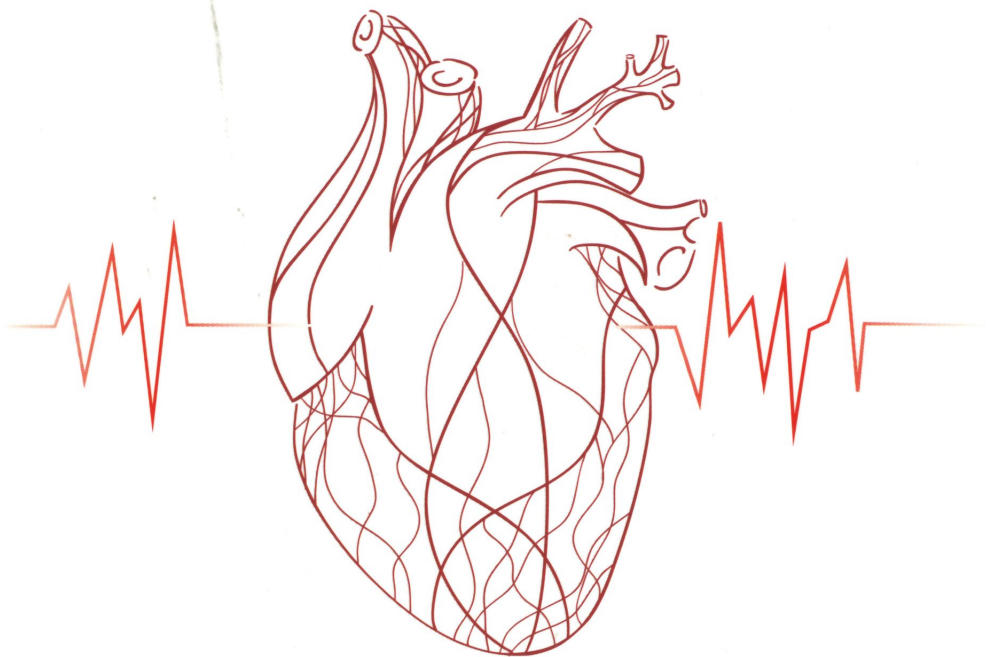


HEART THERAPY

Forty Hadiths in Tazkiyah
and Soul Purification



DR. ALI ALBARGHOUTH

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Forty Hadiths in Tazkiyah and Soul Purification



Dr. Ali Albarghouthi





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Publisher's Note

Islam has given utmost significance to heart purification as it is connected to the success of one's life here and in the hereafter. There are many verses of the Quran and *ahadith* of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ which focus on perfecting the affairs of the soul and heart.

Allah said in the Quran:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا ﴿٩﴾ وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا ﴿١٠﴾

He has succeeded who purifies it, and he has failed
who instills it (with corruption).

Ash-Shams (Q91:9–10)

Muhammad ﷺ who was a living example of a purified life had said:

«Beware! In the body, there is a piece of flesh which, if it is sound, the whole body will be sound, and if it is corrupt, the whole body will be corrupt. It is the heart.»

Bukhari and Muslim.

Despite the availability of a large number of correct instructions from the Quran and Sunnah, not forgetting invaluable literature from scholars of the past with respect to the purification of the soul and heart, evidences have shown that as time went by, a substantial proliferation of baseless methodology and practices have appeared, which sadly include the adoption of exotic rituals from other religions and philosophies. All these were claimed being done in the name of 'heart purification.' Their emergence is typically allowed by misguidance, deviant teachings, and innovations among present day Muslims.

This book in your hands is the first book of its kind which contains strategies to purify your heart and soul and becoming conscious of its corruption, in the light of the true teachings of Islam in accordance with the understanding of the earlier generations of the Ummah.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

We ask Allah Almighty to make it useful to its readers, and weighty and heavy in the scale of good deeds for the writer and the publisher. Ameen.

Farid Ullah bin Ahmed Hussain
Chief Executive Officer

Introduction

What is this book?

This is a collection of forty *hadiths* about the heart, the soul, and how to purify them. It is a discussion of the diseases of the heart, their cures, and how to get closer to Allah. It helps to think of this book as a course in spiritual development; an *iman* journey that the book is asking you to take. In the last section of this *Introduction*, I will share with you my recommendation on how to best use this book.

Why this book?

