

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

We seek forgiveness from Allah
We stand witness to Allah that there is no God but Him
That Muhammad (SAWW) is his slave and messenger

The Secret of Abjad

- According to Imam Ali a.s, the letter kha' خ refers to Al-Khabir. The Arabic word Al-Khabir means the One that is well acquainted of all the things happening. Al-Khabir is the One who is All-Aware.
- In Surah Tauba/Bara' verse 9:16, Allah SWT says:

وَاللَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

Allah is aware with all that you do

- Allah is the One who is aware of the final resting point of everything in the universe.
- Some scholars have made a distinction between Al-Aleem and Al-Khabir. The Arabic word Aleem refers to 'knowledge'. Knowledge about hidden matters is known as *kibra*. And the One who is aware of this hidden knowledge is referred to as Khabir.
- The letter dal' د refers to 'Ad dayyan yau mid'in'. The literal meaning of yau mid is 'reward or penalty'. Yau mid'in therefore denotes the Day when Allah will either reward or penalize. Hence the word refers to the Day of Judgement when Allah will either reward or penalize. The Arabic word yau mil jizaa is also translated as the Day of Reckoning. The Arabic word Dayan means the One who either rewards or penalizes.
- Hence the letter dhal refers to Allah since one of the attributes of Allah is At dayan. Indeed, on the Day of Judgement, He will judge whether to reward or penalize.

Trials in Relation to Creation, Death and Life (Part 2)

Surah Al-Baqarah verse 2:155

- In Surah Al-Baqarah verse 2:155, Allah SWT says:

**وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ
وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالْثَّمَرَاتِ وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ**

*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 those who patiently persevere*

- In the above verse, Allah has mentioned that he will test His creation with a number of trials. These trials are mentioned in a specific order, namely, fear, hunger, loss of wealth, lives and crops. The degree or severity of each trial is different and we discuss each in turn.
 - The secret of mentioning 'fear', among the means of trials, first, may be that the purpose is the fear for the lack of either of those three things. It is always before the loss of the very things that one fears of losing them.
 - Then, next to fear, hunger is pointed out, which comes into being as a result of poverty. Yet, in this respect, fasting is counted as one of the examples of hunger.
 - Loss of property has been situated in the third degree. The loss of wealth, of course, is very bitter, especially for a rich person when he becomes poor.
 - Then there comes the loss of life, which often occurs because of different ailments or after being wounded in a battle-field and holy war in the way of Allah, and so on.
 - And, finally, the loss of fruits and crops comes forth. The literal translation of the Arabic word Samaraat is 'fruits'. However some of the commentators have rendered this as loss or death of one's child, which is the heaviest calamity.
- The above verse also mentions that the patient ones will be given 'glad tidings'. Some commentators have said that these 'glad tidings' point to the reward of heaven and the merit of divine forgiveness for them, as Imam Sadiq (as) has said: "Allah, mighty and glorious, said: '...but give glad tidings to the (steadfast) patient', or, (that is), with paradise and forgiveness." **[Source: Al-burhan fi tafsir-il-qur'an, vol. 1, p. 169].**
- But in another tradition, Imam Sadiq (as) has rendered the concept of 'glad tidings' to the reappearance of Imam al-Mahdi (as), where he says: "Before the rise of gha'im (al-mahdi) (may Allah hasten his auspicious reappearance) there will appear some signs by which Allah tries the Muslim believers." Muhammad-ibn-Muslim, (who was one of the special

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followers of the imam), said that he required to know what those signs were; The Imam (as) then answered: *"Those are the same that Allah, the glorious, has expressed in the Quran, thus: `and we will surely test you (all) with something of fear and hunger and loss of property, lives and fruits;` so far as he (as) recited: `...but give glad tidings to the (steadfast) patient', and continued to say: `this means to give glad tidings to the believers who show patience and perseverance in these calamities for the advent of the gha'im (a.s.), (viz., Hazrat Mahdi, may Allah (SWT) hasten his glad advent." [Al-burhan fi tafsir-il-qur'an, vol. 1, p.197].*

The view of Imam Ali on the trials taken by Allah SWT

- In Nahjul Balaqah, summon 93, Imam Ali Amirul Mukminin narrated:

'Even though Allah, the glorious, knows them more than they know themselves, yet he does so to let them perform actions with which they earn or reward punishment.'

