} (At-Tawbah 9:51)

He taught one of his young cousins, `Abdullah Ibn `Abbas, "**Know that what hits you would not have missed you**"

This belief gives you comfort and prevents fear from future difficulty, but more importantly, helps you overcome any difficulty you are already going through. Allah said,

{No misfortune ever befalls unless it be by Allah. And whosoever has faith in Allah, Allah guides his heart ...} (At-Taghabun 64:11)

3. Flee to Allah

"O Allah I display before you my weakness ..." This phrase was reported as part of the prayer of the Prophet while coming back from his trip to Al Ta'if.¹ Taking refuge in Allah and asking for His help and support is a very important action we should do during the time of difficulty. This is a trial by Allah, it happened with His permission, and it is only He who can alleviate it.

¹ This hadith is ranked as *Hasan* (sound) by Imam As-Suyuti but deemed *Da'if* (weak) by some other scholars.



4. Examine your actions

"If you are not angry with me, I do not care ..." was also part of the Prophet's prayer returning from Al Ta'if. During times of difficulty, we should examine our actions. This difficulty may very well be a warning from Allah that we are doing something wrong. It may be because of our sins and mistakes:

{Whatever misfortune befalls you is a consequence of your own deeds ...} (Ash-Shura 42:30).

It may be because we strayed and Allah sent this difficulty to us as a reminder to bring us back. Malek Ibn Deenar, one of the great scholars of Islam, transformed from being an alcoholic person to the great person we know as a result of the death of his own two-year old daughter.

5. Be optimistic

Having hope and being optimistic were two important attitudes the Prophet embraced when facing difficulty.

"By Allah, Allah will perfect this matter until the traveler can travel from Sana'a to Hadhramaut fearing no one but Allah and the wolf that may eat his sheep", The Prophet told Khabbab when he complained to him about the severity of torture he and



other Muslims in Makkah were going through. (Al-Bukhari)

It was this hope in Allah, and confidence that there will be ease after difficulty, that kept them going.

This hope was not only kept in the hearts but was also spread through words and attitude. The Prophet mastered optimism and looked for optimism: “**Evil omen is false! And I like Al-fa’l (good omen)**” the prophet told his companions. They asked, “What is Al-Fa’l?” He responded, “**A good word.**” (Muslim)

6. Do not get distracted

One of the very bad consequences of going through difficult times is the amount of distraction the difficulty creates. Ibn Al-Qayim says,

“It is a complete fiasco to be distracted by the blessing away from the One who blesses, and by the trial away from the One who tries.”

Sometimes the difficulty itself scares us away from the good we are doing. Allah says,

{And let it never happen that they might turn you away from the revelations of Allah after they have been revealed to you...} (Al-Qasas 28-87)



The prophet never stopped delivering his message because of a personal difficulty he went through or because of a threat or torture he received from his enemies.

7. Expect reward

This was one of the teachings the Qur'an instilled in the hearts of Muslims. Whether the calamity happens naturally, or whether it is due to the harm of others, being patient and perseverant results in a lot of reward. The calamity will eventually be over,

{Indeed with the difficulty there is an ease. Indeed with the difficulty there is an ease.} (Ash-Sharh 94:5-6)

And when the ease comes, the pain will go away and will be forgotten. What remains and will never go away is the tremendous reward one would get,

{We shall certainly test you by afflicting you with fear, hunger, loss of properties and lives and fruits. Give glad tidings, then, to those who remain patient.}

Those, who when any affliction smites them, they say: "Verily, we belong to Allah, and it is to Him we shall return."



Upon them will be the blessings of their Lord, and it is they who are rightly guided.} (Al-Baqarah 2:155-157)





HOW TO BOUNCE BACK FROM ADVERSITY !

SEVEN STEPS TO RESILIENCY

By Heba Al Sharif

"How will I ever pay the bills?" laments Mustafa, who had just lost his job. It is one that he felt pretty secure in, but tough economic times have not bypassed his employer, and Mustafa's state of shock has left him feeling like he just wants to curl up on the couch with the remote control in hand.



"How will I ever feel love again?" cries Dalia, whose husband of 5 years has just declared that he will be seeking a divorce because he is unhappy with their marriage.

"How can I ever trust again?" wonders Hanif, who has just found out that the son he has raised for the last 18 years has been taking drugs and going to promiscuous parties.

"How will I ever dream again?" says Anisa, who's third (and final) application to medical school has been rejected. She has to face the fact that her lifelong dream of becoming a



doctor will not be happening and the disappointment is eating her alive.

In every part of our lives – in our work, families, and marriages – bad things happen. And sometimes those bad things are not just “stuff”, but big disappointments that can turn one’s world upside down. They can make one feel like nothing will ever be the same, as if one will never recover from the setbacks.

In the cases of Mustafa, Dalia, Hanif, and Anisa (all the names have been changed), the letdowns are still fresh. They are all still in a state of shock, feeling like there may be no hope for them. Their feelings are raw. They’re anxious and fearful, and the disappointments will have them going through stages and ranges of intense emotions: anger, confusion, sadness, low self-esteem, and self-doubt. These are stages of response and they must be experienced, but over time, they and anyone else can begin to feel acceptance and hopefulness. When we begin to let go of the past, we will begin to experience increased self-esteem and rejuvenated optimism. We can begin to bounce back, to be more resilient, and to move forward to greener pastures despite the obstacles.

But how do we do that?