Every book tells a story and is part of a story, and this book is no exception. It is part of the story of Muslims in the 21st century and how they understand and approach spirituality. There is an urgent need to take greater care of our souls because of the state of the world and Muslims today. We cannot hope to overcome our problems without looking at their root causes: the state of our hearts.

Materialism

The world today is in agony under the weight of radical materialism. Our lives and societies are judged based on material markers: money, fame, attention, number of followers on social media, number of clicks, etc. Everything is reduced to the dollar sign and how much of it is gained or lost: this defines success and failure. Our choices, our goals, and our human value are assailed by the idea that there is no reality beyond the physical, that there is no higher meaning beyond what we can see and touch. By stripping human life of any emotional and intellectual depth, modern popular culture, with its incessant focus on the trivial and material, has impoverished human existence. This is

why it is common to find people fleeing to alternate lifestyles and spiritualities, looking for anything that can touch their hearts and inject meaning back into their lives.

Muslims are not immune from the effects of materialism and can, like everyone else, be consumed by its juggernaut spread. At the same time, Muslims have a rich reservoir of spirituality that has been preserved in the Quran, the Sunnah, and the traditions of Muslim religious scholars and pious worshipers. The value of what Muslims have is in its divine origin. Since it came from the Creator, the spirituality of Islam is Hereafter-focused, comprehensive, and modeled. It is Hereafter-focused because it does not simply aim to make you happy in this life but intends to save you in this life and the next. Secular spirituality, detached from Allah as it is, has the sole focus of making you feel good here and now, without attention to what happens to you after death. This temporary fix is like a painkiller: it fails to treat the root causes of the problem and the pain resurfaces after the numbness wears off. Feeling good and content about ourselves brings little relief when Allah on the Last Day tells us that He was unhappy with us and the spiritual path we chose: it wasn't the life He wanted us to live. Such spirituality is no more than delusion and escapism. Secularized spirituality (religious spirituality that is reduced to the here and now and that puts no demands on us for real change) is equally flawed and for the same reasons. Islamic spirituality is comprehensive because it originates from the One who knows the ins and outs of the human being: what works, when, and in what proportions. Islamic spirituality provides the balance between mind and heart, individual and society (including family), and reality and ideals. It tackles all the weaknesses of the hearts and provides successful and permanent treatments. The comprehensiveness of Islamic spirituality would remain but a claim if not for the fact that it was lived and modeled. The life of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and his Companions provide us with practical guidance on how this spiritual-

ity can enter the real world, be lived day after day, and transform the world as it interacts with it.

Muslims are the bearers of the truth today. An essential part of this truth is the spiritual path and practice that can take humanity back to its Creator and save the world they live in. It is incumbent on Muslims to learn what Islam teaches about the soul, heart, and true value of human life and to share this antidote with a world that is desperately searching for answers.

Solving our problems

We all have problems. We all worry, have regrets, and are under mounting daily pressures. This is the nature of life. But how to cope with all of this? How do we gain the strength to overcome and solve our problems? It must begin with the realization that the key to it all is internal. The condition of our heart and soul could be an impediment to our happiness or even the cause of our unhappiness. The solution to many of our problems lies in the reformation of our hearts so they can be better connected to Allah. We cannot face the troubles of this world alone. And we don't have to. But for this, we need hearts that are willing to listen to Allah and follow His guidance. And this is why we need to fix our hearts in order to fix our problems. When our hearts move closer to Allah, we will gain the strength and wisdom to solve what seems unsolvable, bear what seems unbearable, and Allah will guide and comfort our hearts in the process. Allah will help solve our problems when we are truly close to Him. But when our hearts are a mess, they will fail us.

Rejuvenation of the Ummah

Invigorating the Muslim Ummah today requires a comprehensive understanding of Islam and adherence to its guidance. The most important reformation needed today is that of the heart and soul of Muslims.

The collection of *hadiths* in this book demonstrate that bringing life and strength back to the ranks of the *Ummah* cannot happen without addressing the spiritual weakness that has corrupted our societies. The heart is without doubt the most important organ that is in need of our care and attention. Just consider this *hadith* where the Prophet ﷺ diagnoses the disease of the *Ummah*.

