

DHIKR IS THE GREATEST OBLIGATION AND A PERPETUAL DIVINE ORDER

Dhikr of Allah is the most excellent act of Allah's servants and is stressed over a hundred times in the Holy Qur'an. It is the most praiseworthy work to earn Allah's pleasure, the most effective weapon to overcome the enemy, and the most deserving of deeds in reward. It is the flag of Islam, the polish of hearts, the essence of the science of faith, the immunization against hypocrisy, the head of worship, and the key of all success. There are no restrictions on the modality, frequency, or timing of *dhikr* whatsoever. The restrictions on modality pertain to certain specific obligatory acts which are not the issue here, such as Salat. The Shari`a is clear and everyone knows what they have to do. Indeed, the Prophet said that the People of Paradise will only regret one thing: not having made enough *dhikr* in the world! Are not those who are making up reasons to discourage others from making *dhikr* afraid of Allah in this tremendous matter?

Allah says in His holy Book: "O Believers, make abundant mention of ALLAH!" (33:41) And He mentions of His servants "Those who remember their Lord standing, and sitting, and lying on their sides" (3:191), in other words at all times of the day and night. He said (3:190-191): "*The creation of heaven and earth and the changes of night and day are signs for people who have wisdom: -- consider who is described as having wisdom -- Those who remember (and recite and call) Allah standing up, sitting, and lying on their sides.*" `A'isha said, as narrated by Muslim, that the Prophet mentioned/remembered Allah at all times of the day and night.

The Prophet said: "If your hearts were always in the state that they are in during *dhikr*, the angels would come to see you to the point that they would greet you in the middle of the road." Muslim narrated it. Imam Nawawi in his *Sharh sahih muslim* commented on this hadith saying: "This kind of sight is shown to someone who persists in meditation (*muraqaba*), reflection (*fikr*), and anticipation (*iqbal*) of the next world."

Mu`adh ibn Jabal said that the Prophet also said: "The People of Paradise will not regret except one thing alone: the hour that passed them by and in which they made no remembrance of Allah." Narrated by Bayhaqi in *Shu`ab al-iman* (1:392 #512-513) and by Tabarani. Haythami in *Majma` al-zawa'id* (10:74) said that its narrators are all trustworthy (*thiqat*), while Suyuti declared it *hasan* in his *Jami` al-saghir* (#7701).

Allah placed His remembrance above prayer in value by making prayer the means and remembrance the goal. He said:

"Lo! Worship guards one from lewdness and iniquity, but verily, remembrance of Allah is greater/more important." (29:45)

"He is successful who purifies himself, and remembers the name of his Lord, and so prays." (87:14-15)

"So establish prayer for My remembrance." (20:14)

Ibn Hajar in his *Fath al-bari* (1989 ed. 11:251) relates Qadi Abu Bakr Ibn al-`Arabi's explanation that **there is no good deed except with dhikr as a precondition for its validity, and whoever does not remember Allah in his heart at the time of his *sadaqa* or fasting, for example, then his deed is incomplete: therefore dhikr is the best of deeds because of this.**

Dhikr is, therefore, something of tremendous importance. Abu Hurayra said that the Prophet said, Peace be upon him: "The earth and everything in it is cursed, except for dhikr and what attends dhikr, and a teacher (of dhikr) and a student (of dhikr)." Narrated by Tirmidhi who said it is *hasan*, Ibn Majah who said the same, Bayhaqi, and others. Suyuti cites it in *al-Jami` al-saghir* from al-Bazzar's similar narration from Ibn Mas`ud and he declared it *sahih*. Tabarani also narrated it in *al-Awsat* from Abu al-Darda'.