Psychologists and therapists might tell us to stop focusing on what was lost or what did not work out the way we would have wanted it to. They will tell us that we need to rewrite our stories, and to see ourselves in a different situation – for example, Mustafa might imagine himself at a new job, or Dalia might see herself living alone – but happy.



Yet, it is not always easy to imagine a new reality when we are in the throngs of major disappointment. Some people cannot see the horizon because of all the frustration and blame that clouds their view. Others may fall into depression when disaster strikes.

■ What Then of the Resilient?

You know the ones who bounce back quickly and move on after trials and tribulations with seemingly boundless energy. How do they do it? After all, even successful people are tested. What is the difference between them and the others? For those that would argue that



resilient people are just born that way, I am telling you that resilience can actually be a learned trait. It just takes some practice and experience. By committing to master disappointments, you can learn that losses can actually be opportunities in disguise; and I think that this is the ultimate secret of the resilient.

Here are 10 steps to expedite the “bouncing back” process, to help get through the disappointments in the best way possible:



{No kind of calamity occurs except by Allah 's leave: And whoever believes in Allah, Allah will guide his heart [aright]: For Allah knows all things} (At-Taghabun 64: 11)

Indeed, Islam is filled with the ultimate success principles. We do not need to go far from the divine words of Allah to bring warmth and acceptance to our hearts when disappointments occur. We do not have to understand why something calamitous (and beyond our control) is occurring, but accepting it will help us move on quickly. Surrendering to the idea that “Allah knows and we know not” why it is what it is can make the process much easier too.

Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) said: “How wonderful is the affair of the believer, for his affairs are all good, and this applies to no one but the believer. If something good happens to him, he is thankful for it and that is good for him. If something bad happens to him, he bears it with patience and that is good for him.” (Muslim 42: 7138).

What are you really afraid of?

In my work, I have learned that there are all kinds of fears. There are superficial fears like those that include visiting the dentist or spiders, and then there are deeper fears that paralyze us, like the fear of failure or of being alone. However, at the root of all fears is the underlying, most important fear, which is the fear that whatever calamity happens, we will not be able to handle it. Having the ability to say, “Whatever happens, I’ll face it,” is having the ability to



face our fears. Once, we have conquered that, then bouncing back should be easier, like a walk in the park.

Do you want a sure-fire way to know that you can handle anything that comes your way? Consider this verse:

{Allah does not burden any soul with more than it is able to bear...} (Al Baqarah 2: 286)

Not to rush or aggravate the process, but learning patience is not always an easy thing. Recall the woman who Prophet Muhammed (peace and blessings be upon him) passed while she was weeping over a grave, and he said to her: **'Be afraid of Allah and be patient.'** The woman said: 'Go away from me, for you do not know my calamity.' So, he left her. A man passed by and asked her, 'What has Allah's Apostle said to you?' She replied, 'I did not recognize him,' and she ran to find the prophet and said, 'O Allah's Apostle! By Allah, I did not recognize you!' The Prophet said, **'No doubt, patience is at the first stroke of a calamity.'** (Al Bukhari).

We need to realize that Allah Almighty is most wise, most merciful, and that the calamities that befall us are not meant to "finish us off," but rather to check on our patience, our acceptance, and our faith. If we can remain steadfast, there promises to be a manifest reward.

We need to be able to see what is still left after the walls of our disasters have come down.

- What remains?

- What needs our attention?



- What's important?

Focusing on what is left, on giving priority to other areas in our life that we might have been neglecting can indeed be what makes the disaster turn into a blessing in disguise.

Maybe Mustafa's job meant he could spend more time with his young family, they felt as if he was neglecting

them. Perhaps Hanif's other son needs a solid, compassionate father, as he too has suffered losing his brother to a harmful lifestyle. Seeing what is left gives us the motivation to move past the disaster.



'When one door closes, another one opens', so goes the famous saying - and there is wisdom in it. Indeed, when disaster forces us to lose or change something, it also gives us the chance to try something new. Maybe Anisa's rejection to medical school means that she should really give other talents a fighting chance. She has always loved to write for instance. She has always liked to bake. This can be an opportunity to find success in any number of areas. The more new things she tries, the more she can learn what she is good at and what good things await her.



Taking advantage of new opportunities is a way to build our confidence levels and make resiliency a way to get us out of our “comfort zones,” and really experience life.

Sometimes it is hard to ask for help when you need it after a calamity, we want to appear strong. We do not want to bring others down with our burdens. However asking for help in our time of need is such a liberating act, and it gives those who love us (or have made a commitment to such work) a chance to be part of our “bounce back quick” process. Talk to a friend or a counselor. Talking it out with someone is how we begin to feel better.

In addition, if those in the middle of a calamity can find a mentor, maybe someone who has been where they have been, and have risen above the heartache to travel further on in their life, it is as simple as emulating that person. A mentor can serve as a role model, teaching us how to act, what to do, and giving us inspiration to move forward.

To move forward, the enormity of the task (such as finding a new job or dealing with an addicted son) may seem insurmountable. We need to focus on each step as we move forward, not worry about the entire undertaking all at once. We need to give ourselves a break, to practice self-love, and be patient with our circumstances. Enjoying a comforting meal with people we love, taking a walk on a sunny day, or getting lost in a good book are all ways to show ourselves that we are not going to fall prey to stress, when we can be more resilient.

Celebrate the steps you have taken to get over your calamity, and soon there will be a joy-filled “bounce” to those steps.



