

Provisions for the Seekers

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INTRODUCTION

ALL PRAISE IS FOR ALLĀH, the Loving Lord of the universe, who bestowed us with faith. Peace and blessings be upon His most beloved Messenger, Muḥammad, and all of the messengers of Allāh, who guided mankind to their Lord and to the path of eternal bliss and happiness.

Imām Nawawī says in his *Taqrīb*, “The science of ḥadīth is the noblest means of attaining closeness to the Lord of the Worlds. How can it not be so, when it is the exposition of the way of the best of mankind and the most noble of the first and last of creation, Muḥammad ﷺ?” No doubt, a thing is honored by the honor of whom it is connected to. Moreover, the science of ḥadīth is the means to all Islamic sciences, including understanding the Qur’ān and developing an Islamic lifestyle.

The Jawāmi‘ al-Kalim.

The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ was given an exceptional ability to convey in a few, simple, and beautifully phrased words, meanings that embrace whole libraries of wisdoms and truths. The Messenger ﷺ himself said, “I have been sent with the *jawāmi‘ al-kalim*” (*Bukhārī*), i.e., comprehensive but concise language that is able to express a multitude of meanings in few words. He was known to confine himself to conciseness and non-superfluous speech. Each one of these is a gem worthy of being written in gold.

Today, one can find many a book on proverbs and quotations from historical personages, religious and political leaders on the shelves of bookstores and libraries, but the eloquence of the final Messenger of Allāh ﷺ outshines them all in beauty, completeness, and wisdom. Sages and great philosophers appear as struggling students in the light of his divinely inspired wisdom. To cite an example of his speech, the Messenger of Allāh

ﷺ said, “The religion is sincerity” (*Bukhārī, Muslim*). Scholars have written pages elucidating the seemingly endless applications, meanings, and wisdoms contained in this expression of two words (الدين الصيحة) in the Arabic language (see ḥadīth 1).

For generations, Muslims all over the world have found great understanding and inspiration in the profound statements of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, which have provided them a guiding hand in navigating through the different aspects of their lives with goodness and virtue. Many scholars thus compiled books on these ḥadīths of Allāh’s Messenger ﷺ, among which is *Zād al-ṭālibīn*.

Zād al-Ṭālibīn

This book is a collection of 327 ḥadīths which the author, Shaykh ‘Āshiq Ilāhī al-Bulandshehrī, compiled from ‘Allāma Tabrizī’s renowned ḥadīth compilation, *Mishkāt al-Maṣābiḥ*. The first chapter contains 261 of these comprehensive gems of wisdom from Allāh’s Messenger ﷺ, followed by 25 ḥadīths on prophecy, and then a concluding chapter consisting of 40 accounts and narratives. Because the author had originally composed this work for students of Islamic studies and the Arabic language, he arranged the ḥadīths of the first chapter according to their grammatical sentence structures to facilitate an understanding of Arabic grammar.

Zād al-ṭālibīn has been a popular book taught in a number of *madrasas* as an initial ḥadīth work. It has proven to be a means of benefit for the students in that it accustoms them to the memorization of ḥadīth, inspires them with the comprehensive guidance contained within, and provides them with a collection of ḥadīth with which they can mold the hearts by expounding the virtues and excellences of Islam.

Hadīth Compilations

The teachings of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ—his utterances, deeds, tacit approvals—were all well recorded, preserved, and transmitted orally by the Companions. Though many ḥadīths were recorded in writing during the lifetime of Allāh’s Messenger ﷺ, it was only in the second century of Islam that systematic compilations of ḥadīth were produced by the likes of Imām Mālik ibn Anas (d. 193/808) and others. Subsequently many other compi-

mundane, can be a source of reward for a person if soundly intended. For instance, if a person eats, drinks, sleeps, or exercises, and intends that he is undertaking these essential activities to remain healthy and active to worship Allāh, each one of these activities will be a source of reward for him and thus blessed.