- With regards to the sense of trial, Imam Ali Amirul Mukminin remarked:

"...Certainly, Allah tries his servants in respect of evil actions by decreasing fruits, holding back blessings and closing treasures of good, so that he who wishes to repent may repent, he who wishes to recall (forgotten good) may recall, and he who wishes to abstain (from evil) may abstain. ..." [Nahjul-balaqah sermon 143].

- Imam Jaafar Al Sadiq as has related that: "Once Ameer al-Mumineed (a.s) fell ill. When some people visited and asked him: 'How have you woken up today O Ameer al-Mumineen?' He (a.s) replied, 'I have woken up with "evil". They said, 'Glory be to Allah! Is this what we hear from a person like you?' He (a.s) said, 'Allah SWT says: And We try you with evil and with good as a test. Good is health and weath is sickness and poverty as a trial and a test.' [Majma' Al Bayan Tafseer Al Quran].

The trial of Faqr or poverty

Meaning and severity of the trial of Faqr

- **FAQR** means "poverty" and this is considered to be the most severe of all misfortunes.
- Holy prophet (saw) has said that, "Once Allah (SWT) revealed on Prophet Ibrahim (a.s) and said to him: 'O Ibrahim! I created you and tried you with fire of Namrood. What if I were to try you with poverty and remove (the strength of) endurance from you-what would you do?' Ibrahim (as) said, 'O Lord! Poverty to me is much more difficult than the fire of Namrrod'. So Allah (SWT) said, 'By My honour and My might! I have created nothing in the heavens and in the earth which is more severe than poverty'" [Bihar].

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- Luqman, the wise, once said to his son, “*Know O my son! I have tasted patience and every kind of bitterness and found nothing more bitterly than poverty. Therefore, if any day, you experience poverty, then let your poverty be (strictly) between yourself and Allah...*” **[Bihar].**

Only the Dearest to Allah SWT Taste Poverty

- A man once asked the Holy Prophet (saw), “*What is poverty?*” He (saw) replied, “*It is a treasure from the treasures of Allah*”. Again somebody asked, “*O Prophet of Allah! What is poverty?*” He (saw) replied, “*It is an honour from Allah*”. When asked for the third time, “*What is poverty?*” The Holy Prophet (saw) replied, “*It is something which Allah does not give except to His Prophet or a believer who is honourable to Allah*” **[Bihar]**

Common Question regarding poverty

Hundreds and thousands of people today are living in poverty all over the world. Does this mean they are all undergoing a trial by Allah SWT?

- In Surah Rum 30:41, Allah SWT says:

**ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُمْ
بَعْضَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ**

Mischief has spread over land and sea because of what the hands of men have wrought¹... that He may make them taste a part of that which they have done, so that they may return

- This could be because of one of the following three reasons:
 1. Dhulm. People are being oppressed by others and are being tactfully denied their due rights.
 2. Due to their own wrong-doings and there are certain evil things which lead men to poverty.
 3. Indeed, it is a trial from Allah SWT.

Reward for Faqr

- The Holy Prophet (SAWW) has said, “*The poor are the owners of paradise. People are longing for paradise and paradise longs for the poor*” **[Bihar].**

¹ God’s Creation was pure and good in itself. All the mischief or corruption was introduced by different forms of evil e.g. selfishness, arrogance etc. As soon as mischief came in, God’s mercy and goodness stepped in to stop it. The consequence of Evil must be evil and this should be shown in such partial punishment as “the hands of men have wrought” so that it may be a warning for the future and an invitation to enter the door of repentance.

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He (SAWW) also said, “*One who dies without leaving behind (even) a dirham or a dinar, shall not be preceded to paradise by one who was better (richer) than him*” **[Bihar]**.