«يُوشِكُ الْأُمَمُ أَنْ تَدَاعَى عَلَيْكُمْ كَمَا تَدَاعَى الْأَكْلَةُ إِلَى قَصْعَتِهَا» فَقَالَ قَائِلٌ (وَمَنْ قَلَّةٌ نَحْنُ يَوْمَئِذٍ؟) قَالَ «بَلْ أَنْتُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ كَثِيرٌ وَلَكِنَّكُمْ غُثَاءٌ كَغُثَاءِ السَّيْلِ وَلَيَنْزِعَنَّ اللَّهُ مِنْ صُدُورِ عَدُوِّكُمْ الْمَهَابَةَ مِنْكُمْ وَلَيَقْذِفَنَّ اللَّهُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمُ الْوَهْنَ» فَقَالَ قَائِلٌ (يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَمَا الْوَهْنُ؟) قَالَ «حُبُّ الدُّنْيَا وَكَرَاهِيَةُ الْمَوْتِ»

رواه أبو داود (٤٢٩٧) وصححه الألباني (السلسلة الصحيحة ٩٥٨).

«People are about to invite each other over you [to attack you] like people invite each other to a meal.» So someone said: “Will we be few then?” He ﷺ replied: «No, you will be plenty then but you will be like the dregs of the sea. And Allah will remove from the chest of your enemies any fear they have for you and will place weakness in your hearts.» Someone asked: “What is this weakness [meaning where does it come from] O Prophet of Allah?” He ﷺ replied: «Love of the world and hatred of death.»

Reported by Abu Dawud (4297) and declared *sahih* by al-Albani (*al-Sil-silah al-Sahihah*, 958).

Notice how the Prophet ﷺ traced the weakness of the *Ummah* to love and hate, which reside in the heart. The weakness of the *Ummah* is the product of the weakness in its heart. What is both sad and ironic is that when we go back to the *hadith* commentaries, we read them repeating as far back as the seventh century Hijri the following statement:

نسأل الله العافية فقد ابتلينا بذلك وكأنه نحن المعينون به

We ask Allah for safety. We have been afflicted with this as if we are the ones the *hadith* is referring to.

Any effort of reform and reconstruction of the Muslim *Ummah* cannot afford to neglect the essential role the heart plays in the success of any nation. When we ignore the wellbeing of the heart, we doom our projects to ultimate failure.

Unity

The *Ummah* today suffers from dissensions and fragmentations that shook it to the core and left it weak and confused. There are, of course, many reasons for these conflicts, and attempts to unite Muslims must address all of these. One of the main reasons are the obstacles created by our spiritual malaise. Only when the hearts come together, can the bodies too. One of the favors of Allah on the first generation of Muslims was that He had put love between them. Allah the Most High says:

وَأَعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا وَاذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ
عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنْتُمْ أَعْدَاءً فَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ
بِنِعْمَتِهِ إِخْوَانًا وَكُنْتُمْ عَلَى شَفَا حُفْرَةٍ مِنَ النَّارِ فَأَنْقَذَكُمْ
مِنْهَا كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ

And hold you all firmly to the rope of Allah and do not divide. And remember the favor of Allah upon you when you were enemies and He brought your hearts together and you became, by His favor, brothers. And you were on the edge of a pit of the Fire, and He saved you from it. So does Allah make clear to you

His ayat that you may be guided.

Al Imran (Q3:103)

And Allah the Most Merciful says:

وَإِنْ يُرِيدُوا أَنْ يَخْدَعُوكَ فَإِنَّ حَسْبَكَ اللَّهُ هُوَ الَّذِي آتَاكَ
 بِنُصْرِهِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٦٢﴾ وَاللَّفَّ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِهِمْ لَوْ أَنْفَقْتَ
 مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا مَا أَلْفَتَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ
 أَلْفَ بَيْنَهُمْ إِنَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٦٣﴾

But if they intend to deceive you, then Allah is sufficient for you. It is He who supported you with His help and with the believers. And He brought together their hearts. If you had spent all that is in the earth, you could not have brought their hearts together; but Allah brought them together. Indeed, He is Exalted in Might and Wise.

Al-Anfal (Q8:62–63)

When the hearts are aligned and free of hatred, jealousy, and arrogance, they can easily accept the truth and admit their mistakes. But when the hearts are diseased and flawed, they will ignore, nay bury the truth, for personal and material gains. A lot of our disagreements today are not born out of ignorance but from the unwillingness to follow the truth even after it has become clear. Yet this is not the only pitfall of having a diseased heart. As will become apparent in this book, the flawed heart has trouble recognizing the truth. This means that it can stare the truth in the face but miss it; the baggage it carries distracts it and obfuscates its view.

