

Islamic Studies

Grade 6

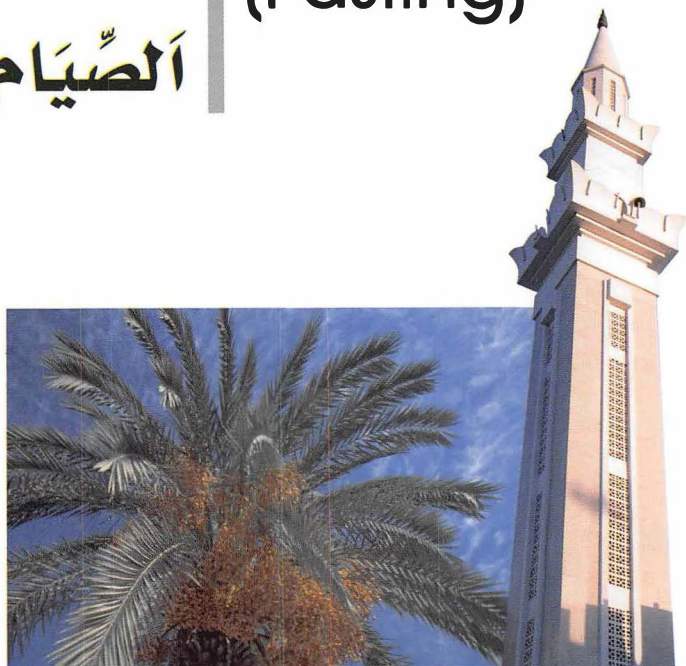
Molvi Abdul Aziz
MA, English Literature

DARUSSALAM

GLOBAL LEADER IN ISLAMIC BOOKS

الصَّيَام

Sawm (Fasting)



Definition

Sawm, or siyaam, is an Arabic word which means 'keeping away from something.' In Islam, it means to abstain from eating, drinking and other things from dawn until sunset with the intention of getting closer to Allah.

The fast of Ramadan was made obligatory on Muslims in the second year of the Hijrah. When the month of Ramadan comes, Muslims must fast it because of Allah's Command:

"So whoever of you witnesses the month (of Ramadan) must fast it."

(2:185)

Fasting also makes one realize, through one's own experience, how it feels to be hungry and thirsty, and thus to gain a true appreciation of the needs of the poor.

For whom is the Fast Obligatory?

Fasting in the month of Ramadan is compulsory for every Muslim who has reached physical maturity, is healthy and sane. Fasting is not obligatory on small children.

Those who are Exempted from Fasting Altogether

1. The permanently ill who are not likely to recover from their illness.
2. Those people who are too old and feeble to fast at any time of the year.
3. Those in similar situations who find it difficult to fast, no matter the season.

These people do not have to make up for the missed days, but they are required to feed a poor person a mudd of food for each day they missed. A mudd is a measure of approximately two-thirds of a kilogramme.

Those who are Allowed to Postpone Fasting

The following are allowed to break the fast and are required to make up for the missed days:

1. The ill people who are not terminally ill, if the fast is likely to make their illness worse or delay recovery;
2. The traveller, if he travels as far as the distance requires shortening the obligatory prayers. If he is able to fast while travelling, then he can do so.

Some Virtues of Fasting

Fasting has a large number of virtues including the following:

- The smell of the mouth of a fasting person is more pleasant to Allah than the smell of musk. (Al-Bukhaaree)
- Fasting is for Allah alone and He alone rewards for it. (Al-Bukhaaree)
- The fasting person has two moments of joy: (1) when he breaks his fast and (2) when he meets his Lord. (Al-Bukhaaree and Muslim)
- Fasting is a form of protection (from Hellfire). (Al-Bukhaaree and Muslim)
- When the month of Ramadan comes, the gates of Paradise are opened, the gates of Hell are locked and the devils are chained. (Muslim)
- In Paradise there is a gate called ar-Rayyaan, through which only those who fast would enter. (Muslim)
- Whoever fasts Ramadan with firm faith and seeking reward (from Allah) will be forgiven his past sins. (Al-Bukhaaree and Muslim)

Benefits of Fasting

The main reason behind fasting is to attain taqwaa, or piety, as the Qur'an says: "O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, that you may become pious."

(Surat Al-Baqarah, 2:183)

Fasting provides protection and strength for both the soul and the body. It is a sure cure for many illnesses and a wonderful tool for strengthening the soul in the love of Allah and His obedience.

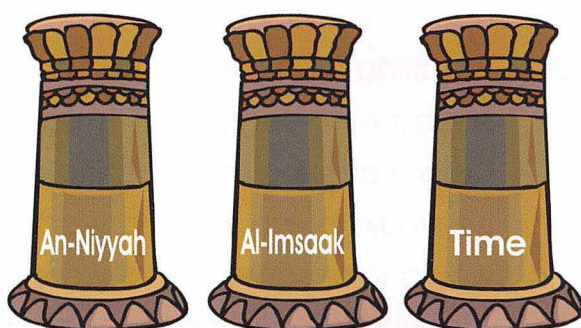
Fasting also provides an exacting exercise in discipline. Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said, "Fasting is a shield; so when one of you is fasting he should not use foul or foolish talk. If someone attacks him or insults him, let him say, 'I am fasting, I am fasting.'" (Al-Bukhaaree and Muslim)

Pregnant and Nursing Women

A pregnant woman is allowed to break the fast if fasting is likely to harm her health or that of her unborn baby.

A nursing mother is also allowed to break the fast if fasting is likely to harm her health or prevent her from having enough milk for her baby.

Pregnant women and nursing mothers must, however, make up for the missed days.



The Pillars of Fasting

1. An-Niyyah (Intention)

This means one has to have the intention to fast to fulfil Allah's Command and to get closer to Him. If the fast is obligatory, one must have the intention to fast at any time during the preceding night. The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Those who do not intend to fast during the (preceding) night will have no fast at all." (At-Tirmidhee)

However, if the fast is voluntary, one can intend to fast at any time even during the day, provided one has not eaten, drunk or done anything that breaks the fast.

It is worth mentioning here that the intention should not be verbal.

2. Al-Imsaak

This means to abstain from those things which break the fast, such as eating and drinking.

3. Time

Fasting starts at dawn and ends at sunset.