الْحَدِيثُ الْأَسْنَدُ

NOMINAL SENTENCES

﴿١﴾ الَّذِينَ النَّصِيْحَةُ

1. The Religion (Islam) is to act with sincerity (*Muslim*).

The Arabic word *al-naṣīḥa*, used in the ḥadīth above, is a comprehensive and unique term and is difficult to translate precisely into English. Even in Arabic, it does not have a synonym. Therefore, the expression “to act with sincerity” has been adopted here as a broad explanation for the Arabic word. Other meanings could be—giving good advice, directing toward good, acting sincerely or honestly, or being benevolent and desiring good (see Lane, *Arabic English Lexicon*).

The remainder of the ḥadīth, as narrated by Imām Muslim on the authority of Tamīm al-Dārī ﷺ, is: “We inquired from the Messenger of Allāh, ‘Toward whom?’ He replied, ‘For Allāh, His Book, His Messenger, the leaders of the Muslims, and the common people’” (*Muslim*). The ḥadīth makes clear that one of the most important aspects of true faith is to give good counsel, to wish well, and to act toward everything with honesty and sincerity.

This is further explained as follows: In relation to Allāh, “sincerity” means to have faith in His essence and attributes, to obey His each and every command, to express gratitude for His blessings, and to fulfill His rights of Lordship in every possible way. In terms of the Book of Allāh, it means to fulfill its rights by accepting it as the word of Allāh, honoring it and reciting it correctly, and practicing its injunctions. For the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, it means to fulfill his rights, confirm that he is the Messenger of Allāh, practice his Sunna, honor him and his family, and hold everything that he has said to be true. For the leaders of the Muslims, it means to assist them in virtue, obey them and exhort others to do the same, remind them of their responsibilities and correct them in a polite, reformatory, and wise manner. The same applies for the scholars of Islam. For the masses, it is to guide them aright and prevent them from wrong, assist

them in their needs and support them, protect them from harm, and deal with them in the best possible manner.

Similarly, as regards every other aspect of life, the religious obligation of *naṣīḥa* is fulfilled by performing everything in the most beneficial and correct manner possible. (*Jāmi' al-'Ulūm wa 'l-Hikam, Mirqāt al-Mafātiḥ*)

﴿٢﴾ الْدُّعَاءُ مُنْعِذٌ لِّلْعِبَادَةِ

2. Supplication is the essence of worship (*Bukhārī*).

Supplication (*du'ā*) has been called the essence of worship for two main reasons. First, by supplicating to Allāh, a person fulfills his obligation of calling on Allāh, which is understood from the verse “And your Lord says, ‘Call on Me, I will answer you (your prayer)’” (Qur'ān 40:60). This is worship in its purest form. Second, by invoking Allāh, one realizes that only He can fulfill one’s needs. The servant who calls upon his Lord abandons hope in everything else and turns his full attention to Allāh, humbling himself in front of Him. This is the essence of worship. Another desired result of worship is to attain reward from Allāh. Because there is such great reward in supplication, it has been called the essence of worship. (*Mazād al-Rāghibīn* 7)

﴿٣﴾ الْمَرْءُ مَعَ مَنْ أَحَبَّ

3. A person will be with whom he loves (*Bukhārī, Muslim*).

This statement of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ was in response to someone who came and inquired, “O Messenger of Allāh, what do you say about someone who loves a group of people, but is unable to join them?” What is meant by “a group of people” is the learned or righteous people, and what is meant by, “was unable to join them,” is a person who was unable to gain their company or achieve the same status as them in knowledge and action. To this the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ replied, “A person will be with whom he loves,” i.e., he will be gathered with them on the Day of Judgment. Allāh Most High says, “Whosoever obeys Allāh and the Messenger, they will be with those unto whom Allāh has shown favor, of the Prophets and the saints and the martyrs and the righteous. The best of company are they” (Qur'ān 4:69-70).

This ḥadīth could also be applied more generally to those who aspire to be with evil people and sinners and secretly admire their actions, even though they may not have perpetrated those evil actions themselves. They will be gathered with the sinners on the Day of Judgment (*Mirqāt al-Mafātiḥ* 8:740).