Allah the Most high says:

سَأَصْرِفُ عَنْ آيَاتِيَ الَّذِينَ يَتَكَبَّرُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ
الْحَقِّ وَإِنْ يَرَوْا كُلَّ آيَةٍ لَا يُؤْمِنُوا بِهَا وَإِنْ يَرَوْا سَبِيلَ
الرُّشْدِ لَا يَتَّخِذُوهُ سَبِيلًا وَإِنْ يَرَوْا سَبِيلَ الْغَيِّ يَتَّخِذُوهُ
سَبِيلًا ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَكَانُوا
عَنْهَا غَافِلِينَ ﴿١٤٦﴾

I will turn away from My *ayat* those who are arrogant upon the earth without right, so that if they should see every *ayah*, they will not believe in it. And if they see the path of righteousness, they will not adopt it as a way; and if they see the path of falsehood, they will adopt it as a way. That is because they have denied Our *ayat* and were heedless of them.

Al-A'raf (Q7:146)

The flawed hearts perpetuate disagreements, dissension, and infighting. Working on curing our hearts today will bring us closer to the unity and love that the earliest generations enjoyed.

The wrong path to purification?

So maybe you are convinced of the urgent need of modern society for spirituality. But what spiritual path will we take? Who will be our guide? How will we know if we are on the wrong path?

There is a dizzying array of choices and paths. Should one renounce the world or can spirituality be achieved inside the world? Is it a path of hunger, renunciation, and pain that seeks release from the body, or is it a path of minimal sacrifice that suits our consumerist lifestyles? Are certain foods harmful? Are certain poses and meditations essential? How do you know when you have gone too far?

It is easy to slip into the wrong spiritual practice. Unlike medical

treatments where the wrong prescription can trigger a physical reaction, spiritual healing is more subtle and mysterious. The effects can take some time to manifest, and even then, one can continue to pursue the same wrong path hoping to erase these negative results. Seeking spirituality is dipping into the world of the *ghayb* (hidden and unseen). Consequently, it must come from pure and reliable sources, and it must come with instructions or a model that illuminates the path.

Guidance from the Quran and Sunnah

Since the Quran and Sunnah are Islam's basic sources, they are also naturally the source of spirituality in Islam. In fact, as it will become apparent soon, one of the main purposes of the religion of Islam is to offer spiritual guidance and purification.

To derive our spirituality from the Quran and Sunnah is to derive it from Allah's pure revelation. Spirituality is also more holistic from its original sources. After the death of the Prophet ﷺ, the Quran and Sunnah were transmitted from one generation to the next. As they were transmitted, various Islamic disciplines developed and furcated, and specializations in these disciplines followed. Increased specialization led sometimes to distance from the original sources and from other Islamic disciplines. As it happened with *aqidah* and *fiqh*, Islamic spirituality acquired guidelines and models that were not always inspired by the original sources of the Quran and Sunnah, in fact contradictory to them, and were sometimes hostile to other Islamic disciplines. Let's take few examples to illustrate.

Some models of Islamic spirituality praised hunger, and there were stories of people who lived on a grain of wheat per day. These models and words of wisdom attributed to past sages also praised abject poverty, abstaining from meat, sleep deprivation, complete solitude, and celibacy. Yet the example of the Prophet ﷺ and his life testifies to the fact that he neither sought these things nor did he ask other Muslims to

do so. If the Prophet ﷺ didn't recommend these acts but recommended their opposite (e.g. he recommended marriage), how could they be praised? Islamic spirituality was also plagued with hostility to the work of the *fuqaha* (jurists), book learning, and transmitted knowledge in favor of gnostic knowledge that is both experiential and personal.

These embellishments and deviations burdened Islamic spirituality and crippled its ability to guide and edify. The *tajdid* (renewal) of Islamic disciplines of knowledge that seeks to retrieve the purity of the original sources and rescue them from later contradictory addition can restore Islamic spirituality to its integral place in Muslim life and society.