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PATIENCE: SUPERIOR SOLUTION

By Dr. Wahiduddin Khan

Patience, the focus of about two hundred verses of the Qur'an, and referred to indirectly in many others, may be termed the core subject of the scripture. The verses directly relating to patience are



quite explicit in their content. For instance, Allah Almighty says:

{And seek help in patience and prayer.} (Al-Baqarah 2:45)

{And endure patiently whatever may befall you.} (Luqman 31:17)

{And exhort one another to be patient.} (Al-Asr 103:3)



{And heed not their annoyance, but put thy trust in Allah.} (Al-Ahzab 33:48)

A very pronounced and direct instruction to behave with patience and endurance is apparent in these verses.

The majority of the other verses are also intensely concerned with patience. The very first verse of the Qur'an begins with **{Praise belongs to Allah}** (Al-Fatihah 1:1) This shows that Almighty Allah expects mankind to express its gratitude and admiration to Him. But this is a very trying expectation! We know that this world is full of unpleasant experiences and that nobody can be insulated from them. According to the Qur'an, man is created in affliction (Al-Balad 90:4) Indeed, it is not possible for anyone to create a life of absolute bliss for himself.

How then can a person become grateful and appreciative of Allah's grace in the real sense? The only way to be so is through patience. It is only when a man patiently endures worldly problems that it is possible for him to express his feeling of gratefulness to Allah. It is for this reason that the Qur'an associates gratefulness with patience (Luqman 31:31).

Patience makes a person capable of finding a positive and successful solution to any problem. When someone explodes with anger while facing his adversary, he loses the faculty to respond effectively or to think of well-planned action. But when he applies patience and tolerance, he finds himself competent to make a rational move instead of an impulsive reaction. History testifies that one who acts on impulses and emotional reactions, invariably fails; and one who responds



rationally, always succeeds. Patience is undoubtedly the superior solution to all problems.

Dr. Wahiduddin Khan is a renowned Islamic writer and thinker. He has authored some two hundred books in India and abroad. He is founder of the Islamic Centre, India's vanguard Urdu Islamic institution, which has done much to awaken in Muslims a new awareness of their religion and social responsibilities





GET RID OF SORROW

By Kamal Badr

Why do you look so sad? What is the point of sorrow in your life? Are you living your life or just surviving?

People may laugh and play, but does that mean they don't harbor sorrow and regret? If all the world continually

grumbled about their problems, the world would be overcome with sorrow and discomfort. In such a climate could mankind survive? Could mankind develop?



But what if man were to look at himself inwardly, just like looking into a mirror—reflecting his sorrow with that of man's history from the beginning of time. Consider the short years you spend in this life and look again at how short is the time of sorrow compared with that of happiness and contentment. What you need to do is get rid of the sorrow in your heart; cast it away and start finding ways to make you happy. Strength comes with the ability to feel content in the midst of



trouble, frustration, and turmoil. But where does that innate happiness come from?

Allah created you, and He also created sorrow as a reflection of happiness. Through sorrow we appreciate joy, just like we comprehend coolness through knowing warmth.

Sometimes man thinks he can do everything, that he can be perfect. Man fluctuates between underestimating himself and overestimating himself, rarely appreciating his true condition. Wisdom is built from experience, but how many times do we run away from mistakes that are the seeds of wisdom?

Learn to roll with life's punches and learn from your Lord about yourself, about life, and about what He wants from you, His creature. If you run away from your mistakes, this will simply lead you to make more.

Let your heart be attached to the Almighty, Who is the Infallible, the All-Knowing. Then you will know yourself and begin to grow.

If you spend your life blaming yourself for everything that happens, you are guilty of denying the role of destiny in your life; you are also guilty of blaming your Lord for creating certain circumstances! Do we, tiny creatures that we are, possibly comprehend the wisdom of the Creator?

Mankind sees through a narrow vision of life: we cannot perceive what others perceive; we cannot see life in its overall beauty. So why do we complain, blame, and feel hopeless?

Overwhelming sorrow is destructive, and uncontrollable sadness is disastrous. These things are tools in the hands of



Satan to control mankind and lead him, unawares, to his destruction. Happiness, on the other hand, is distributed by the angels, so take your share and give it to others—then indeed, it will again be returned to you.

Excessive weeping over a problem or sorrow is a sign of dissatisfaction with your Lord. It is natural for mankind to experience a variety of emotions and, indeed, this is what makes him unique; but wallowing in these emotions will certainly destroy us.

Allah the Almighty has called on us to rein in these emotions and make them follow a positive and beautiful channel. And at times of grief, it is the ultimate test to wade through negativity and hopelessness and squeeze the following words out of your mouth: "From Allah we come and to Him we shall return." At that moment of submission your soul will be set free from the sadness that threatens to swallow you up.

Truly in the remembrance of the Lord do the hearts find rest.

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MAKE YOUR REQUEST AND TRUST GOD

THE PROPHETS' SUPPLICATIONS IN THE QUR'AN

By Dr. Yusuf Al-Qaradawi

Materialistic people observe only the norms they are accustomed to and the superficial factors and causes; they never see what is beyond. Believers, on the other hand, perceive what is below the surface. They perceive Allah's power that manages all affairs. He, the Almighty, creates causes and consequences. Then why



do people not resort to Him when crises reach their peaks, when they are besieged with problems and are entrapped within vicious circles? If they do, they will surely find refuge with Him when they are in a distress, intimacy when they feel lonely, and help when they have no one to support.