The Sunan (Recommended Acts) of Fasting

1. As-Sahoor: The Pre-Dawn Meal

As-Sahoor is the meal a Muslim takes before dawn with the intention of fasting. The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Eat sahoor, for indeed there is a blessing in sahoor." (Al-Bukhaaree and Muslim)

2. Delaying the Sahoor and Hastening to Break the Fast

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "My followers will remain upon goodness as long as they hasten to break the fast (at sunset) and delay eating the sahoor." (Muslim)

3. Breaking the Fast with Dates or Water

Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) used to break his fast with fresh dates before offering the Maghrib prayer. If there were no fresh dates, he would break it with dry dates. If there were no such dates, he would take some sips of water.

4. Invoking Allah upon Breaking the Fast

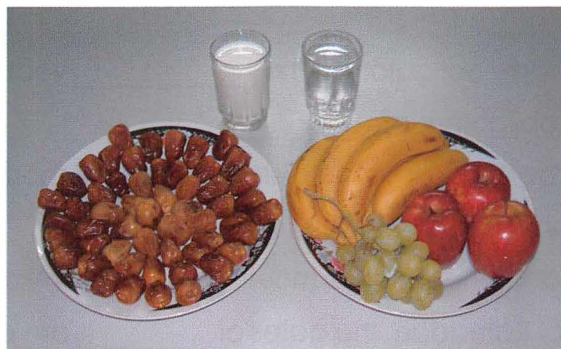
The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Three supplications are accepted: The supplication of the fasting person, that of the oppressed and that of the traveller." (Al-Baihaquee)

Things that Break the Fast

The following are some of the things that spoil the fast. Anyone who does any one of them is required to make up for the fast:

- Intentional eating and drinking
- Intentional vomiting
- Swallowing water because of exaggerating while rinsing the mouth or nose during wudhu. This type includes allowing food to reach the stomach by any means, such as taking injections that nourish the body.
- Intending to break the fast even if one has not eaten or drunk.
- Reverting from Islam.

If someone vomits against his will, his fast is still valid. Likewise, if he eats and drinks out of forgetfulness his fast is valid but he has to stop eating or drinking as soon as he remembers.



Supplication When Breaking the Fast

One of the supplications the Prophet (ﷺ) would make upon breaking the fast was:

ذَهَبَ الظَّمَأُ، وَابْتَلَّتِ الْعُرُوقُ، وَثَبَتَ الْأَجْرُ إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ

Dhahabadh-dhama'u, wabtallatil-'urooqu, wa thabatal-ajru inshaa-Allaah

(The thirst has gone, the veins are moistened and the reward is confirmed, if Allah wills.)



Exercises

A. Fill in the blanks with suitable words.

1. Fasting was made obligatory in the _____ year of the Hijrah.
2. Fasting is not obligatory on _____.
3. If a traveller travels as far as the distance requires shortening the obligatory prayers, he may _____ his fast.
4. The odour of a fasting person's mouth is sweeter to Allah than _____.
5. In the month of Ramadan, the gates of _____ are opened, the gates of _____ are locked and the _____ are chained.
6. The Prophet (ﷺ) broke his fast with _____ or _____.
7. Eating or drinking out of _____ does not make the fast void.

B. Match these Arabic terms to their correct meanings.

| A | B | |
|----------|---|--------|
| 1 Niyah | a To abstain from things that break the fast. | 1 ____ |
| 2 Imsaak | b Breaking the fast | 2 ____ |
| 3 Sahoar | c Intention | 3 ____ |
| 4 Iftaar | d Measure of about two-thirds of a kilogramme | 4 ____ |
| 5 Mudd | e Pre-dawn meal | 5 ____ |
| 6 | f Immigration | 6 ____ |

C. Answer the following questions.

1. What is the Islamic meaning of sawm?

2. On whom is fasting obligatory?

3. Who are completely exempted from fasting?

4. A fasting person has two joys. What are they?

5. Which people will enter through ar-Rayyaan Gate?

6. Write any three benefits of fasting.

D. Think-up

It is Ramadan and sixteen-year-old Sara is very ill. What should she do now?

الزَّكَاةُ

Zakah: The Purifying Dues



Definition

The Arabic word zakah has various meanings including 'purity', 'honour', 'growth' and 'blessings'. In Islamic terminology, it is the amount required from Muslims to pay to those who deserve it, when their wealth reaches a certain amount called the nisaab, and which satisfies the required conditions.

The zakah is meant to purify a person's wealth and his income from that taint of selfishness, hence the expression 'purifying dues'.

Zakah is the Third Pillar of Islam

Zakah is the third pillar of Islam that comes immediately after salah. Indeed, it is a form of worship. Paying it is an obligation on every Muslim who owns the least amount (called nisaab) that requires its payment and that satisfies the rest of its conditions. Allah commands the believers to pay it:

وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ

"Establish regular prayer and give zakah."
(73:20)



Refusal to Pay Zakah

Those who refuse to pay zakah, believing that it is not obligatory, are considered disbelievers. Abu Bakr as-Siddeeq (رضي الله عنه), the first caliph, had no hesitation in taking up arms against Muslims who believed in Allah and the Messenger (ﷺ) and performed salah but refused to pay zakah. He said, "By Allah! If they refuse to give away a female goat that they used to give to Allah's Messenger (ﷺ), I will surely fight them for that." (Al-Bukhaaree and Muslim)

Allah warns those who do not pay zakah thus:

وَالَّذِينَ يَكْنِزُونَ الذَّهَبَ وَالْفِضَّةَ وَلَا يَنْفِقُونَهَا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ
فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ﴿٢٤﴾ يَوْمَ يُحْمَىٰ عَلَيْهَا فِي نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ فُتْكُوى
بِهَاجِجَاهُمْ وَجَنُوبِهِمْ وَظُهُورُهُمْ هَذَا مَا كَنْزْتُمْ لِأَنفُسِكُمْ فَذُوقُوا
مَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْنِزُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾



"Those who hoard gold and silver and do not spend them for the sake of Allah – warn them of a painful punishment. On that Day when [the hoarded wealth] will be heated in the Fire of Hell and with it will be branded their foreheads and their sides and their backs, [and it will be said to them,] 'This is the treasure which you have hoarded for yourselves. Now taste of what you used to hoard.'" (9:34-35)

The Prophet (ﷺ) also said, "Every owner of gold or silver who does not pay its zakah, when the Day of Judgement comes, plates of fire would be beaten out for him; these would then be heated in the fire of Hell and his side, his forehead and his back would be cauterised with them. Whenever these cool down, [the process is] repeated during a day the length of which would be fifty thousand years, until judgement is pronounced among [Allah's] creatures, and then he would see whether his destination would be either Paradise or the Fire." (Muslim) The Prophet (ﷺ) went on to mention all types of property on which zakah is due and how those who own it but do not pay zakah due on it will be punished. This includes camels, cows and sheep.

