



IN THE NAME OF ALLAH THE MOST GRACIOUS, THE MOST MERCIFUL
Has not the time come for the hearts of those who believe (in the Oneness of Allah - Islamic Monotheism) to be affected by Allah's Reminder (this Qur'an), and that which has been revealed of the truth, lest they become as those who received the Scripture [the Taurat (Torah) and the Injeel (Gospel)] before (i.e. Jews and Christians), and the term was prolonged for them and so their hearts were hardened? And many of them were Fasiqun (rebellious, disobedient to Allah). 57: 16

INTRODUCTION

Year in and year out, everyone is reciting the Qur'an but it becomes like a ritual. It is now the last weekend of the Year 2019, we have to look at ourselves and keep stock of our progress on the Qur'an in regards to:

1. How much have I understood what I read?
2. How much have I pondered over its recitation?
3. How much have I implemented on what I have recited?
4. How closer have I been to Allah in 2019?
5. What are my shortcomings?
 - Have I missed my prayers?
 - How much of my prayers have I actually achieved khushoo?
 - Have I talked about others?
 - Have I spent too much time on social media?
 - How much time have I allocated myself to seek knowledge?

Every single Guidance is in the Qur'an but many people fail to study them properly. It is time for you and I inshaAllah to keep ourselves into account as the year 2019 draws to a close, and this keeping stock is called Al Muhasabah.

This is called al Muhasabah - "keeping ourselves into account"

It was said that Tawbah ibn as-Summah was in ar-Raqqah, and he used to take stock of himself. One day when he was doing that, he realised that he was sixty years old. He worked out the number of days of his life, and realised that it was twenty-one thousand and five hundred days. He screamed and said: Woe is me! Am I going to meet the Sovereign with twenty-one thousand and five hundred sins? How about if there were ten thousand sins every day?! Then he fell down dead, and they heard a voice saying: How quickly he was taken to al-Firdaws al-A'la (the highest Paradise)!

This is how a person should take stock of himself with every breath he takes, with every sin of the heart (i.e., thoughts, feelings and emotions) and every action he does, at every moment. If a man were to throw a stone into his house for every sin he commits, his house would be filled within a very short period of time. But he does

not pay much attention to remembering his sins, although they have already been recorded against him. "Allah has kept account of it, while they have forgotten it" [al-Mujaadilah 58:6].

End quote from Mukhtasar Minhaaj al-Qaasideen (p. 373)

"O you who believe! Fear Allah and keep your duty to Him. And let every person look to what he has sent forth for tomorrow" [59:18].

The Day of Judgment will come very soon, but what have we prepared for this Mother of Examinations?

Allah with His Mercy has Promised us Guidance when He Informed Adam (AS)

"We said: "Get down all of you from this place (the Paradise), then whenever there comes to you Guidance from Me, and whoever follows My Guidance, there shall be no fear on them, nor shall they grieve.

But those who disbelieve and belie Our Ayat (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.) such are the dwellers of the Fire, they shall abide therein forever." 2: 38-39

One of the most important of Allah's Guidance is the Books of Allah. Previous nations have been given various scriptures, but they have abandoned them, or worse, they changed it.

And (remember) when We gave Musa (Moses) the Scripture [the Taurat (Torah)] and the criterion (of right and wrong) so that you may be guided aright. 2: 53

"Indeed Allah took the covenant from the Children of Israel (Jews), and We appointed twelve leaders among them. And Allah said: "I am with you if you perform As-Salat (Iqamat-as-Salat) and give Zakat and believe in My Messengers; honour and assist them, and lend to Allah a good loan. Verily, I will remit your sins and admit you to Gardens under which rivers flow (in Paradise). But if any of you after this, disbelieved, he has indeed gone astray from the Straight Path."

So because of their breach of their covenant, We cursed them, and made their hearts grow hard. They change the words from their (right) places and have abandoned a good part of the Message that was sent to them. And you will not cease to discover deceit in them, except a few of them. But forgive them, and overlook (their misdeeds). Verily, Allah loves Al-Muhsinun (good-doers).

And from those who call themselves Christians, We took their covenant, but they have abandoned a good part of the Message that was sent to them. So We planted amongst them enmity and hatred till the Day of Resurrection (when they discarded Allah's Book, disobeyed Allah's Messengers and His Orders and transgressed beyond bounds in Allah's disobedience), and Allah will inform them of what they used to do."