It is toward Allah that the person afflicted with an incurable disease should direct himself, asking for recovery. To Him also the anguished one should turn his face, asking Him to bestow patience and satisfaction upon him and to reward him for all



he has lost. The oppressed one also appeals to Allah waiting for the day when He will take revenge on the oppressor, for there is no screen between Allah and the supplication of the oppressed. In addition, the one who has no children invokes Allah to grant him good offspring. Each of these kinds of people has great hope that Allah would answer his request, for this is not difficult for Allah.

For instance, Ibrahim (peace and blessings be upon him) asked Allah to grant him children saying **{My Lord! Vouchsafe me of the righteous}** (As-Saffat 37: 100). Allah fulfilled his wish and sent to him some angels in the shape of people who said to him,

{Lo! we bring thee good tidings of a boy possessing wisdom. He said: Bring ye me good tidings (of a son) when old age hath overtaken me? Of what then can ye bring good tidings?

They said: We bring thee good tidings in truth. So be not thou of the despairing.

He said: And who despaireth not the mercy of his Lord save those who are astray?} (Al-Hijr 15: 53-56).

After that, he praised his Lord saying, **{Praise be to Allah Who hath given me, in my old age, Ishmael and Isaac! Lo! my Lord is indeed the Hearer of Prayer}** (Ibrahim 14: 39).

Another example was Ya`qub (peace and blessings be upon him), who lost his son Yusuf for a very long time. Then he was afflicted with another disaster when Yusuf's brother was taken



after the incident of the king's bowl. Yet Ya`qub never lost hope; rather, he said, **{(My course is) comely patience! It may be that Allah will bring them all unto me. Lo! He, only He, is the Knower, the Wise}** (Yusuf 12: 83).

When Ya`qub showed sorrow for losing his sons, the rest of his sons blamed him saying **{By Allah, thou wilt never cease remembering Yusuf till thy health is ruined or thou art of those who perish!}** (Yusuf 12: 85-86).

Full of confidence and hope, Ya`qub replied, **{Go, O my sons, and ascertain concerning Yusuf and his brother, and despair not of the Spirit of Allah. Lo! None despaireth of the Spirit of Allah save disbelieving folk}** (Yusuf 12: 87).



Zakriya (peace and blessings be upon him)

sets another example of hope and confidence. Allah Almighty says,

{A mention of the mercy of thy Lord unto His servant Zakriya. When he cried unto his Lord a cry in secret, saying: My Lord! Lo! the bones of me wax feeble and my head is shining with grey hair, and I have never been unblest in prayer to Thee, my Lord.

Lo! I fear my kinsfolk after me, since my wife is barren. Oh, give me from Thy presence a



successor. Who shall inherit of me and inherit (also) of the house of Ya`qub. And make him, my Lord, acceptable (unto Thee)} (Maryam 19: 2-6).

His hope was not vain. **{(It was said unto him): O Zakriya! Lo! We bring thee tidings of a son whose name is Yahya; We have given the same name to none before (him)}** (Maryam 19: 7).

Ayyub (peace and blessings be upon him) was no exception.

{And Ayyub, when he cried unto his Lord, (saying): Lo! adversity afflicteth me, and Thou art Most Merciful of all who show mercy.

Then We heard his prayer and removed that adversity from which he suffered, and We gave him his household (that he had lost) and the like thereof along with them, a mercy from Our store, and a remembrance for the worshippers} (Al-Anbiyaa' 21: 83-84).

Similarly, after the whale had swallowed Yunus (peace and blessings be upon him),

{...he cried out in the darkness, saying: There is no God save Thee. Be Thou glorified! I have been a wrong doer. Then We heard his prayer and saved him from the anguish. Thus We save believers} (Al-Anbiyaa' 21: 87-88).

Moving on to Musa (peace and blessings be upon him), he departed by night along with his people to save them from the Pharaoh and his soldiers, but the Pharaoh was informed of his



departure and gathered great numbers of soldiers to overtake him. The following noble verse describes the scene:

{And they overtook them at sunrise. And when the two hosts saw each other, those with Musa said: Lo! we are indeed caught} (Ash-Shu`araa' 26: 60-61).

It was really a dilemma; the sea was in front of Musa and the Children of Israel while the enemy was behind them. In such hard moments, Musa did not fear the situation nor did he feel desperate; rather, he said, **{Nay, verily! for lo! my Lord is with me. He will guide me}** (Ash-Shu`araa': 60-61). And Allah did not let him down:

{We inspired Musa, saying: Smite the sea with thy staff. And it parted, and each part was as a mountain vast.

Then brought We near the others to that place.

And We saved Musa and those with him, every one; We drowned the others. Lo! herein is indeed a portent} (Ash-Shu`araa' 26: 63-67).

Finally, in the Hijrah (emigration from Makkah) Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) and his Companion Abu Bakr As-Siddiq sought protection in the Cave of Thawr. The polytheists followed the traces of their feet and the tracker said, "Surely, Muhammad did not pass this place walking; he has either ascended to heaven from here or descended to earth." Meanwhile, Abu Bakr becomes very anxious lest the Prophet, the bearer of the message of Islam, should be harmed. Abu Bakr wept and said, "If anyone of



them should look under his feet, he would surely see us.” The Prophet said to him, “O Abu Bakr! What do you think of two (persons) the third of whom is Allah?” The fruit of this situation was described in the Qur’an:

{If ye help him not, still Allah helped him when those who disbelieve drove him forth, the second of two; when they two were in the cave, when he said unto his comrade: Grieve not. Lo! Allah is with us. Then Allah caused His peace of reassurance to descend upon him and supported him with hosts ye cannot see, and made the word of those who disbelieved the nethermost, while Allah’s word it was that became the uppermost. Allah is Mighty, Wise} (At-Tawbah 9: 40).