By the words "the world and everything in it" is meant here all that claims status or existence apart from Allah instead of in Him. In fact, all creation does dhikr because Allah said that all creation does praise to Him constantly, and *tasbih* is a kind of dhikr. Allah said of the Prophet Yunus, when the whale swallowed him: "Had he not been one of My glorifiers (*musabbihin*), he would have remained inside the whale's stomach until Judgment Day." (37:143-144)

The one who engages in dhikr has the highest rank of all before Allah. The people who call on Allah without distraction have been mentioned in Qur'an, as well as the effect that calling has on their heart: "In houses which Allah has allowed to be raised to honor and for His Name to be remembered in them; He is glorified there day and night by men whom neither trade nor sale can divert from the remembrance of Allah" (24:36-37). "Those who believe, and their hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of Allah: By remembering Allah, truly satisfaction comes to the heart" (13:28).

During the night of Isra' and Mi`raj, the Prophet was taken up to a point where he heard the screeching of the Pens (writing the divine Decree). He saw a man who had disappeared into the light of the Throne. He said: "Who is this? Is this an angel?" It was said to him, no. He said: "Is it a Prophet?" Again the answer was no. He said: "Who is it then?" The answer was: "This is a man whose tongue was moist with Allah's remembrance in the world, and his heart was attached to the mosques, and he never incurred the curse of his father and mother." Shaykh Muhammad `Alawi al-Malaki cited it in his collated text of the sound narrations on that topic entitled *al-Anwar al-bahiyya min isra' wa mi`raj khayr al-bariyya*.

In Ahmad, Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah, and Ibn Hibban declared it fair (*hasan*): A man came to the Prophet and said, "O Rasulallah, the laws and conditions of Islam have become too many for me. Tell me something that I can always keep (i.e. in particular, as opposed to the many rules and conditions that must be kept in general)." By reading that the man said there were too many conditions to keep, one must understand that he was unsure that he could keep them all. He wanted something that he would be sure to keep always. The Prophet said: "(I am advising you in one thing:) **Keep your tongue always moist with dhikrullah.**"

It is well-known in Islam that the best work in the path of Allah is jihad. Yet the Prophet, Peace be upon him, placed dhikr even above jihad in the following authentic hadiths.

Abu al-Darda' narrates: The Prophet once asked his companions: "Shall I tell you about the best of all deeds, the best act of piety in the eyes of your Lord, which will elevate your status in the Hereafter, and carries more virtue than the spending of gold and silver in the service of Allah or taking part in jihad and slaying or being slain in the path of Allah? The dhikr of Allah." Related in the Malik's *Muwatta'*, the *Musnad* of Ahmad, the *Sunan* of Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah, and the *Mustadrak* of Hakim. Al-Bayhaqi, Hakim and others declared it *sahih*.

Abu Sa'id narrates: The Prophet was asked, "Which of the servants of Allah is best in rank before Allah on the Day of resurrection?" He said: "The ones who remember him much." I said: "O Messenger of Allah, what about the fighter in the way of Allah?" He answered: "Even if he strikes the unbelievers and *mushrikin* with his sword until it broke, and becomes red with their blood, truly those who do dhikr are better than him in rank." Related in Ahmad, Tirmidhi, and Bayhaqi.

`Abd Allah ibn `Umar said that the Prophet used to say: "Everything has a polish, and the polish of hearts is *dhikr* of Allah. Nothing is more calculated to rescue from Allah's punishment than *dhikr* of Allah." He was asked whether this did not apply also to *jihad* in Allah's path, and he replied: "Not even if one should ply his sword until it breaks." Bayhaqi narrated it in *Kitab al-da`awat al-kabir* as well as in his *Shu`ab al-iman* (1:396 #522), also al-Mundhiri in *al-Tarhib* (2:396) and Tibrizi mentions it in *Mishkat al-masabih*, at the end of the book of Supplications.

Meanings of Dhikr

The word *dhikr* has many meanings. It means:

- Allah's Book and its recitation;
- Prayer;

- Learning and teaching: The author of *Fiqh al-sunna* said:

Sa'id ibn Jubayr said, "Anyone engaged in obeying Allah is in fact engaged in the remembrance of Allah." Some of the earlier scholars tied it to some more specified form. `Ata said, "The gatherings of dhikr are the gatherings where the lawful and the prohibited things are discussed, for instance, selling, buying, prayers, fasting, marriage, divorce, and pilgrimage."