- Imam Ja’ffar al-Sadiq (a.s) has said, “*Verily, on the Day of Judgement, Allah will turn towards the poor apologetically and say: ‘By My honour and My might! I did not make you poor in the world because I considered you inferior. You will most certainly see how I shall be recompensing you today...’*” **[Bihar]**.

Three Kinds of Illnesses

1. **Maradh al-Balwa** which means “illness which is a trial from Allah SWT”.
 - Allah SWT afflicts some believers with illness in life in order to elevate them in spiritual ranks and statues as it was in the case of Prophet Ayub as. (We discuss the case of Hazrat Ayub later)
2. **Maradh al-‘Uqoobah** which means “illness as a punishment”.
 - Punishments in turn are of two kinds:

- **Self-Inflicted Punishment:** Some punishments are self inflicted in the sense that the actions of man himself are conducive to punishment. For example, there are things which we are told to abstain from otherwise they have adverse effect on our health such as smoking, drinking wine, eating pork, taking drugs, piercing sensitive areas of one’s body etc. If man does not abstain from these, the consequence will be illness. This is self-inflicted punishment.
- **Punishment from Allah SWT:** Although this is punishment but in reality it is the mercy of Allah SWT meant to cleanse a believer from his sins.

The Holy Prophet (saw) has said, “*A believing man and a believing woman, a Muslim man and a Muslim woman does not fall ill except that Allah (SWT) drops their sins through that illness*” **[Al-Targheeb wal-Tarheeb]**.

He (saw) has also said, “*The wrong-doings of a person who is ill fall from him just as leaves fall down from a tree*” **[Al-Targheeb wal-Tarheeb]**.

3. **Maradh ‘Illat al-Fanaa** which means “illness which is a cause of elimination/death”.
 - Everything in this world is mortal and thus we will all leave this temporary world at some point. Thus, some illnesses are natural which ultimately lead to death. No one can escape this form of illness.
 - Indeed in Surah Al Anbiya 21: 35, Allah SWT says:

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ وَنَبَلُّوكُم بِالشَّرِّ وَالْخَيْرِ فِتْنَةً وَإِلَيْنَا تُرْجَعُونَ

*Every soul shall have a taste of death: and We test you by evil and by good by way of trial.
To Us must ye return*

Different perspectives about trials

- The following is documented in Biharul Anwar:
 1. A trial for al-zalim who oppresses people is adab (discipline)
 2. A trial for a mukmin is imtihaan (examination)
 3. A trial for ambi'yha is darajah (rank)
 4. A trial for au'liyah is karaamah (honour or respect)

- In Uyun Akhbar al-Reza it is narrated that Imam Reza (as) said: "Imam Sadiq (as) saw a man who was really upset about the death of his child. Imam Sadiq (as) said: "You are so upset about a small tragedy, but you are neglecting the great tragedy. If you had prepared yourself to go to where your child has gone, you would have never become so upset. However forgetting to prepare for death is a greater tragedy than the death of your son." [Mishkat ul-Anwar fi Ghurar Al-Akhbar. The Lamp Niche For Best Traditions Hadith 1753].

The trial of Abraham

- In Surah Al Baqarah 2: 124, Allah SWT says:

**وَإِذِ ابْتَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ رَبُّهُ بِكَلِمَاتٍ فَأَتَمَّهُنَّ قَالَ إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ
إِمَامًا**

*And remember that Abraham was tried by his Lord with certain commands, which he fulfilled:
He said: "I will make thee an Imam to the Nations.*

- This verse speaks about the important occurrences in Abraham's life, i.e. his great tests and how he passed them successfully, which illustrates his high rank and superior personality and manifests the worthiness of his being. When Abraham (as) passed these trials successfully, Allah saw fit to give him a gift as a prize. Allah SWT then addressed him in verse 2:124 as above.