These are the facts of history. The materialists may deny some or all of them because they are strange. However, true believers know for certain that usual causes could never limit Allah’s absolute might. Moreover, such causes are not unchangeable facts, for had scientists and inventors stopped at whatever people were acquainted with, knowledge would not have advanced at all, and we would not have reached the atomic age and space age.

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HOW TO STOP WORRYING

BURDENED HEARTS TO BE FREED

By Heba Alshareef

Karima and Mona (not their real names) have not been friends for long, and their differences might mean soon they will no longer be friends.

"I do like her, but her constant worrying is depressing,"

Karima mentioned to me, because after months of working together, she knows I can empathise with her situation.

"It's taken me this long to get over my own anxiety. Am I strong enough to help her deal with hers?"

Karima used to be the kind of person who would stay up until the wee hours of the morning fretting about anything and everything.

- Were the new shoes she bought worth the price?





- Was her job safe from the chopping block?
- Would the cough she developed turn into something really dangerous?

The thoughts would go round and round in her brain, depriving her of sleep, and making her feel like she was never in control of her life. Her mother had worried herself into her grave, and Karima did not want to do the same thing. She had been committed to change and, with the mercy of Allah, change had come.

Then she met Mona, who had recently been through a difficult situation, and constantly felt like things would be going from bad to worse. For the better part of her life, Mona had lived comfortably free of any major worries – but then again, she hadn't been tested like this before. Karima really wanted to help Mona, but she was afraid of being pulled back in and succumbing to the constant worry that had once plagued her. So, she asked me to help.

Here's the seven step plan I shared with the two friends, and if you're prone to worrying or just in a rut right now to the point that you cannot seem to get out of it (or you know someone who is in that situation), the following should help alleviate the condition. May Allah ease the suffering of burdened hearts.

■ Understand Worry

First, it's important to realize that while the act of worrying may make you feel distressed or anxious; it isn't actually a feeling in and of itself. Worry is a thought process – a



constant “what if” thought process that has one obsessively focused on a problem (whether it is an actual problem or just something that one ‘believes’ is a problem). Worrying makes you visit this problem repeatedly, and it does not seem like there is a solution in sight.

Second, not all worrying is bad. Sometimes, worry can be the start of opening a door that will lead to a proactive resolution to an actual problem. However, when it goes too far, it can make you believe that you are working on finding a solution, when, in fact, you are just going in circles aimlessly. When worrying goes too far, it can become harmful, deadly even.

Step number one is to analyze the type of worrying that you are experiencing, and then categorize it. Ask yourself how you can turn it towards being productive.

As for all the other kinds of worries that do not come under the category of “usefulness”, keep reading.

Go ahead, Worry!

A technique that really worked for Karima was the “I’m giving myself 30 minutes to worry like crazy” technique. For so long, she’d attempted to scare herself into quitting the worrying habit, telling herself things like, “you’re going to have a heart attack” or “you turn every little thing into a big deal – you’ll never be able to stop.”

But the constant fretting about something makes the appeal of it even more dangerous. For example, if you’ve ever gone



on a diet and told yourself you can't eat cookies anymore, what do you always want to cheat on your diet with? Cookies!

Therefore, by allowing yourself the time to worry – and only the appointed time slot – you minimize the craving to do it over and over again. Karima tells me that her “designated 30 minute worry time” gives her permission to fret, and go crazy with all the things she is anxious about. The time becomes a sort of therapeutic release. When it's done, she finds she didn't even need the entire 30 minutes and she's able to turn her focus on finding solutions to that which is burdening her.

If you are always expecting the worst, and you are afraid that you will not be able to handle it when it occurs then you are entrapping yourself into a life that will not allow you to live to your



potential. Realizing that everyone worries at some point, and that they soldier on despite that worry is the first step to realizing that you can do the same.

As part of her job, Karima sometimes has to make presentations in front of influential people, and she used to worry that she would be so bad at it that she would get fired. Then, one day she spoke to a co-worker who told her



that the idea of public speaking used to make her physically sick, but her drive to climb the corporate ladder made her ignore that, and do her speeches anyway. Karima realized she could follow this example.

It is a sure thing about confidence building: when you do things you previously thought you could not do, your self-assurance gets a boost. This in turn will help you see that you have what it takes, and that you can handle any situation that is causing you to worry.

Take solace in the verse from the Qur'an:

{And Allah does not burden any soul more than it can handle} (Al Baqarah 2: 286)

Visualize Casting Your Worries Away

In life coaching or therapy techniques, practitioners recommend a regimen of visualization to help dissipate or make your worries go away. These days, when Karima is feeling overwhelmed, she takes her lunch break in the park, and watches the leaves falling from the trees (it is autumn in her part of the world).

"I imagine my worries as the leaf falling from the branch. I watch the slow descent, feel the burden falling from my shoulders too," it seems like she is dreaming as she remembers, and I feel happy for her.



Karima continues: “I anticipate change, just like I know that the only constant is change – just like I know that the colours of the leaves have changed before they fell. And yet the tree remains solid, its roots deep in the ground, unburdened by the change.”

If you were a tree, which tree would you be? Can you see your leaves (worries) falling away?