Qurtubi said, "Gatherings of dhikr are the gatherings for knowledge and admonition, those in which the Word of Allah and the sunnah of His Messenger, accounts of our righteous predecessors, and sayings of the righteous scholars are learned and practised without any addition or innovation, and without any ulterior motives or greed."

- Invocation of Allah with the tongue according to one of the formulas taught by the Prophet or any other formula;

- Remembrance of Allah in the heart, or in both the heart and the tongue.

We are concerned here with the last two meanings, that of mention of Allah, as in the verse, "The believers are those who, when they hear Allah mentioned, their hearts tremble" (al-Anfal), and the Prophet's saying in Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah from Ibn Jubayr: "The best *dhikr* is ***La ilaha illallah***." The Prophet did not say, "the best *dhikr* is making a lecture"; or "giving advice"; or "raising funds." We are also concerned here with the meaning of remembrance through the heart, as in the verse: "The men and women who remember Allah abundantly" (33:35). The Prophet both praised and explained what is in the latter verse when he said, as it is related in Muslim, "The single-hearted are foremost." When he was asked, "O Messenger of Allah, who are the single-hearted?" he replied, "The men and women who remember Allah abundantly." The Prophet further elucidated the role of the heart in effecting such remembrance when he said to Abu Hurayra: "Go with these two sandals of mine and whoever you meet behind this wall that witnesses that there is no god except Allah **with certitude in his heart**, give him glad tidings that he will enter Paradise." (Narrated by Muslim.)

Dhikr may sometimes mean both inner remembrance and outward mention, as in the verse "Remember Me, and I shall remember you" (2:152) when it is read in the light of the hadith qudsi, "Those that remember Me in their heart, I remember them in My heart; and those that remember Me in a gathering (i.e. that make mention of Me), I remember them (i.e. make mention of them) in a gathering better than theirs." We return to the explanation of that important hadith further below. Suffice it to say that, broadly speaking, there are three types of *dhikr*: of the heart, of the tongue, and of the two together.

Ibn Hajar in *Fath al-Bari* (1989 ed. 11:251) explained that what is meant by *dhikr* in Abu al-Darda's narration of the primacy of *dhikr* over *jihad* is **the complete *dhikr* and consciousness of Allah's greatness whereby one becomes better, for example, than those who battle the diebelievers without such recollection.**

In another hadith narrated by Bukhari, the Prophet compared doers of *dhikr* among non-doers, to those who are alive among those who are dead: *mathalu al-ladhi yadhkuru rabbahu wa al-ladhi la yadhkuru rabbahu mathalu al-hayyi wa al-mayyit*. (Book of *da`awat* ch. 66 "The merit of *dhikrullah*") Ibn Hajar comments it thus in his *Fath al-Bari* (1989 ed. 11:250):

What is meant by *dhikr* here is the utterance of the expressions which we have been encouraged to say, and say abundantly, such as the enduring good deeds -- *al-baqiyat al-salihat* -- and they are: *subhan allah*, *al-hamdu lillah*, *la ilaha illallah*, *allahu akbar* and all that is related to them such as the *hawqala* (*la hawla wa la quwwata illa billah*), the *basmala* (*bismillah al-rahman al-rahim*), the *hasbala* (*hasbunallahu wa ni`ma al-wakil*), *istighfar*, and the like, as well as invocations for the good of this world and the next.

Dhikrullah also applies to diligence in obligatory or praiseworthy acts, such as the recitation of Qur'an, the reading of hadith, the study of the Science of Islam (*al-`ilm*), and supererogatory prayers.