The Importance of Tazkiyah (Purification and Edification of the Soul) in Islam

The word *tazkiyah* is familiar to Muslims' ears. After all, it comes from the same root as *Zakah*, one of the pillars of Islam. We also find verbs from the root of *tazkiyah* used in the Quran and the Sunnah. In the Arabic language, *tazkiyah* includes the meanings of (1) growth, (2) purity, and (3) blessing (see *Mufradat Alfadh al-Quran*, pp. 380–381, and *Manhaj al-Islam fi Tazkiyat al-Nafs*, pp. 8–13). So, the goal of the process of *tazkiyah* is to purify the soul of its ills, help it to grow, and bless it with *iman*.

Tazkiyah is a Quranic concept. Allah the most high says:

بَلِّغِ اللَّهُ زُكِّي مَنْ يَشَاءُ

Indeed Allah purifies (gives *tazkiyah*) whomever He wants.

Al-Nisa (Q4:49)

Allah in this *ayah* declares that it is He who is the source of *tazkiyah*; it is He who can purify our souls, clean our hearts, and bless them all with *iman* and *taqwa*. The important lesson from this *ayah* is that we cannot achieve *tazkiyah* without going back to Allah and asking for

His assistance and guidance. In other words, we have to be completely sincere and reliant on Him, not on anything or anyone else.

Allah the Most High also says in the Quran:

كَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِيكُمْ رَسُولًا مِّنكُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِنَا وَيُزَكِّيكُمْ
وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُم مَّا لَمْ تَكُونُوا تَعْلَمُونَ

Just as [We blessed you when] We sent among you a messenger from yourselves reciting to you Our *ayat* and giving you *tazkiyah* [purifying and blessing you] and teaching you the Book and wisdom and teaching you that which you did not know.

Al-Baqarah (Q2:151)

The Prophet ﷺ is the one who delivered the message to us and is the model of the pious believer. Therefore, he is the one who could teach it and be its best guide. There are important lessons we should note from this *ayah*. Since *tazkiyah* was the mission of the Prophet ﷺ (i.e. part of what he was sent to do), we should seek spiritual purification and growth in his words and actions. True spirituality, one that Allah loves and blesses, can only be found in the message that Allah sent and with the Messenger that Allah sent. The followers of the Prophet ﷺ should also inherit from him this task of actualizing *tazkiyah* and teaching it to others as they inherit the tasks of teaching the Quran and Sunnah. In fact, all three are fused together and are not at all separate.

Allah is the granter of *tazkiyah* and the Prophet ﷺ is its teacher and model. What part do we play in this? Allah says:

فَدَا فَلَاحٌ مِّن رَّزْقِهَا ۖ وَقَدْ حَاطَ مَن دَسَّهَا ﴿١٥﴾

The one who performs *tazkiyah* of his soul will succeed, and the one who performs *tadsiyah* will fail.

Al-Shams (Q91:9–10).

It is our responsibility and task on this earth to walk the path of *taz-*

kiyah. When we do, we cleanse our souls and allow them to grow with virtue and noble character. Purification and growth are intertwined: there can be no real and sustainable growth without purification from contaminants, just like a garden won't give you beautiful trees and fruits until you cleanse it and protect it from weeds, insects, rodents, and all that would seek to harm it. *Tadsiyah* is the opposite of *tazkiyah*, and it is the act of burying the soul into debasement and harm. We get from the word *tadsiyah* the sense of something stuffed into a tight place, of something hidden and disappearing, and of something low in rank and benefit. When the soul adopts acts, habits, and character that debase it, it loses its potential and the good that is in it, in effect disappearing. It also experiences tightness in forms of anxiety, boredom, and lack of meaning and purpose. And finally, it gets used to swimming in the swamps of crookedness and indecency and does not think of leaving. *Tazkiyah*, on the other hand, suggests the opposite. Out of the embedded meaning of growth and blessing, we get the sense of prominence, spaciousness, nobility, and usefulness. We also get the sense of distance from dishonesty and indecency.