Some benefits of Zakah

Zakah has a number of benefits including the following:

1. It strengthens the ties of brotherhood between the rich and the poor.
2. It blesses one's wealth and purifies the heart from selfishness and thirst for wealth.
3. It purifies the heart of the recipient from envy and hate towards those who give it and encourages him to show kindness and love for them.
4. It brings about public advancement that leads to the happiness of all members of society.

Conditions for the Payment of Zakah

1. The assets like money, livestock, property, etc. are subject to zakah. These assets are of growing types. They have the potential to generate income.
2. One full lunar year should pass since the ownership of the wealth for zakah to be due. This condition does not include vegetables and fruits.
3. The wealth must be at or above a certain limit called the nisaab. There is a different nisaab for different types of wealth.

The nisaab or amount on which zakah becomes payable of some kinds of wealth is as follows:

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Silver | 595 grams |
| Gold | 85 grams |
| Trading goods | Equal to the price of silver (595 grams) |
| Camels | 5 camels |
| Sheep | 40 sheep |
| Cows | 30 cows |

It is, however, important to note that the assets should be in excess of basic needs. What is needed by an individual to satisfy the basic necessities for him and his family is not subject to zakah. If the owner is burdened by debt that exceeds the nisaab or brings the wealth's worth to below the nisaab, then zakah is not due. All debts are therefore deducted from the zakatable wealth.

Zakah is obligatory only on Muslims, regardless of whether they are adults or minors, sane or insane. Legal guardians should pay on behalf of the minor children and the insane.



Those Entitled to Receive Zakah

There are eight categories of people who are entitled to zakah. These are as follows:

1. The poor

These are those who do have some money but not sufficient to meet their needs and the needs of their dependents.

2. The needy

These are those whose level of poverty is more or less the same as that of the poor; they have a pressing need, such as when they require two-hundred of a certain currency, for example, but have only one hundred.

3. Those employed to collect the funds of zakah, distribute it, record it in its register and maintain it

These will be paid their salaries from zakah funds whether they are rich or poor.

4. Those whose hearts are to be reconciled

These are those new Muslims whose faith is still weak and need the zakah to strengthen their faith. They are also those disbelievers whose hearts may be inclined towards Islam if they are given the zakah, or those influential disbelievers whose conversion to Islam is desired or their evil is to be restrained.

5. For freeing slaves

A slave who wants to free himself from slavery should be given zakah so that he can pay the necessary money to his master to set him free.

6. The debtors

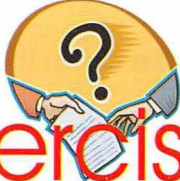
Debtors mean those who are burdened with debts, which have not been spent for something that Allah does not like, and who cannot pay them off.

7. In the way of Allah

This means anything that is pleasing to Almighty Allah such as Jihad in order to elevate the Word of Allah and any other form of work that is done in the cause of Allah and from which Muslims will derive benefit, such as the construction of mosques, schools, hospitals and shelters for the orphans.

8. The travellers

A traveller may be rich in his home, but if he is in need of money while travelling, he may be given zakah.



Exercises

A. Explain these Arabic terms:

1. Nisaab

2. Zakah

B. Fill in the blanks with suitable words.

1. Zakah is a form of _____.
2. One being a Muslim depends on one's paying _____.
3. The payment of zakah is an expression of _____ to Allah.
4. The nisaab of gold is _____ grams and that of silver is _____ grams.

C. Answer these questions.

1. How did Abu Bakr (ﷺ) react towards those people who refused to pay zakah?

2. Why, do you think, zakah is translated as the purifying dues?

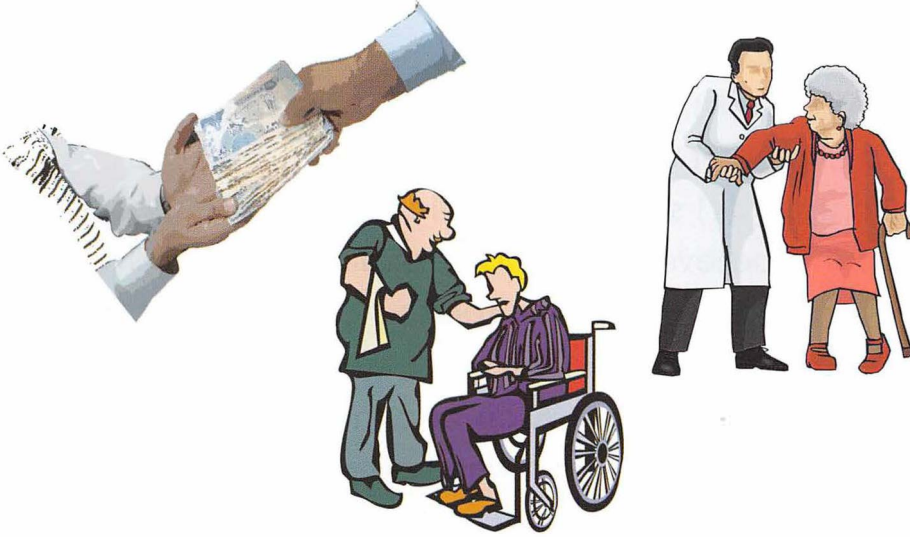
3. Write down the benefits zakah has in society.

4. List the categories of people entitled to receive zakah.

5. Mention other benefits of zakah.

حُسْنُ الْخُلُقِ

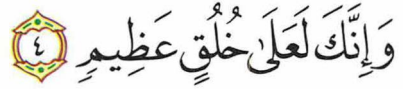
Good Moral Character



Good moral character is the most excellent of all virtues. In fact, it reveals the essential nature of people. Once Allah's Messenger (ﷺ), said, "The most excellent believers in faith are those who have good moral character." (Al-Tabaraanee)

Allah has distinguished His Messenger Muhammad (ﷺ) by blessing him with certain miracles and exceptional virtues. Yet He has not praised him of any of his special qualities to the same extent as He has praised him for his great moral character. Allah says,

"And indeed, you are of a splendid moral character." (68:4)



The Arabic term 'khuluq' actually describes a person's 'character', inner disposition or nature. It also means habitual behaviour, which becomes, as it were, one's second nature or 'way of life'. The Prophet's 'way of life', his character was the Qur'an.