***Dhikr* can take place with the tongue, for which the one who utters it receives reward, and it is not necessary for this that he understand or recall its meaning, on condition that he not mean other than its meaning by its utterance; and if, in addition to its utterance, there is *dhikr* in the heart, then it is more complete; and if there is, added to that, the recollection of the meaning of the *dhikr* and what it entails such as magnifying Allah and exalting Him above defect or need, it is even more complete; and if all this takes place inside a good deed, whether an obligatory prayer, or *jihad*, or other than that, it is even more complete; and if one perfects one's turning to Allah and purifies one's sincerity towards Him: then that is the farthest perfection.**

Fakhr al-Din al-Razi said: "What is meant by the *dhikr* of the tongue is the expressions that stand for *tasbih*, *tahmid*, and *tamjid* -- exaltation, praise, and glorification. As for the *dhikr* of the heart, it consists in reflection on the proof-texts that point to Allah's essence and His attributes, on those of the obligations including what is enjoined and what is forbidden so that one may examine the rulings that pertain to them, and on the secrets of Allah's creation. As for *dhikr* of the limbs, it consists in their being immersed in obedience, and that is why Allah named prayer: "*dhikr*" when He said: "When the call is proclaimed on Jum`a, hasten earnestly to the *dhikr* of Allah" (62:9). It is reported from some of the Knowers of Allah that *dhikr* has seven aspects:

dhikr of the eyes, which consists in weeping (*buka'*);

dhikr of the ears, which consists in listening (*isgha'*);

dhikr of the tongue, which consists in praise (*thana'*);

dhikr of the hands, which consists in giving (*`ata'*);

dhikr of the body, which consists in loyalty (*wafa'*);

dhikr of the heart, which consists in fear and hope (*kawf wa raja'*);

dhikr of the spirit, which consists of utter submission and acceptance (*taslim wa rida'*)."

Loudness in *dhikr*

The Prophet praised a man who was *awwah* -- literally: one who says *ah, ah!* -- that is: loud in his *dhikr*, even when others censured him. Ahmad narrated with a good chain in his *Musnad* (4:159) from `Uqba ibn `Amir: "The Prophet said of a man named *Dhu al-bijadayn: innahu awwah*, He is a man who says *ah* a lot. This is because he was a man abundant in his *dhikr* of Allah in Qur'an-recitation, and he would raise his voice high when supplicating."

Allah said of the Prophet Ibrahim: "Verily, Ibrahim is *awwah* and *halim*" (9:114, 11:75), that is, according to *Tafsir al-jalalayn*: "Crying out and suffering much, out of fear and dread of his Lord." [*halim* = merciful, gentle.] The Prophet prayed to be *awwah* in the following invocation: *rabbi ij`alni ilayka awwahan*, "O Allah, make me one who often cries out *ah* to you." Narrated by Tirmidhi (book of *da`awat*#102, *hasan sahih*), Ibn Majah (*Du`a'* #2), and Ahmad (1:227) with a strong chain [Yahya ibn Sa`id al-Qattan < Sufyan al-Thawri < Shu`ba < `Amr ibn Murra < `Abd Allah ibn al-Harith < Taliq ibn Qays al-Hanafi < Ibn `Abbas] with the following wording:

The Prophet used to supplicate thus: "O my Lord! help me and do not cause me to face difficulty; grant me victory and do not grant anyone victory over me; devise for me and not against me; guide me and facilitate guidance for me; make me overcome whoever rebels against me; O my Lord! make me abundantly thankful to You (*shakkaran laka*), abundantly mindful of You (*dhakkaran laka*), abundantly devoted to You (*rahhaban laka*), perfectly obedient to You (*mitwa`an ilayks*), lowly and humble before You (*mukhbitan laka*), **always crying out and turning back to You (*awwahan muniban*)!...."**

Gatherings of Collective, Loud Dhikr

The hadith qudsi already quoted, "Those that remember Me in a gathering," makes gatherings of collective, loud *dhikr* the gateway to realizing Allah's promise "Remember Me, and I shall remember you." It is no wonder that such gatherings receive the highest praise and blessing from Allah and His Prophet, Peace be upon him, according to many excellent and authentic hadiths.