Tazkiyah is also mentioned in the Sunnah. The Prophet ﷺ defined *tazkiyah* in the following important *hadith*:

قال رسول الله ﷺ: «ثَلَاثٌ مَنْ فَعَلَهُنَّ فَقَدْ طَعِمَ طَعْمَ الْإِيمَانِ مَنْ عَبَدَ اللَّهَ وَخَدَهُ وَأَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَعْطَى زَكَاتَ مَالِهِ طَيِّبَةً بِهَا نَفْسُهُ رَافِدَةً عَلَيْهِ كُلِّ عَامٍ وَلَا يُعْطِي الْهَرَمَةَ وَلَا الدَّرَنَةَ وَلَا الْمَرِيضَةَ وَلَا الشَّرْطَ اللَّئِيمَةَ وَلَكِنْ مِنْ أَوْسَطِ أَمْوَالِكُمْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمْ يَسْأَلْكُمْ خَيْرَهُ وَلَا يَأْمُرْكُمْ بِشَرِّهِ وَزَكَّى نَفْسَهُ» فقال رجلٌ (وما تركية النفس؟) فقال: «أن يعلم أن الله عز وجل معه حيث كان»

رواه الطبراني في المعجم الصغير والبيهقي في السنن والبخاري في تاريخه وصحح الألباني اسناده في السلسلة الصحيحة (ج ٣ ص ٣٨).

«There are three things that if one does, they will get to taste *iman*: they worship Allah alone believing that there is no one worthy of worship except Allah; and they happily give the *Zakah* of their wealth, willing to give it every year, and not give the old or the sick or the diseased with scabies or the lowly but from the middle of what you own—for Allah did not ask you to give away the best and does not command you to give away the worst; and for one to perform *tazkiyah* of himself.» So a man asked: “And what is *tazkiyah* of oneself?” He said: «To know that Allah is with him wherever he may be.»

Reported by al-Tabarani and al-Bayhaqi and declared *sahih* by al-Albani (*al-Silsilah al-Sahihah*, vol. 3, p. 38).

We find in the Prophetic definition of *tazkiyah* both the procedure and the goal. The goal is the definition of *Ihsan*, where one worships Allah as if he sees Him or as if Allah sees him. It also functions as the process of *tazkiyah*. Nurturing and strengthening the feeling that Allah is with us at all times—sees us, hears us, knows what’s in our mind and heart—all this moves us to a higher state of *muraqabah* (observance and watchfulness) of our deeds and thoughts, *tawakkul* (reliance) on Allah, and loving Him.

The Story of the Forty Hadiths

The most famous forty *hadith* book is that of al-Nawawi (d. 676 AH). But interestingly, the story of the forty *hadiths* did not begin nor end with al-Nawawi.

The genesis of the idea of collecting forty *hadiths* goes back to the early days of Islam and *hadith* collection. It was common among scholars of Islam at an early age to proclaim certain few *hadiths* as representing the foundations or the essence of Islamic teachings. Al-Shafi’i, Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Ishaq ibn Rahawayh, and Abu Dawud among others

are reported to have pinpointed few *hadiths*—three, four, or five—as encapsulating the teachings of Islam (see *Jami' al-Ulum wa al-Hikam*, pp. 61–63). So there was this early realization that some *hadiths* were foundational and comprehensive. Ibn al-Salah (d. 643 AH) built on this and collected twenty-six such *hadiths* that represented the foundations of Islam. Al-Nawawi took these twenty-six and made them forty two. Then finally, Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali (d. 795 AH) made them into fifty *hadith* and wrote his famous commentary on them, *Jami' al-Ulum wa al-Hikam*.

But why forty? As al-Nawawi himself explained, there is a weak *hadith* that states that whoever memorizes forty *hadiths* will be resurrected among the scholars. This *hadith* seems to have provided the idea for countless number of scholars to attempt to collect forty *hadiths*, even though the aforementioned *hadith*, as al-Nawawi and Ibn Hajar among others declared, is weak. The first person to collect forty *hadiths* was Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak (d. 182 AH), and many scholars followed afterwards. They collected forty of *hadiths* to cover a plethora of topics, general and specific. The most famous of these collections belongs to al-Nawawi, which—as we learned—is a part of a chain of scholarly condensation of the corpus of *hadith*.

This present work is inspired by the effort of these great Muslims, and aims to assist the modern reader in approaching the topic of *tazkiyah* through the guidance and words of the Prophet ﷺ. When it comes to *hadith*, Muslims have to ascertain that the *hadith* they are quoting and basing their religious beliefs and practices on are authentic. This means that Muslims must rely on the work of scholars of *hadith* who study each *hadith* and grade it based on its chain and content. Fortunately, Muslims have a long history of such scholars that include al-Bukhari, Muslim, Ahmad ibn Hanbal, and al-Tirmidhi to name a few. And from the later generations, scholars like Ibn Hajar, Ahmad Shakir, and al-Albani. This work relies on the effort of these and other scholars

in selecting only the *hadiths* that they deemed authentic, and avoids the inclusion of weak *hadiths*.