One of the aspects of good character is to have a cheerful face, to be generous and to harm no one. Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) once said, "I was only sent to perfect the noble moral character." (Al-Baihaque).

Good character in Hadeeth

When A'ishah (رضي الله عنها) was asked about the Prophet's character, she replied, "His character was the Qur'an." (Muslim)


The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "The heaviest thing to be placed in the balance of the believer on the Day of Judgement will be good character, and Allah hates the [person who uses] abusive and obscene [language]." (At-Tirmidhee)

"Let him who believes in Allah and the Last Day either speak good or keep silent, and let him who believes in Allah and the Last Day be generous to his neighbour, and let him who believes in Allah and the Last Day be generous to his guest." (Muslim)

"The dearest to me and the nearest among you to me on the Day of Judgement will be those who have good moral character." (At-Tirmidhee)

"Fear Allah wherever you are, and follow up a bad deed with a good one and it will wipe it out, and behave well towards people." (At-Tirmidhee)

The Prophet (ﷺ) also used to say, "O Allah! You have made good my creation, so make good my character." (Al-Bukhaaree)



Exercises

A. Explain these terms.

1. Bad character

2. Good character

3. Khuluq

B. Answer the following questions.

1. Which of the believers is the most excellent in faith?

2. In what words has Allah praised the Prophet (ﷺ)?

3. What does goodness of character mean?

C. Activity

Make a list of good qualities a Muslim should have, and then write down their opposites.

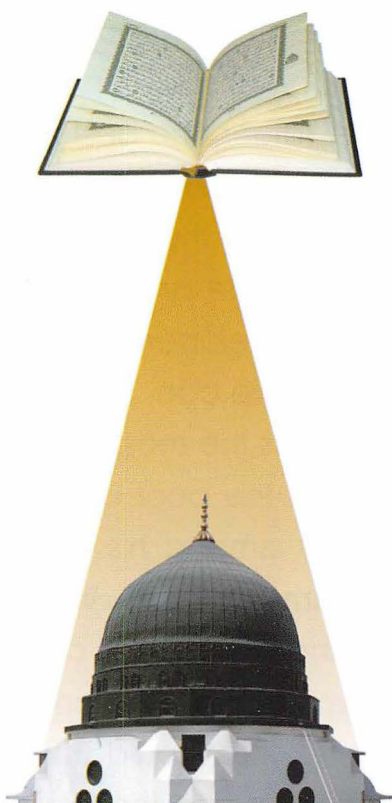
Perfecting our Character

تَهْذِيبُ الْأَخْلَاقِ

Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said, "The best among you are the best in good moral character." (Al-Bukhaaree)

Perfecting our character, however, requires a great effort and a strong determination. It requires rigorous self-discipline, struggle, exercise and a good education. What is good character? How can we acquire it? The best and the simplest way to answer these questions is to look at the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) as a role model. He is the perfect example of good character. The Qur'an says, "You have indeed in the Messenger of Allah an excellent example for whoever hopes for Allah and the Last Day and remembers Allah much." (33:21)

The only way to live by the Qur'an is to live as Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) lived by it. His life was the Qur'an in practice. The best way to understand the Qur'an and follow its message is to learn what the Prophet (ﷺ) said and did. We must follow in the footsteps of the Prophet (ﷺ). If you want to know what type of person the Qur'an wants you to be, you only need to study the life of the Prophet (ﷺ) and copy his example in your life.



By only knowing, however, would not be enough. We need inner strength and drive to follow the teachings of the Qur'an. This strength will come out of the love that a believer must have for Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ).

Some of the Prophet's Qualities

One important aspect of the Prophet's character was perfection. He sought perfection in everything he said or did. He was the best father, the best husband, the best leader, the best teacher and the best friend.

He was the most honest, patient, trustworthy, gracious, compassionate and merciful person who has ever lived. The lesson for us is to seek perfection in whatever we do, however small it may be as best we can.

He was the most just, the most decent and the most truthful. He would visit the poor and the needy and entertain them. He would always sit among his companions as though he was an ordinary person among them. When he walked, he would walk as though he was going down a hill or a slope. He walked in a dignified manner and walked easily and swiftly. When he turned to address somebody, he would turn his whole body completely. He was the most modest and the first one to cast his eyes down. He would look downwards more than upwards. He spoke first to his companions. He was the first person to greet anyone he met. He only spoke when it was necessary. He spent long periods in silence. He began and ended what he said correctly. His words were comprehensive. He had a mild temperament. He was neither harsh nor stern. He valued a gift even if it was small. He never criticised food. If he liked, he would eat, but if he didn't like it, he would leave it.

When he pointed at something, he would do so with his whole hand. When he was angry, he would turn away and avert his gaze. His laughter was no more than a smile. When he retired to his house, he divided his time into three parts – one for Allah, one for his family and one for himself. Then he divided his part between his people and himself. Some people needed one thing, some needed two, and some had many needs. He concerned himself with them and kept them busy doing things that were good for them and the community. He brought people together and did not split them up. He praised what was good and encouraged it. He disliked what was bad and discouraged it.

Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) was always cheerful, easy-going, good-tempered and lenient. He was never rude or rough. He did not shout nor utter bad words. He never tried to find fault with people or flatter them.

He would not sit down, stand up or do anything else without mentioning Allah's name. He would not reserve a special place for himself and he forbade others to do so. When someone asked him for something he needed, either he gave it to him or he talked to him with consoling words. He was the kindest of all the people and had the best behaviour.

He spoke only about things for which he expected a reward from Allah. When he spoke, the people sitting with him would be as still as if there were birds on their heads. He would not interrupt anyone who was speaking until that person had stopped talking. He would laugh at what they laughed at and show surprise at what made them surprised. He was patient with a stranger who was rude to him. He said, "When you find someone asking for something he needs, then give it to him, and never ask for a reward except from the reward-Giver (i.e. Allah)." (At-Tirmidhee)

Although Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) was a leader of all the Muslims, he was always humble. He never belittled his companions. When he shook hands with someone, he would grip with his whole hand and never was the first to release the grip. When speaking to someone, he would never be the first to look away. When he walked into an assembly, he would never demand to sit at the centre or near the front. He would just sit wherever he found space.

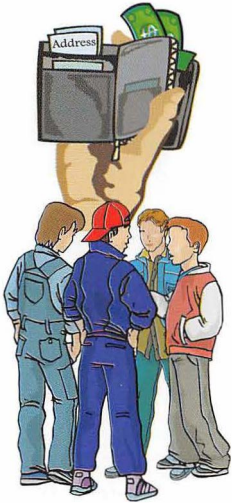
The life of the Prophet (ﷺ) teaches us that we should be kind to people, as much as we can, with sincerity even to those who are not nice to us.