5: 12-14

In fact, Allah made a similitude of those who were given the scriptures - like a donkey which carried books of great importance but does not know the importance of the books it carries:

“The likeness of those who were entrusted with the (obligation of the) Taurat (Torah) (i.e. to obey its commandments and to practise its legal laws), but who subsequently failed in those (obligations), is as the likeness of a donkey who carries huge burdens of books (but understands nothing from them). How bad is the example (or the likeness) of people who deny the Ayat (proofs, evidences, verses, signs, revelations, etc.) of Allah. And Allah guides not the people who are Zalimun (polytheists, wrong-doers, disbelievers, etc.).” 62: 5

The Qur’an is sent as a Guidance and as a Mercy to all of us in order for us to make important changes in ourselves and prepare ourselves before we meet Him in the Day of Judgment:

“This is the Book (the Qur'an), whereof there is no doubt, a guidance to those who are Al-Muttaqun [the pious and righteous persons who fear Allah much (abstain from all kinds of sins and evil deeds which He has forbidden) and love Allah much (perform all kinds of good deeds which He has ordained)].” 2: 2

“And We send down from the Qur'an that which is a healing and a mercy to those who believe (in Islamic Monotheism and act on it), and it increases the Zalimun (polytheists and wrong-doers) nothing but loss.” 17: 82

If we have still not changed after reading the Qur’an perhaps we have to look into our hearts and soften it, before the heart gets hardened and the hearts will eventually die.

HOW TO SOFTEN THE HEART?

1. Du’a

As hearts keep changing, we ask Allah Almighty to keep our hearts firm on the straight path and the truth. According to Musnad Imam Ahmad, the *du’a* the Prophet (peace be on him) frequently recited was:

O Turner of hearts, make my heart firm upon your religion.

2. Feeling grateful to Allah for His Favours

Be grateful to Allah that He has Guided us to Islam and that we are still alive and well because He has given us the gift of time in order for us to worship Him.

“O you who believe (in the Oneness of Allah – Islamic Monotheism)! Eat of the lawful things that We have provided you with, and be grateful to Allah, if it is indeed He Whom you worship” [2:172]

Gratitude for blessings is a cause of them being increased, as Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And (remember) when your Lord proclaimed: ‘If you give thanks (by accepting faith and worshipping none but Allah), I will give you more (of My blessings); but if you are thankless (i.e. disbelievers), verily, My punishment is indeed severe’” [14:7]

3. Remember Allah

“Therefore remember Me (by praying, glorifying). I will remember you, and be grateful to Me (for My countless favours on you) and never be ungrateful to Me” [2:152]

We should contemplate on His Names and Attributes – on His Greatness and Magnificence. Understanding His attributes helps to fill our heart with reverence and awe and inshaAllah soften it.

"Those who believe and whose hearts find rest in the remembrance of Allah; verily in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest." (13:28)

Do the morning and evening dhikr

4. Understand and ponder over the meaning of the Qur'an

“Allah has sent down the best statement, a Book (this Qur'an), its parts resembling each other in goodness and truth, oft-repeated. The skins of those who fear their Lord shiver from it (when they recite it or hear it). Then their skin and their heart soften to the remembrance of Allah. That is the guidance of Allah. He Guides therewith whom He pleases and whomever Allah sends astray, for him there is no guide.” 39: 23

Reciting the Qur'an quickly and without understanding has completely no impact on the heart. Any verses that we do not understand must be researched by going through the tafsir books such as tafsir of Ibn Kathir.

5. Avoid major sins and constantly seek forgiveness

Abu Huraira reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “Verily, when the servant commits a sin, a black mark appears upon his heart. If he abandons the sin, seeks forgiveness, and repents, then his heart will be polished. If he returns to the sin, the blackness will be increased until it overcomes his heart. It is the covering that Allah has mentioned: No, rather a covering is over their hearts from what they have earned.” (83:14)

Source: Sunan al-Tirmidhī 3334

Some of the effects of sin, as described by Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allaah have mercy on him):

1 – Being deprived of knowledge for knowledge is light that Allaah causes to reach the heart, and sin extinguishes that light. When al-Shaafa’i sat before Maalik and read to him, he admired him because of the intelligence, alertness and understanding that he saw in him. He said, “I think that Allaah has caused light to enter your heart, so do not extinguish it with the darkness of sin.”

2 – Being deprived of provision. In Musnad Ahmad it is narrated that Thawbaan said: “The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: ‘A man is deprived of provision because of the sins that he commits.’” (Narrated by Ibn Maajah, 4022, classed as hasan/sound by al-Albaani in Saheeh Ibn Maajah).