How to approach this book?

Think of this book as a path that you will walk, a process, an interactive project that allows you to change as you read and to absorb what you learn into your life. This, after all, was how the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ learned. As Ibn Mas'ud رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ said:

قال عبدالله بن مسعود: (كان الرجل منا إذا تعلم عشر آيات لم يجاوزهن حتى يعرف معانيهن والعمل بهن)
رواه ابن جرير الطبري في تفسيره وصححه أحمد شاکر في تعليقه على التفسير
(ج ١ ص ٨٠).

When one of us would learn ten *ayahs*, he would not move beyond them until he understood their meanings and applied what was in them.

Reported by al-Tabari in his *Tafsir* and declared authentic by Ahmad Shakir (vol. 1, p. 80).

Also reported by the *tabi'i* (someone who met the Companions) Abdul Rahman al-Sulami:

قال عبد الرحمن السلمي: (حدثنا الذين كانوا يُقرِّئوننا أنهم كانوا يستقرِّون من النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم فكانوا إذا تعلَّموا عشر آيات لم يخلِّفوها حتى يعملوا بما فيها من العمل فتعلَّمنا القرآن والعمل جميعاً)
رواه ابن جرير الطبري في تفسيره وصححه أحمد شاکر في تعليقه على التفسير
(ج ١ ص ٨٠).

The ones who used to teach us the Quran reported to us that they used to request to learn the Quran from the Prophet ﷺ.

How to approach this book?

When they used to learn ten *ayahs*, they would not leave them until they apply what is in them. So we learned the Quran and we applied what was in it at the same time.

Reported by al-Tabari in his *Tafsir* and declared authentic by Ahmad Shakir (vol. 1, p. 80).

I recommend you approach this book with the same spirit and method of learning. Study a single *hadith* each week and stop. Allow yourself the time to absorb its message and actualize its teachings. Keep a journal where you record your thoughts, highlighted benefits, inspired sayings, and action plans. Set concrete goals in this journal and monitor your progress. Push yourself to adopt certain good habits and leave addictive, bad ones. This way, you will be able to change as you are reading this book, *insha-Allah*. Make sincere and continuous *du'a* along the way for Allah to help you internalize the truth and to follow it. Think of this book as a long-term project for change. You can use it in a book club, in a mosque/MSA study circle, read it with friends, or teach it to your family and children at home. It is the practice of what you learn that will make the difference.

May Allah make you among the righteous and help you reach the highest levels in Jannah. May Allah make you among those who hear the truth and follow it. May Allah make you among the guided and those who guide others. May Allah fill your heart with peace, love, and contentment. May Allah love you, my dear brother and sister.

HADITH ONE

الحديث الأول



The heart is central

قال رسول الله ﷺ: «إِنَّ الْحَلَالَ بَيِّنٌ وَإِنَّ الْحَرَامَ بَيِّنٌ وَبَيْنَهُمَا أُمُورٌ مُشْتَبِهَاتٌ لَا يَعْلَمُهُنَّ كَثِيرٌ مِنَ النَّاسِ فَمَنِ اتَّقَى الشُّبُهَاتِ اسْتَبْرَأَ لِدِينِهِ وَعِرْضِهِ وَمَنْ وَقَعَ فِي الشُّبُهَاتِ وَقَعَ فِي الْحَرَامِ كَالرَّاعِي يَرْعَى حَوْلَ الْحِمَى يُوشِكُ أَنْ يَرْتَعَ فِيهِ أَوْ لَا وَإِنَّ لِكُلِّ مَلِكٍ حِمَى أَوْ لَا وَإِنَّ حِمَى اللَّهِ مَحَارِمُهُ أَوْ لَا وَإِنَّ فِي الْجَسَدِ مُضْغَةً إِذَا صَلَحَتْ صَلَحَ الْجَسَدُ كُلُّهُ وَإِذَا فَسَدَتْ فَسَدَ الْجَسَدُ كُلُّهُ أَوْ لَا وَهِيَ الْقَلْبُ»
البخاري (52) ومسلم (1599) واللفظ لمسلم.