The way to establish good moral character is to clear our hearts of bad ideas. We should teach ourselves better ways to analyse ideas and situations we come across in our life. This, however, requires intense training and effort.

Let us look at this situation. We are walking along a street and a homeless person stops us and asks us for money or food. Some of us will completely ignore this person or call him a habitual beggar. But enter our new and improved code of conduct: we can either give the person money for the sake of Allah and ask him to buy food with it or we can go to the nearest fast food restaurant and buy this person a meal. The lesson is never to turn away a person who asks you for help. This was the character of our beloved Prophet (ﷺ).



Let us consider another situation. Four pupils find a wallet with £500 inside it. There is also a slip of paper in it, which gives the name and address of the owner. The pupils know the man but don't like him. Two from the group think they should return the wallet to the owner. The third thinks they should take it to the police station. The fourth says they should divide the money among them. Think about the incident from the owner's point of view. Would it have made a difference to the fourth pupil if it had been his wallet?



What guidance do we get from the life of the Prophet (ﷺ)?

Here is another story!

Abdullah goes to your school. He is your friend but he is in another class. He does not come to school everyday. You assume that he must be ill. At dinnertime, you drop in on him to see how he is. You find him sitting in the living room reading something. He seems all right, but when you ask him how he is, he bursts into tears. He tells you that another boy in his class is making his life miserable – calling him names, making snide remarks, hiding his things and hitting him. He is so upset that he stayed away from school. Can you help Abdullah? Decide what advice you would give him in the light of the Prophet's noble teachings.



The last situation is concerning a secret between two friends. A friend of yours trusts you with a secret that he thinks is important. You promise him not to tell anyone. Shortly afterwards, you are speaking with a close friend and you think his secret would make a nice topic of conversation. After all, you are also not fully aware why your friend is making such a big deal out of his little secret. Besides, you are going to ask the person to whom you are disclosing the secret to promise you not to tell anyone, just like you did.



Enter your moral code and you stop reminding yourself that a promise is a promise. The lesson here is to be trustworthy, whether it is with feelings, thoughts and emotions or with material possessions. This is also one of the Prophet's great characteristics. Before we act or react to anything, we should form a habit of asking ourselves what guidance we can get from the life of the Prophet (ﷺ) concerning this situation.

Once we develop a more positive and truthful Islamic approach on the events that occur in our daily life, we will gradually perfect our character.



Exercises

A. Complete these sentences.

1. "The best among you are the best in _____."
2. "You have indeed in the _____ an excellent example."
3. The Prophet's life was _____ in practice.

B. Answer these questions.

1. Perfecting our character is hard work. Explain.

2. What manners do we learn from the Prophet (ﷺ) regarding talking?

C. Think-up

Discuss a few of the Prophet's qualities that you would like to have in your pursuit of better character.

Thankfulness

الشُّكْرُ

Allah the Almighty says about thankfulness:

لَئِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ وَلَئِنْ كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ ﴿٧﴾

"If you are thankful, I will surely give you more; but if you are ungrateful, My punishment is terrible indeed." (14:7)

In another place, Allah tells us that only those who are grateful to Him truly worship Him:

وَأَشْكُرُوا لِلَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ إِيَّاهُ تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿١٧٢﴾

"And be grateful to Allah if it is indeed Him that you worship." (2:172)

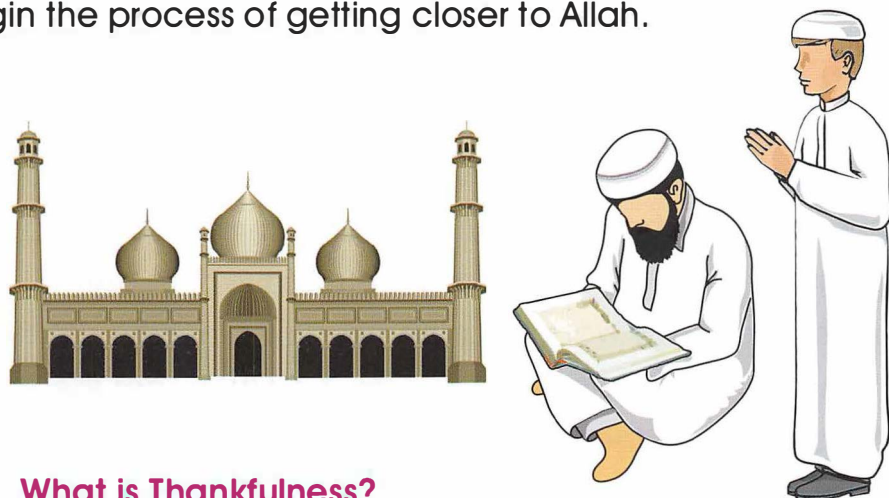
Allah has mentioned thankfulness along with faith. He has made it very clear that He gains nothing from punishing people if they give thanks to Him and believe in Him.

مَا يَفْعَلُ اللَّهُ بِعَذَابِكُمْ إِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ وَءَامَنْتُمْ
وَكَانَ اللَّهُ شَاكِرًا عَلِيمًا ﴿١٤٧﴾

"What would Allah gain from your punishment if you are grateful and believe? And ever is Allah Appreciative and Knowing." (4:147)

We should therefore always be grateful to Allah for everything that He has given us. We should recognize that our very existence and our continuing sustenance are dependent on Allah. Allah's bounties and blessings are countless. In many places in the Qur'an, Allah compares the terms Shukr and Kufr. Imaan implies shukr, or gratefulness as opposed to kufr, or ungratefulness. A disbeliever who does not believe in Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ) is ungrateful. He is ungrateful to Allah Who has given him everything, whereas a believer is ever thankful for all that Allah has given him. He recognizes that his Lord is Merciful and Loving.

If you are grateful, then you have taken the first step towards becoming a true believer. Allah creates, distributes and administers everything in the universe. He governs and sustains all that is in the universe. Not even a leaf falls without His knowledge. Being grateful is the cornerstone of our faith. If you learn this lesson well, you will begin the process of getting closer to Allah.



What is Thankfulness?

The true nature of thankfulness is the acknowledgement of the bounties of the Giver, Allah, with a sense of humility. Allah describes Himself as the Most Thankful One (ash-Shakoor). He rewards His servants for their thankfulness. The servant's thankfulness to Allah is therefore expressed through the praise he offers to Him.