3 – Sense of alienation that comes between a person and his Lord, and between him and other people. One of the salaf (righteous predecessors) said: “If I disobey Allaah, I see that in the attitude of my riding beast and my wife.”

4 – Things become difficult for him, so that he does not turn his attention towards any matter but he finds the way blocked or he finds it difficult. By the same token, for the one who fears Allaah, things are made easy for him.

5 – The sinner will find darkness in his heart, which he will feel just as he feels the darkness of night. So this darkness affects his heart as the physical darkness affects his vision. For obedience is light and disobedience is darkness. The stronger the darkness grows, the greater becomes his confusion, until he falls into innovation, misguidance and other things that lead to doom, without even realizing, like a blind man who goes out in the darkness of the night, walking alone. This darkness grows stronger until it covers the eyes, then it grows stronger until it covers the face, which appears dark and is seen by everyone. ‘Abd-Allaah ibn ‘Abbaas said: “Good deeds make the face light, give light to the heart, and bring about ample provision, physical strength and love in people’s hearts. Bad deeds make the face dark, give darkness to the heart, and bring about physical weakness, a lack of provision and hatred in people’s hearts.”

6 – Deprivation of worship and obedience. If sin brought no punishment other than that it prevents a person from doing an act of worship which is the opposite of sin, and cuts off access to other acts of worship, that would be bad enough. So the sin cuts off a third way and a fourth way and so on, and because of the sin he is cut off from many acts of worship, each of which would have been better for him than this world and everything in it. So he is like a man who eats food that is bound to cause a lengthy sickness, and thus he is deprived of many other foods that are better than that. And Allaah is the One Whose help we seek.

7 – Sin breeds sin until it dominates a person and he cannot escape from it.

8 – Sin weakens a person’s willpower. It gradually strengthens his will to commit sin and weakens his will to repent until there is no will in his heart to repent at all... so he seeks forgiveness and expresses repentance, but it is merely words on the lips, like the repentance of the liars, whose hearts are still determined to commit sin and persist in it. This is one of the most serious diseases that are most likely to lead to doom.

9 – He will become desensitized and will no longer find sin abhorrent, so it will become his habit, and he will not be bothered if people see him committing the sin or talk about him.

For the leaders of immorality, this is the ultimate shamelessness in which they find great pleasure, such that they feel proud of their sin and will speak of it to people who do not know that they have done it, saying, “O so and so, I did such and such.” Such people cannot be helped and the path to repentance is blocked for them in most cases. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “All of my ummah (followers) will be fine except for those who commit sin openly, and that includes cases where Allaah conceals a person’s sin, but the following morning he exposes himself and says, ‘O So and so, I did such and such last night, so he shamelessly exposes himself when all night his Lord had concealed his sin.’” (Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 5949; Muslim, 2744).

10 – When there are many sins they leave a mark on the heart of the person who commits them, so he becomes one of the negligent. As one of the salaf said, concerning the aayah (verse)–

“Nay! But on their hearts is the Raan (covering of sins and evil deeds) which they used to earn”

[al-Mutaffifeen 83:14 – interpretation of the meaning] –

this means sin after sin.

How this starts is that the heart gets stained by sin, and if the sin increases then the stain grows bigger until it becomes the raan (covering of sin and evil deeds), then it increases until it becomes a seal, and the heart becomes covered and sealed. If that happens after a person had been guided and had understood, then his heart is turned upside down, and at that point the Shaytaan gains control over him and directs him as he wants.

6. Remember death

Death is a reality and a calamity that we will all face. When we remember death, we realise that this life is a temporary abode which is meant to please Allah (S) by doing a lot of good deeds and by worshiping him alone without associating any partners.

It was narrated that Abu Hurairah said:

“The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: ‘Frequently remember the destroyer of pleasures,’ meaning death.” Sunan Ibn Majah

Remembering death changes our outlook to life. We look at life more seriously and this world and its pleasures will become less significant.

It is narrated that Al-Hasan al-Basri (الله رحمه) went to see a sick man whom he used to visit, and he found him in the agony of death. He looked at his distress

and the hardship that he was suffering, then he went back to his family with a different expression than that with which he had left them. They said to him, "Food is ready, may Allah have mercy on you." He said, "O my family, enjoy your food and drink, for by Allah I have seen death and I will keep striving for that until I meet Him (Allah)."