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- The Arabic word *kalimat* means ' words '. Here it refers to the divine commandments by which Abraham (as) was tried. These trials were not those of the usual sort. It clearly indicates that the tests were not connected with matters of ordinary reasoning or faith. They can never be considered ordinary tests. The purpose of the ' words ' was a series of heavy, hard, laborious, grave duties which were given to Abraham, the sincere pure Prophet, and he was the only one who had the qualifications to successfully complete them. Some of those commandments were such as the followings:
 1. One trial was concerning the steadfastness of his faith in Allah. Abraham (as) was commanded through a vision in a dream to slay his son Ishmael. When he awoke, he unhesitatingly acted as he was bidden, (37: 105-108).
 2. By Allah's command, he took and left his wife and his infant son to an area of dry land, where no food and water or any inhabitants could be found.
 3. He also stood against the idol-worshippers of Babylon and very bravely defended monotheism in his historical trial after he had broken their idols. He miraculously held firm in faith and patience when he was thrown into the midst of fire.
- The Quran clearly attests to this fact that Imamate was bestowed on Abraham (as) when he persevered with patience in tolerating the difficulties which he encountered as he paved the path of certitude alongside his faith, and passed his various great tests successfully.
- This meaning is cited in an expressive tradition from Imam Sadiq (as) which says: "*Verily, Allah, the blessed, the sublime, took Abraham (as) as his slave before he took him as a Prophet. And verily Allah took him as his Prophet before he took him as a Messenger. And Allah took him as his Messenger before he made him a Confidante (khalil). Allah took him as a Confidante before he appointed him as an Imam. When he had brought all these things together in him: he (Allah) said: ` Verily, I have appointed you an Imam (leader) for mankind` [Usul-kafi, vol.1 chapter2 concerning the degress of the prophets(nabiy), the messengers (rasul), and the imams].*
- Prophet Ibrahim was made an Imam only after he passed a number of stringent trials. Before being appointed as an Imam, Hazrat Ibrahim was already Khalil-ul-Allah which means confidante of Allah SWT. In other words, Prophet Ibrahim had already entered the companionship of Allah.² Thus when Prophet Ibrahim passed the trials, his daraja was raised even higher and he was appointed as an Imam. Indeed, the rank or daraja of an Imam is the highest possible rank. It is noteworthy that the Holy Prophet was both the Last Prophet and an Imam, and hence his daraja is unique.

² It should be noted that being a companion does not automatically mean that you are also a confidante of your companion. History is full of examples of hypocrites who were companions but yet were not true followers and hence were not confidantes.

The trial of Ayub

- And Ayub when he cried to his Lord (saying) as in Surah Al Anbiya 21: 83:

وَأَيُّوبَ إِذْ نَادَى رَبَّهُ أَنِّي مَسَّنِيَ الضُّرُّ وَأَنْتَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ

Harm has afflicted me, and Thou art the most Merciful of the merciful

- Prophet Ayub was a very prosperous man and of exemplary virtue and piety. He suffered from a number of calamities because Allah wanted to test his faith. He lost his family, children, cattle and servants and became a miserable destitute, yet he remained devoted to his Lord and prayed for His grace and mercy, even though Shaytan tried to convince him that the misfortunes afflicted on him were because of his sins. Ayub became a model of humility, patience and faith in Allah. Then he was restored to prosperity, with twice as much as he had before, and he had a new family of several children.
- In Surah Al Anbiya 21:84, Allah SWT says:

فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ فَكَشَفْنَا مَا بِهِ مِنْ ضُرٍّ وَآتَيْنَاهُ أَهْلَهُ وَمِثْلَهُمْ مَعَهُمْ رَحْمَةً مِّنْ عِنْدِنَا وَذِكْرَىٰ لِلْعَابِدِينَ

Therefore We responded to him and took off what harm he had, and We gave him his family and the like of them with them: a mercy from Us and a reminder to the worshippers

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Trials faced by mukmineen

- According to a hadith in Biharul Anwar, Imam Jaafar as Sadiq said to Abu Hamzah Thimali: "O' Abah Hamzah, thee will not happen and will never happen for a mukmin except for the following trials:-

1. His neighbour will harass or hurt him³

• ³ According to Rasullullah saw, the limitation of one's neighborhood is forty houses in front of you, forty houses behind you, forty houses on your right and forty houses on your left (Bihar)

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2. *Hypocrites will not stop harassing him.*
3. *Munafiq views the killing of a mukmin as a form of jihad*
4. *A mukmin will envy him.”*

Verily the fourth trial is the toughest for a mukmin”.