Gratefulness to Allah can be expressed in three ways:

1. Thankfulness expressed by the tongue. This consists in the acknowledgement of the gifts of Allah with an attitude of humility.
2. Thankfulness expressed by the body and the limbs. This is the indication of loyalty and readiness to serve and help fellow humans.
3. Thankfulness expressed by the inner feelings of the heart.

To put it simply, thankfulness means that you do not disobey Allah by misusing His favours. Thankfulness is expressed through the believer's devotion to Him in all his states and conditions. It is expressed through his firm belief that whatever is good in his existence, worship, remembrance of Allah is entirely due to His enabling guidance (tawfeeq), His gracious favour and His Help.

The Prophet (ﷺ) and Gratefulness

Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) would stay up all night standing in prayer until his feet became swollen. When he was asked, "Why are you doing this when Allah has already forgiven all your past and future sins?" He replied, "Should I not be a grateful slave?" (Muslim)

He once said, "How wonderful the case of a believer is! There is good for him in whatever happens to him, and this is not the case of anyone except that of the believer. If he receives some prosperity, he expresses thankfulness to Allah and that is better for him. And if some adversity befalls him, he shows patience and that is [also] better for him." (Muslim)

The Prophet (ﷺ) once said to Mu'adh (رضي الله عنه), "By Allah, I love you, so do not forget to say at the end of each salah,

اَللّٰهُمَّ اَعِنِّيْ عَلٰى ذِكْرِكَ وَشُكْرِكَ وَحُسْنِ عِبَادَتِكَ

Allaahumma a'innee 'alaa dhikrika, wa shukrika, wa husni 'ibaadatik

"O Allah! Help me to remember You and give thanks to You and to worship You well." (Ahmad, Abu Dawood and An-Nasaa'ee: saheeh)

Thankful People Show Appreciation

You should always thank people for personal help. One of the basic rules of good manners is that every favour or kindness, no matter how small or who it comes from, should be acknowledged and appreciated.

There exists no situation in which 'Thanks' cannot be given. It takes only a few seconds to say a heart-warming 'Jazaakallahu khayran' to a fellow Muslim. You can thank even total strangers with a nod of the head, a gesture of the hand, a thankful glance – in crowded streets, on buses or trains, in the quiet mosque, anywhere at all.

Remember the old expression: "I felt sorry for myself because I had no shoes until I met a man who had no feet." People who live in small houses should not feel sorry for themselves after they meet people who live in even smaller houses.

Thank Allah for whatever you have. Being grateful soothes the mind and the heart. Count your blessings! You will soon discover that you have more than you think!

Whenever Almighty Allah is thanked for any of His blessings, He provides another blessing, which in turn makes one to thank Him again! So one can never stop giving thanks to Allah, because giving thanks for blessings is in itself a blessing!



Exercises

A. Fill in the blanks with suitable words.

1. Allah has mentioned thankfulness along with _____.
2. People are divided into two categories: the people of _____ and the people of _____.
3. To give thanks for blessings is in itself a _____.

B. Who said the following, to whom and when?

"Should I not be a thankful servant?"

C. Answer the following questions.

1. Who, according to Allah, truly worships Him?

2. How is a disbeliever ungrateful to Allah?

3. What is the true nature of thankfulness?

4. In what different ways can you show appreciation?

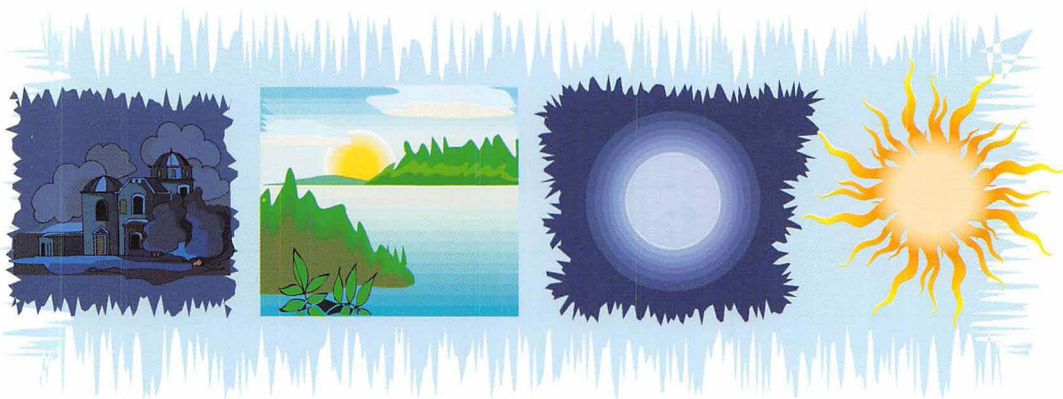
D. Think-up

In what way, do you think, can a poor and hard-pressed person be thankful to Allah?

Surat Ash-Shams

(The Sun)

سُورَةُ الشَّمْسِ

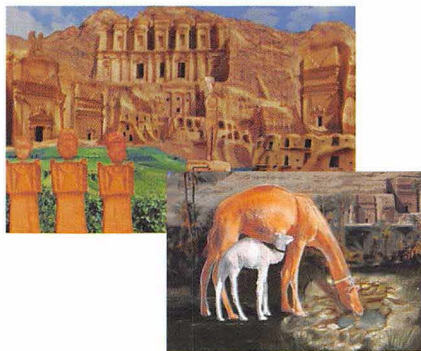


بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَالشَّمْسِ وَضُحَاهَا ۝١ وَالْقَمَرِ إِذَا تَلَّهَا ۝٢ وَالنَّهَارِ إِذَا جَلَّهَا ۝٣
وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا يَغْشَاهَا ۝٤ وَالسَّمَاءِ وَمَا بَنَاهَا ۝٥ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا طَحَاهَا ۝٦
وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا ۝٧ فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا ۝٨ قَدْ
أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا ۝٩ وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا ۝١٠ كَذَبَتْ ثَمُودُ
بِطَغْوَاهَا ۝١١ إِذْ أَنْبَعَثَ أَشْقَاهَا ۝١٢ فَقَالَ لَهُمْ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ
نَاقَةَ اللَّهِ وَسُقْيَاهَا ۝١٣ فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَعَقَرُوهَا فَدَمْدَمَ
عَلَيْهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ فَسَوَّاهَا ۝١٤ وَلَا يَخَافُ عُقْبَاهَا ۝١٥

In the Name of Allah, Most Kind, Most Merciful

1. By the sun and its brightness,
2. And by the moon when it follows it,
3. And by the day when it shows up (the sun's brightness),
4. And the night when it veils it,
5. And by the sky and He Who built it,
6. And by the earth and He Who shaped it,
7. And by the soul and He Who perfected it,
8. And inspired it with what is wrong for it and what is good for it.
9. Surely, he has succeeded who purifies it,
10. And he has failed who corrupts it.
11. The people of Thamood denied the Truth through their overwhelming arrogance,
12. When the most wretched of them was sent forth [to hamstring the she-camel];



13. The Messenger of Allah said: Do not harm Allah's she-camel or [prevent her from] her drink [of water].
14. But they denied him and hamstrung her. So their Lord brought upon them destruction for their sin and made them equal in destruction.
15. And He does not fear the consequences of doing so.