Love Your Daily Routine and Take a Walk!

Oftentimes, the things that we waste our time worrying about have no real bearing or pose no real threat to the routine of our lives. And it is in that routine that those prone to worry should find comfort from the anxiety that plagues them. The sound of the alarm clock, the morning coffee, the after-school snack, these are examples of the daily happenings that can bring certainty, and reassurance that life goes on. It is about allowing familiar patterns to bring structure, and to hold their foundation in the storms of worry.

If you do not do so already, make sure to add an exercise session to the familiar patterns of your day. Thirty minutes walking or working out will stimulate all the “good hormones” and this is sure to minimize the tendency to worry.



■ Practice Gratitude

Last Friday, the Imam's *khutbah* (sermon) reminded people of all the favours of Allah bestowed upon them. He mentioned the *ayah* (verse):

{...and if you were to count the blessings of Allah, you would not be able to reckon them} (Al-Ibrahim 14:34)

Without doubt, this is the most wonderful patience building technique to practice in order to minimize the harm done by worrying. When you feel a worry coming on, start counting your blessings instead. Worry will turn into gratitude, and gratitude will turn into happiness, which is an additional blessing to add to the pot. *Al hamdu Lillah, al hamdu Lillah, al hamdu Lillah...*

■ Practice Problem Solving

As I mentioned in step one, there are the worries that serve us well, and when we make the effort to actively seek out solutions to other kinds, we are increasing the chances that all worries will become useful and not harmful. I am a big advocate of journal writing to help define issues and remedies to those issues. Try brainstorming solutions to give you new perspective on a worry that is plaguing you. The helpful insights will open doors and empower you *insha-Allah*.



When I reminded Karima that she could practice problem solving regarding her situation with Mona (she was worried about falling into old habits if the two remained friends), she promptly came up with ways that she could turn this particular worry into something positive. The two of them are now the best of friends, and very supportive of one another. Karima and Mona can be seen taking walks together (getting their exercise in) and sitting in front of trees. It looks as if they do not have a care in the world.



CHAPTER THREE

LAWS OF VICTORY

WHEN WILL VICTORY COME?

By Wael Hamza

I was giving a lecture about thinking good of Allah (*Husn Az-zan bi-Allah*) and having positive thoughts about Him. I explained to the audience how this good thinking is an essential part of sound belief. I listed a few situations where this positive thought should come to mind.



One of these situations was to strongly believe that Allah will support the truth, grant victory to those who stand by it, bring about justice, and defeat the falsehood. Leaving the lecture and contemplating about it as usual, I was a little uncomfortable. I analyzed the world around to only find that



1) the truth is weak, 2) people who stand for justice are oppressed, killed, and humiliated, and 3) the oppressors and the unjust are powerful and victorious. "How would one have positive thoughts that Allah's victory is with the truth when I see thousands of people being killed and others being injured?" I wondered.

What truth is victorious? Where is justice in the world? Lands are occupied; freedom fighters are oppressed; revolutionary people are tricked and betrayed. Where is the victory of Allah? When is the victory of Allah?

Can I ask this question?

Do I have the right to ask such a question? Isn't it against my belief to even think that way? Didn't Allah say in the Qur'an that **{Indeed the victory of Allah is close by}** (Al-Baqarah 2:214)?

But this very important statement was made as an answer to a question. To my comfort I found out that the question was, **{When will the support of Allah come?}** (Al-Baqarah 2:214)

So I am not so far off by asking such a question.

What comforted me more is that the ones who were asking this question were a messenger and those who believed with him:



{...the messenger and the believers with him say, 'When will the support of Allah come?' Indeed the support of Allah is close by.} (Al-Baqarah 2:214)

Reading the verse backward, I looked a little more back (in the same verse) to find out why the messenger and the believers with him would ask such a question. It was quite interesting, yet not surprising, to find out that they were going through tough times, times similar to the ones we are going through now:

{They were afflicted by misery and hardship and they were so convulsed that the Messenger and the believers with him say 'When will the support of Allah come?'} (Al-Baqarah 2:214)

I was really amazed by the much similarities this situation and our situation has. Of course you know what I will do next; read more, backward. This time, I am reading the verse from the beginning till the end. It depicts a picture of the whole story. Read with me! Allah is talking to us as a community, a community who is standing for justice and supporting the truth, a community of believers who stand next to the Messenger and his message. Read:

{Do you suppose that you will enter Paradise untouched by the suffering endured by people who passed away before you? They were afflicted by misery and hardship and were so convulsed that the Messenger and the believers with him say: "When will the support of Allah come? [They



were assured] “Behold, the support of Allah is close by.” (Al-Baqarah 2:214)

The question I am asking is similar to the question these good people were asking. We (and they) are not “questioning” Allah’s support. We are, as a matter of fact, supplicating. It is a call upon Allah to bring about His support. It is a *dua`a* that Allah expedites His help and bring down His victory.

Eventually Allah’s support will come as it came before. It is close by as Allah described. However, it is very apparent that there is a law by which Allah grants His support and a pattern through which the truth becomes victorious. There is a *sunnah* (a way) by which Allah supports the truth and defeats the falsehood. Justice is brought down according to a very specific law, a universal law that applied before and applies to us, and will apply henceforth. It is similar to the physical law in the sense that it must take place. However, it is different in the sense that we play a very important role in it.