- Rasulullah remarked, *‘You will never be a true mukmin until you see trials as a form of nikmat and abundance as a form of trial.’ [Bihar].*
- Imam Zainal Abidin a.s once mentioned that his aunt, Zainab sa is a learned scholar without a teacher. This implies that the knowledge of Zainab sa was Divine knowledge. Like a true mukmin, Zainab sa always viewed trials as a form of nikmat. Indeed when she was asked about the tragedy of Kerbela she remarked: *“I saw nothing but beauty and beauty alone.”* These words of Hazrat Zainab sa confirm the above hadith of the Prophet as the words imply that all trials are beautiful since they are a form of nikmat from the Almighty. Even the biggest sacrifice, the incident of Kerbela was seen as beautiful from the eyes of the exalted Hazrat Zainab sa. The sacrifice of Prophet Ibrahim was just the beginning but the incident of Kerbela was the climax of sacrifice. If we follow the examples of Ahlul Bayt, then we will realise that life is beautiful notwithstanding any trials that we may have to pass through. Indeed, one of the attributes of Allah SWT is Al-Jamil, which means beautiful.
- Imam Sadiq (as) said: *"There will not pass forty days before God either descends a calamity or a physical illness upon a believer so as to reward him for it." [Mishkat ul-Anwar fi Ghurar Al-Akhbar. The Lamp Niche For Best Traditions Hadith 1706].*
- In a similar hadith, Imam Sadiq (as) said - Imam Sadiq (as) said: *"Any believer is reminded (of God) once every forty days by either a tragic event of a financial or physical nature for himself or his children, or a sort of sadness which he does not understand the reason for. Then he will be rewarded". [Mishkat ul-Anwar fi Ghurar Al-Akhbar. The Lamp Niche For Best Traditions Hadith 1713].*
- Imam Ali said: *“Whosoever loves Ahlul Bayt should be prepared to don the dress of poverty.” [Hadith extracted from sermon 1111 of Nahjul Balagah].*

Mind-Blowing Story

Haroun Asks Bohlool a Question

One day Haroun was intoxicated and was sitting in a place on the corner of the river, busy watching the spectacle being made by the water waves. Meanwhile, Bohlool arrived. Haroun gave a drunken laugh, and then gave Bohlool a happy, warm welcome, and ordered him to sit down.

A little while later Haroun said, "Bohlool, today I am going to ask you a matter. If you give the right answer I will give you 1,000 Dinars; if you can't answer, I will give the order to throw you from this palace into the river.

Bohlool said, "I don't have any need for the Dinars, but I will accept your offer on one condition."

Haroun accepted so Bohlool said, "If I correctly answer your question then you must free 100 friends of mine that are in your prison; if I don't answer correctly, you have the right to throw me in the river."

So, Haroun asked, "If I have one goat, one wolf, and a bundle of grass, and I want to get them one by one from this side to the other side of the river; then in which order should they be taken so that the goat can't eat the grass and the wolf can't eat the goat?"

"First leave the wolf and take the goat across the river. Then come back and take the grass, leave it there, but bring the goat back. Now leave the goat here and take the wolf to the other side. Leave it there, come back alone, and then take the goat. This way one by one, they can all be safely taken across the river. Neither will the goat eat the grass, nor will the wolf eat the goat."

Haroun exclaimed, "Bravo! You gave the correct answer."

Then Bohlool told the names of his 100 friends who were all in all believers of the Holy Imam. The scribe wrote these names down; but when Haroun received the list, saw and recognized the names, he broke his promise. Later, after listening to Bohlool again, he only freed and forgave ten people.

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In this tafseer class, there might be shortcomings in imparting the knowledge of the tafseer. If there is any information that requires correction, please do not hesitate to let us know via e-mail: jaafari_tafseer_committee@yahoo.com.sg. Allah knows best.