Remembering death also helps to soften the heart. It is narrated that a woman complained to 'Aa'ishah (R) of the hardness in her heart. She said to her: "Remember death often, for that will soften your heart." She did that, and her heart was softened (Qurtubi)

Qurtubi (الله رحمه) related: the scholars said: remembering death deters one from sin, softens the hard heart, stops one from delighting in this world, and makes disasters look bearable.

7. Always be with good companions

And keep yourself (O Muhammad SallAllahu 'alayhi wa sallam) patiently with those who call on their Lord (i.e. your companions who remember their Lord with glorification, praising in prayers, etc., and other righteous deeds, etc.) morning and afternoon, seeking His Face, and let not your eyes overlook them, desiring the pomp and glitter of the life of the world; and obey not him whose heart We have made heedless of Our Remembrance, one who follows his own lusts and whose affair (deeds) has been lost. 18: 28

The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) gave two examples; one for the good companion and one for the bad:

Abu Musa Al-Ash`ary (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated: The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: The example of a good companion (who sits with you) in comparison with a bad one, is I like that of the musk seller and the blacksmith's bellows (or furnace); from the first you would either buy musk or enjoy its good smell while the bellows would either burn your clothes or your house, or you get a bad nasty smell thereof." [Reported by Al-Bukhari and Muslim].

The Hadith indicates that a good companion brings about good, bless and benefits such as the one who carries perfume from whom you benefit either taking some as a gift or purchasing some. The least benefit is: you will smell perfume as long as you sit with him. This just draws the example near to the minds because the goodness and benefit gained from a good companion are much bigger and even better than Musk. You benefit from his knowledge concerning your religion, your world or both or he gives you an advice that benefits you during your lifetime and supplicates for after your death. He may forbid you to do things that harm you, so you always gain benefits in his company and your profit is guaranteed, by the will of Allah. When he sees you neglect your worship, he will guide you to increase your concern towards obedience to exert efforts to increase it. He advises you regarding your defects and guides you to the best morals by saying, actions and conditions.

A human being was created with the instinct to follow his beloved ones. Natures and souls are correlated as the Prophet (peace be upon him) said in the Hadith that was reported by Al-Bukhari: "Souls are correlated. So, the souls of similar nature unite together while the souls of different nature disagree with one another." Some of them lead to good and some lead to evil.

The least benefit gained from a good companion is: A person turns away from bad deeds and evils for the sake of the companionship, competition in good and disdaining evil. Of those benefits gained from a good companion are: He protects your honor in your presence and absence, defends you and supplicates for you in your life and death.

As for befriending the evil ones, it is the deadly poison and the certain affliction. You find them encourage people to do sins and evil deeds and exhort people to them. They open the doors of evils to anyone associates with them as well as decorates all kinds of sins for their companions, urging people to harm one another and remind them with the corrupted things which they never thought about. When someone intends to repent and to stay away from sins, they insinuate to him to delay repentance and beautified long hope in their sights. They exhort them to repent in old age. The bad consequences of associating with them are much greater.

43: 67 – an important verse about finding good companions. Look into the tafsir of this verse please.

Attending circles of knowledge

Being in the presence of angels, blessings and the mercy that descends upon them during gatherings is very beneficial. The Prophet (peace be on him) said:

There are no group of people that sit together in a house of the houses of Allah reading Allah's book and studying it between them except that tranquillity will descend upon them, mercy will encompass them, the angels will surround and protect them, and Allah will mention them to those that are with Him (to the highest angels).
(Muslim)

As per the famous *hadith*, even the one who attends a gathering without intending to be there is forgiven through the collective reward, blessings and forgiveness of the gathering. So he benefits even if he was dragged there by someone else. And that is why it is good to encourage one another to seek Allah's blessings.

8. Crying

Those with a soft heart cry easily. Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) was always crying. This is a good quality as it reflects a soft heart. Mullah Ramadan (may Allah be pleased with him), the father of the esteemed scholar, Said Ramadan al Bouti (may Allah be pleased with him) was over a hundred

years old, and he taught till his last days. Whenever he heard the name of the Prophet (peace be on him) or Allah Almighty it would bring tears to his eyes. Such was the softness of his heart, which reflected on those around him. He insisted on being carried to the mosque even though it was not required of him. And the mosque was flooded with mourners when he died.

May Allah Soften our hearts so that we will always be affected when we read the Qur'an and may He constantly Guide us in the straight path.