Surat Ash-Shams begins with a series of oaths. It is important to note that the Arabic word for sun 'ash-Shams' is feminine in Arabic. It, therefore, takes the feminine pronoun 'haa'. This Qur'anic tone gives pleasure to the reciter of this surah. One enjoys repeating it and drawing closer to Allah.

Verses 8, 9 and 10 reveal a great psychological fact. Allah has given everyone a conscience or inner voice. This conscience enables man to distinguish between what is right and what is wrong. The person who learns to listen to his inner voice finds that this voice becomes louder and audible; such a person achieves success, while the person who stifles this voice and remains unmindful to it fails.

The second part of the surah evokes the civilization of Thamood and the ruin of its great city. The Qur'an attributes the destruction of Thamood to their rejection of the call of their Prophet Salih (ﷺ), a rejection that led to the destruction of other peoples before Thamood as well.

The people of Thamood disobeyed their Prophet Salih (ﷺ). They rejected the truth that he came with, as the she-camel of Allah was his miracle, which Allah had brought forth from a rock as a sign for them and a proof against them. They transgressed against her in her drinking, for she had been allocated a day to drink and they had been allocated a day to drink. They slaughtered Allah's she-camel. Nothing was more sinful for them than the unjustified killing of the she-camel. By slaying her, they disobeyed Allah and rebelled against Him; this of course led to their destruction. Modern civilizations have valuable lessons to learn from the ruined tribe of Thamood.



Exercises

A. Complete these sentences.

1. Allah sent Prophet _____ to the people of Thamood.
2. Allah brought forth the she-camel from a _____.
3. The people of the Thamood rejected the _____ that Prophet Salih (ﷺ) came with.

B. Answer these questions.

1. How can man become successful in this life?

2. Who is Allah's she-camel? What does her slaying mean?

3. Why were the Thamood destroyed?

4. What did the most wretched of the Thamood do?

C. Memorisation

Learn this surah by heart.

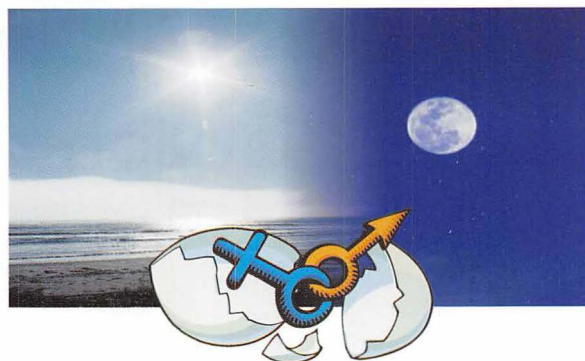
Surat Al-Layl

(The Night)

سُورَةُ اللَّيْلِ

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

- وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا يَغْشَى ﴿١﴾ وَالنَّهَارِ إِذَا تَجَلَّى ﴿٢﴾ وَمَا خَلَقَ الذَّكَرَ وَالْأُنثَى ﴿٣﴾
 إِنَّ سَعْيَكُمْ لَشَتَّى ﴿٤﴾ فَأَمَّا مَنْ أَعْطَى وَانْتَفَى ﴿٥﴾ وَصَدَقَ بِالْحُسْنَى ﴿٦﴾
 فَسَنِيَرُهُ لِلْيُسْرَى ﴿٧﴾ وَأَمَّا مَنْ بَخِلَ وَاسْتَغْنَى ﴿٨﴾ وَكَذَّبَ بِالْحُسْنَى ﴿٩﴾
 فَسَنِيَرُهُ لِلْعُسْرَى ﴿١٠﴾ وَمَا يُغْنِي عَنْهُ مَالُهُ إِذَا تَرَدَّى ﴿١١﴾ إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا
 لَلْهُدَى ﴿١٢﴾ وَإِنَّ لَنَا لَلْآخِرَةَ وَالْأُولَى ﴿١٣﴾ فَأَنْذَرْتُكُمْ نَارًا تَلَظَّى ﴿١٤﴾
 لَا يَصْلَاهَا إِلَّا الْأَشْقَى ﴿١٥﴾ الَّذِي كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّى ﴿١٦﴾ وَسَيُجَنَّبُهَا
 الْأَتْقَى ﴿١٧﴾ الَّذِي يُؤْتِي مَالَهُ يَتَزَكَّى ﴿١٨﴾ وَمَا لِأَحَدٍ عِنْدَهُ مِنْ
 نِعْمَةٍ تُجْزَى ﴿١٩﴾ إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ رَبِّهِ الْأَعْلَى ﴿٢٠﴾ وَلَسَوْفَ يَرْضَى ﴿٢١﴾



In the Name of Allah, Most Kind, Most Merciful

1. By the night when it covers;
2. And [by] the day when it appears;
3. And [by] He who created the male and female;
4. Indeed, your efforts are surely diverse!
5. As for him who gives and has taqwa
6. And believes in the best [reward],
7. We will pave his way to ease.
8. But as for he who is tight-fisted and considers himself free of need,
9. And denies the best [reward],
10. We will pave his way to hardship.
11. His wealth will not help when he falls [into Hellfire].
12. Indeed, guidance is up to Us,
13. And indeed to Us belong the hereafter and the first [life].
14. So I have warned you of a Fire which is blazing.
15. None will enter it but the most wretched one,
16. Who rejects the truth and turns away.
17. But the one who has taqwa will be far removed from it;
18. He who gives what he owns to purify himself,
19. Not as repayment for favours received,
20. But only to seek the Countenance of his Lord, the Most High;
21. And, surely, he will be satisfied.

Surat Al-Layl was revealed in Makkah. It consists of twenty-one verses. The surah begins with a series of oaths. The night and the day are the two signs frequently evoked in the Qur'an. The male and the female – like the day and the night – are two opposite elements and point to their Creator.