The Messenger ﷺ said: «*Halal* is clear and *haram* is clear, and between the two are ambiguous matters that many people do not know their rulings. So whoever avoids the ambiguous matters will safeguard his religion and reputation. And the one who falls into them falls in the *haram*, like the shepherd who grazes around the sanctuary and is about to cross into it. Indeed, every king has a sanctuary and the sanctuary of Allah is His prohibitions. And indeed in the body there is a morsel of meat that if it is well, the rest of the body will be well; and if it is corrupt, then the rest of the body will be corrupt. It is the heart.»

Reported by al-Bukhari (52) and Muslim (1599), and the wording is Muslim's.

Commentary

The most important part of the body is the heart, and its condition determines the quality of our lives and *iman*. Following the *halal* and

avoiding the doubtful and the *haram* happens only because of the piety of the heart.

The morsel inside the body

Go back to a time where you felt really happy and contented. Maybe you just received some good news or everything around you felt right and you were in a great mood (it would help if you actually pause and try this). Go back to that time and think: How did your body react? Was it also happy? Were your eyes happy, finding beauty in everything you saw? Was your tongue happy, gushing with sweetness and kindness to all those around you? Were you more satisfied with your life? Were you more forgiving and patient with people's mistakes and offenses? Now, please switch and remember a time when you were sad and depressed (I apologize for asking you to do this but it will be helpful if you actually do it). Were your eyes also sad, failing to notice joy around you and spotting imperfections instead? Was your tongue sad, repeating phrases of desperation and lashing out at people/things around you? Were you more likely to punish and condemn those who offend you? Did you feel you were depleted of energy? Did you feel tired or even physically sick?

The effect our emotions have on our bodies is undeniable. In fact, the way we feel can make us physically healthier or sicker. Feeling depressed alters the levels of serotonin in the body and makes us more sensitive to pain. Depression also compromises our immune system, making us less able to fight infection and disease. It also increases our stress hormone levels and increases our chances of heart disease.¹ There is also research to suggest that happiness has a positive physical influence on the body.² In a similar fashion and as the *hadith* confirms, the religious state of the heart determines the religious state of the body

1 WebMD: How Depression Affects Your Body

2 Harvard School of Public Health: Happiness and Health

and how upright it is. So the health of the heart, in more than one way, determines the health and well-being of the body.

The Prophet ﷺ called the heart a bite-sized piece of meat, contrasting its small size with the great power it has. Abu Hurayrah رضي الله عنه said:

قال أبو هريرة رضي الله عنه: (القلب ملك والأعضاء جنوده فإذا طاب الملك طابت جنوده وإذا خبث الملك خبثت جنوده).
رواه البيهقي في شعب الإيمان (١٠٨).

The heart is the king and the limbs are its soldiers. So if the king is good, his soldiers will be good. And if he is evil, his soldiers will be evil.

Reported by al-Bayhaqi in *Shu'ab al-Iman* (108).

The heart sets the tone for the rest of the body just like the king directs the soldiers under his service. Let's illustrate with another example. Let's think of a security control room with cameras, mics, speakers, and scores of officers and guards. Let's imagine them all protecting a big bank. The one behind the controls chooses the movement of the cameras and what they zoom on, the sensitivity of the mics and what they pick up, the instructions broadcasted from the speakers, the movement of the officers, and where the guards are stationed. The safety of the building depends primarily on who is in the control room. In this example, the control room represents our heart. Like the cameras, what our eyes look at is decided by the controls from our heart. What the ears listen to (like the mics), what our tongues say (like the speakers), and what our body parts do (like the officers and guards) are all directed by the heart. If the heart does its job—it's healthy and alert—the rest of our body will do its job well. But if the heart is sick and distracted, the rest of our body will be sick, and distracted. So the next time your eyes are looking at something, remember the zoom of the camera and ask yourself, why is the person in my control room (i.e. my

HEART THERAPY

Depression, anxiety and loneliness are common problems today. Envy, greed and materialism invade our hearts and poison our relationships and lives. Racism, warfare and economic deprivation the symptoms of a greater spiritual weakness are destroying our world. What is the solution to all of these problems? We need a spiritual awakening, a healing of the hearts that can heal the world. We need to rediscover our iman.

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