Understanding this law is essential. It will comfort our hearts. It will explain to us many of the event and actions we see around. It will predicts the future for us and give us guidance to what we should do next. But more importantly, it will tell us how we, as poor and weak human beings, can bring about the victory of Allah by playing the role designed for us in this very important **Law of Victory**.



■ First Law of Victory - Victory is From Allah

No matter how skillful we are and how hard we work, it is not our skills nor is it our efforts that brings about victory. We can seek help from different powers and involve as much resources as we wish but Allah keeps the ownership of victory to himself.



When you read the stories of many Prophets, especially Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) you would find that they expend so much effort in support of their message. However, often times the support comes in ways that they never expected.

The Prophet makes a long trip to a city called Ta'if to ask them to believe in him and support his message, they mock him and he comes back with no success. However, during this trip a group of Jinn listened to the Qur'an, believed in it, and went back to their people to deliver the message.

A few months later, the Prophet uses the opportunity of Hajj to talk to almost every single tribe that came about the same thing: believe in me and protect my message. None of them



accepted. While in this situation, six people from Madinah came to him and accepted Islam. Since they were not leaders of their people, he did not even ask them for support. It was this moment where Islam went to Madinah and Madinah, later, became the home for Islam and the city that protected the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), his companions, and his message.

Prophet Yusuf (peace be upon him), while in jail for a crime he never committed, asked one of the freed prisoners, who will continue his work in the king's palace, to mention his story to the king so he can be freed. The man forgot all about Yusuf and he spent more years in the prison. The man remembered years later and Yusuf gets out of jail later. It is a message that Allah sends us and a very important concept in the Law of Victory; that is victory is from no one but Allah Himself. Allah said it clearly in the Qur'an.

{Indeed victory comes only from Allah} (Aal-`Imran 3: 126)

If we would like to bring about victory, then we should seek it from the one who owns it. We should rely only on Him and we should expected only from Him. It is not a surprise that we have to recite this verse at least 17 times a day as part of our *salah*,

{It is you alone whom we worship and it is you alone whom we turn for help.} (Al-Fatihah 1:5)

It would behoove us not to seek success through ways that displease Him, for Allah does not grant victory to people who disobey Him. If we understand this concept very well our role



in bringing about victory will become clear; that is, to obey Allah and rely on Him.

■ Second Law of Victory - Human role is necessary



As we establish the first law of victory—that victory belongs to Allah and that He Alone can grant it, we must understand that {... **Allah (only) supports those who support Him ...}** (Al-Hajj 22:40).

Victory will not descend on those who 'sit' and 'wait' for it. It comes to those who act, work, strive, and sacrifice for it to come. It will come from Allah and probably will come from ways we never expected and never tried but it will not come until we work for it.

Allah is the most capable of bringing about His support to whomever He wills without any effort on our part. As He Almighty listed in Surat Ar-Ra'd (The Thunder), His powers are limitless:



{It is Allah who has raised the heavens without any support that you could see and then He established Himself on the Throne.

And He it is who has made the sun and the moon subservient, each running its course till an appointed term.

He governs the entire order of the universe...

And He It is who stretched out the earth and has placed in it firm mountains and rivers ...} (Ar-Ra`d 13: 2-3)

{He it is who causes you to see lightening that inspires you with both fear and hope and He it is who raises up heavy clouds.

And thunder celebrates His praise and holiness, and the angels, too, celebrate His praise for awe of Him.

He hurls thunderbolts, striking with them whom He wills while they are engaged in the disputation concerning Allah and He is Mighty in His contriving.} (Ar-Ra`d 13: 12 - 13)

More and more reading through the Surah you would find Allah the Most Capable. So, if Allah is the Most Capable and only He can grant victory, why doesn't it come? In the same surah (and in the same page where magnificent abilities of Allah are listed), Allah says



{Verily Allah does not change a people's condition unless they change that which is within themselves.} (Ar-Ra'd 13:11)

Although capable of providing the support, He will not unless we change; unless we play a role in that change. We have to understand this part of the law very clearly. We have to move for the victory to come. We have to change for the change to happen. The Prophet had to meet all the tribes for Allah to send him the tribe that supported him. He had to prepare for the battle of Badr as much as he can for Allah to send the angels to fight next to him.

If we do not understand this very well, change ourselves, expend all what we can to support the truth, we will be waiting for Allah's victory and it may not come, for **{...Allah (only) supports those who support Him}** (Al-Hajj 22:40)

■ Third Law of Victory - A Day Equals 1000 Years



Ridiculing the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), people from Makkah asked him to expedite Allah's punishment. They even said, addressing Allah,

{If that (which Muhammad is telling us) is the truth from You, send on us stones from heaven or inflict on us a painful punishment.} (Al-Anfal 8:32)



They said so while mocking the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), harming him, and torturing and killing those who believed in him.

It wasn't an easy situation. The oppressors were strong. They were so evil. The people of the truth were weak and oppressed. Khabbab Ibn Al-Aratt, one of the great Companions of the Prophet, suffered tremendous torture whose signs lasted for years on Khabbab's body. Once `Omar Ibn Al-Khattab asked Khabbab to mention some of the suffering he used to go through. Khabbab showed him and the attendees the signs of torture on his back. The scene was so horrible that none of them was able to look at Khabbab's body; they asked him to cover it. May Allah be pleased with them all.

So, one night Khabbab met the Prophet in the city. Out of pain, he complained to the Prophet about the huge suffering they are going through.

"O Messenger of Allah, shouldn't you ask Allah for support? Shouldn't you supplicate for us?"