This surah gives a brief summary of the basic choices placed before man. The sharing of wealth, taqwa (fear of Allah) and the belief in the best reward in the hereafter are basic virtues. Allah eases the way of the true believers to the good life and the way of the disbelievers and wrongdoers to the life of hardship.



If a person becomes aware of the right thing but continues to do what is wrong, then Allah eases his way to hardship. For example, a young man who tells lies will gradually become mature in telling lies and one day he will turn into a compulsive liar. He would not even be able to distinguish between falsehood and truth. On the other hand, if a person gets into the habit of doing good, Allah will ease his way to doing more and more good deeds, and ultimately he will earn Allah's Pleasure.



Exercises

A. Complete these sentences.

1. Allah eases the way of the true believers to the _____ and eases the way of the disbelievers and wrongdoers to the life of _____.
2. This surah consists of _____ verses.

B. Answer the following questions

1. Where was Surat Al-Layl revealed?

2. Which two signs are frequently evoked in the Qur'an?

3. What does the word 'taqwa' mean?

4. According to the surah, who will surely be satisfied?

C. Activity

Give an example each to show how Allah eases the way of the mindful and the unmindful.

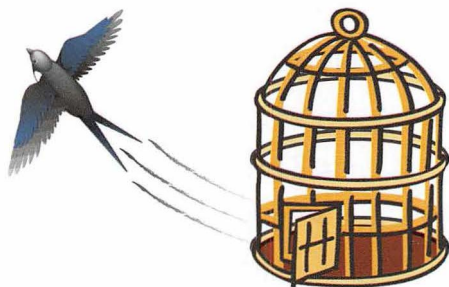
D. Memorisation

Learn this surah by heart.

Bilal ibn Rabaah رضي الله عنه

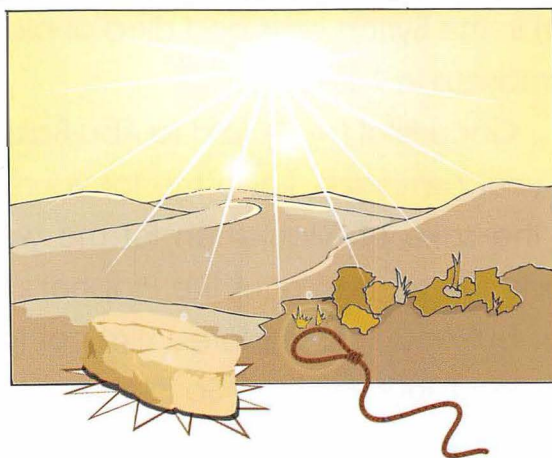
بِلَالُ بْنُ رَبَاحٍ رضي الله عنه

Bilal ibn Rabaah (رضي الله عنه) was an Ethiopian slave. He belonged to some people of the tribe of Banu Jumah. He was known for his hard work and loyalty to his master Umayyah ibn Khalaf, a leader of his tribe. He was one of the very early converts to Islam. He was tortured mercilessly by his master until Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه) bought him and freed him.



When Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) began preaching Islam, Bilal was so deeply moved by the wonderful character of the Prophet (ﷺ) and the remarkable teachings of Islam he was calling to that he decided to embrace this new religion. In fact, he was the first slave to become Muslim in the history of Islam.

His master Umayyah was a cruel man who hated Islam and subjected Bilal to different kinds of torture to make him reject Islam. Bilal (رضي الله عنه), however, remained steadfast in his belief in Allah, the One. Umayyah would order his men to take him naked to the desert at the hottest times of the day and throw him on the scorching sand. He would also order them to put a heavy rock on his chest so he would reject



belief in Allah. But Bilal (ؓ) would simply say, "Ahad, Ahad", which means Allah is One. Sometimes, the disbelievers would also put a rope around his neck and the street boys would drag him through the alleyways and even across the hillocks of Makkah. This made Abu Bakr (ؓ) to buy him and give him his freedom.

Bilal emigrated to Madinah where he immediately received a warm welcome from Sa'd bin Khaithamah (ؓ). He afterwards lived in the house of Abu Bakr (ؓ) where, like other members of the household, was attacked by the fever, then raging in Madinah.

It was Bilal (ؓ) who was the first companion to call adhan in Islam. The Prophet (ﷺ) appointed him his mua'dh-dhin.

Bilal (ؓ) became one of the closest companions to the Prophet (ﷺ) and took part in all the campaigns of the Prophet (ﷺ). Once in the Battle of Badr, he came face to face with his former cruel master Umayyah ibn Khalaf and challenged him. They fought fiercely, and finally Bilal killed Umayyah. Abu Bakr (ؓ) exclaimed, "O Bilal, how sweet Allah's Justice is!"



He remained with Abu Bakr until the latter's death. Then he took part in the Syrian wars and died of plague, sixty and odd years old, in Damascus in 18 A.H.

Once Bilal (ؓ) said to Abu Bakr (ؓ), "If you have brought me for your own sake, keep me for yourself; but if you have brought me for the sake of Allah, then let me work in the Cause of Allah." Bilal made this request after the Prophet's death. He wished to go forth to war, but Abu Bakr implored him not to leave him, as he was old and needed Bilal's services. So Bilal (ؓ) remained in Madinah until Abu Bakr (ؓ) died. Afterwards, he requested Omar (ؓ) to let him go.

In the beginning, Omar (رضي الله عنه) was reluctant to give him permission because he considered Bilal's services indispensable. So Bilal suggested another companion as his successor. Omar (رضي الله عنه) accepted this and allowed him to go.

Omar (رضي الله عنه) used to say about Bilal (رضي الله عنه), "Abu Bakr is our master and he freed our master."



Exercises

A. Fill in the blanks with suitable words.

1. Bilal ibn _____ belonged to some people of the tribe of _____.
2. Bilal's master was _____.
3. Bilal died in _____.
4. The Prophet (ﷺ) appointed Bilal (رضي الله عنه) his _____.
5. Bilal (رضي الله عنه) took part in all the _____ of the Prophet (ﷺ).

B. Answer the following questions.

1. Who was Bilal (رضي الله عنه)?

2. Write how Umayyah tortured Bilal (ﷺ).

3. Why was Bilal (ﷺ) the Prophet's mu'adh-dhin?

4. Abu Bakr (ﷺ) exclaimed, "O Bilal, how sweet Allah's Justice is!" Why do you think he said this?

5. Who freed Bilal (ﷺ) from slavery?