The truth was apparent: the Prophet and his Companions on one side and his enemies and oppressors on the other; that is a clear truth and a clear falsehood. However, both sides are calling for the same thing, expediting Allah's intervention.

The believers are asking the Prophet, "Shouldn't you call for Allah's support? Shouldn't you supplicate that Allah removes this suffering?"



The oppressors are asking the same thing, out of mockery and ridiculing. It is the same question again: "***When is the victory of Allah?!***"

The Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him) answers Khabbab stating a very important law by which Allah's victory comes.

Among the nations before you a (believing) man would be put in a ditch that was dug for him, and a saw would be put over his head and he would be cut into two pieces; yet that (torture) would not make him give up his religion. His body would be combed with iron combs that would remove his flesh from the bones and nerves, yet that would not make him abandon his religion.

By Allah, this religion (i.e. Islam) will prevail till a traveler from Sana'a (in Yemen) to Hadhramaut will fear none but Allah, or a wolf as regards his sheep, but you are hasty.

Allah answers those mocking enemies by telling his Messenger and all of us about this very important law, that which I called the Third Law of Victory:

{They ask you to hasten the punishment. Allah shall most certainly not fail His promise; but a day with your Lord is as a thousand years of your reckoning} (Al-Hajj 22:47)

The truth is going to prevail. The support will come. The falsehood will be defeated. The oppressors will be brought to justice.



However, these things do not happen overnight. Allah has wisdom in giving things its due time. Noah had to spend 950 years calling his people and suffering the mockery and the disbelief before Allah granted him victory. The people of the cave had slept for over 300 years before they woke up to find the city once, ruled by their oppressors a city of believers.

According to this Law, victory will come, perhaps not in our life time; but it will come. It will come at the time Allah planned, for, one day with Allah is as a thousand year of our reckoning.

■ Fourth Law of Victory - My Lord 'Hurls' the Truth

Never hunted before, you look at an experienced hunter carrying his bow and arrows. A bird is flying at a very far distance. The hunter grabs the arrow, puts it in the bow, gets ready to shoot. You are watching curiously to see what is going to happen. To your surprise, the hunter does not throw the arrow at the bird. He throws it in a completely different direction, way ahead of the bird.



You, according to your limited hunting experience, say, "He will never hit!"



Something amazing happens. The arrow drifts a little due to the wind, the bird continues to fly, and finally the arrow just hits the bird. The hunter has experience. He has knowledge of what is going to happen. He calculates the speed of the wind and the speed of the bird. He developed a skill of how and where to shoot the arrow to be able to hit.

How about Allah Almighty when He “throws” the truth on the “falsehood” to defeat it? Inspired by a nice thought of Sheikh Al-Sha`rawy (may Allah have mercy on him), I made this story above. However, the analogy is not mine and not even the Sheikh's. Read how Allah describes the process of defeating the falsehood:

{Nay, We hurl the truth against the falsehood so it knocks it out; and behold, the falsehood perishes ...} (Al-Anbiyaa' 21:18)

This verse establishes the process: throwing “the truth” on “the falsehood” and it knocks it out. Now that we got the analogy, let us establish what I called “the Fourth Law of Victory” by quoting one more verse:

{Say, Indeed my Lord hurls the truth, the All-Knower of the unseen.} (Saba' 34: 48)

This verse uses the same analogy. However, it describes the One who performs the action—that is Allah Almighty as the **{All-Knower of the unseen.}** The verse explains to us a very important concept in the battle between good and evil. It is Allah who throws the good at the evil to defeat it.

He Almighty knows the unseen, that which we do not know. He knows the best way of throwing the truth at the falsehood.



We may not think this is the way to do it because we do not know. We may think that the arrow is thrown in the wrong direction because we do not have experience. But the One who throws does know.

When the Knower of the unseen is throwing, trust Him. He may throw in directions you do not like or disagree with. However, He will hit and you will see.

But how dare we miss or forget this law! We have seen it multiple times before. We have seen Prophet Yusuf (peace be upon him) been kidnapped, thrown in the well, sold as a slave, seduced by his mistress, and finally thrown in jail for a crime he never committed.

Nevertheless, these very same actions that we disliked were the actions that established Yusuf as one of the highest authorities in Egypt and helped him save Egypt and its surrounding from a devastating famine.

How dare we think the arrow is not going to hit when we see Musa (peace be upon him) picked up from the river by his very enemy, Pharaoh. This was exactly what was needed for him to grow up as a leader to be able to save his people later.

It was the conflict that happened later for Musa to leave the palace and live a simple Bedouin life to be able to feel for the poor and the simple. What Musa went through was bad according to our knowledge, yet, what he exactly needed to develop the attitude of a messenger and the qualities of a leader.

How can we miss the stories of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him)? The loss of his parents was what



led him to accompany his grandfather then his uncle as opposed to his parents. This little suffering the kid (peace and blessings be upon him) went through is the exact same thing he needed to acquire leadership skills and interact with the highest rank in the society.

If we were to choose for him an uncle, we would have chosen anyone but Abu Talib. We would have chosen Al-`Abbas ibn `Abdul-Muttalib, Abu Lahab, or Hamza. They had the money to bring him up better. But we are not experienced. Allah chose Abu Talib for a reason.

My dear reader, if you are depressed from what is going on in the world, if you see things moving in directions that you do not like, do not lose hope. Do not lose trust in Allah. These directions may be very well the directions through which Allah will bring about victory, for He Almighty is the Knower of the unseen.