In Bukhari and Muslim: The Prophet said that Allah has angels roaming the roads to find the people of *dhikr*, i.e. those who say *La Ilaha Illallah* and similar expressions, and when they find a group of people (*qawm*) reciting *dhikr*, they call each other and encompass them in layers until the first heaven -- the location of which is in Allah's knowledge. (This is to say, an unlimited number of angels are going to be over that group. He didn't say: "when they find one person." Therefore it is a must to be in a group to get this particular reward.) Allah asks His angels, and He knows already (but he asks in order to assure it and make it understandable for us) "What are my servants saying?" (He did not say "servant," but *`ibadi*, "servants" in the plural.) The angels say: "They are praising You (*tasbih*) and magnifying Your Name (*takbir*) and glorifying You (*tahmid*), and giving You the best Attributes (*tamjid*)." (Can you say that all this is a lecture or a study group? Can you say that this is silent? Rather, this is saying "Alhamdulillah" and all kinds of other *dhikr*.) Allah says: "Have they seen Me?" The angels answer: "O our Lord! They did not see You." He says: "(They are praising Me without seeing Me, what if they see Me!" The angels answer: "O our Lord, if they saw You, they are going to do more and more worship, more and more *tasbih*, more and more *takbir*, more and more *tamjid*!" He says: "What are they asking?" Angels say: "They are asking Your Paradise!" He says: "Did they see Paradise?" They say: "O our Lord, no, they have not seen it." He says: "And how will they be if they see it?" They say: "If they see Paradise, they are going to be more attached and attracted to it!" He says: "What are they fearing and running away from?" (When we are saying, "*Ya Ghaffar* (O Forgiver), *Ya Sattar* (O Concealer)," it means that we are fearing Him because of our sins. We are asking Him to hide our sins and forgive us.) They say: "They are fearing and running away from hellfire." He says: "And have they seen hellfire?" They say: "O our Lord, no, they did not see hellfire." He says: "And how will they be if they see fire and hell?" They say: "If they see your fire, they are going to be running from it more and more, and be even more afraid of it." (Now listen to this carefully:) And Allah says: "I am making you witness (and does Allah need witnesses? He needs no witness since He said: "Allah is sufficient as witness." Why make the angels witnesses? Does Allah change His word? "Making you witness" here means, "Assuring you") that I have forgiven them." (Why has Allah forgiven them? Because, as the beginning of the hadith states, they are a group of people reciting the Names of Allah and remembering Him with His *dhikr*.) One of the angels says: "O my Lord, someone was there who did not belong to that group, but came for some other need." (That person came for some other purpose than *dhikr*, to ask someone for something.) Allah says: "Those are such a group that anyone who sits with them -- no matter for what reason -- that person will also have his sins forgiven."

The late Imam Ahmad Mashhur al-Haddad (d. 1416/1995) said in his book *Miftah al-janna* (cf. transl. Mostafa Badawi, *Key to the Garden*, Quilliam Press p. 107-108):

This hadith indicates what merit lies in gathering for *dhikr*, and in everyone present doing it aloud and in unison, because of the phrases: "They are invoking You" in the plural, and "They are the people who sit," meaning those who assemble for remembrance and do it in unison, something which can only be done aloud, since someone whose *dhikr* is silent has no need to seek out a session in someone else's company.

This is further indicated by the *hadith qudsi* which runs: "Allah says: I am to my servant as he expects of Me, I am with him when he remembers Me. If he remembers Me in his heart, I remember him to Myself, and if he remembers me in an assembly, I mention him in an assembly better than his..." (Bukhari and Muslim) Thus, silent *dhikr* is differentiated from *dhikr* said aloud by His saying: "remembers Me within himself," meaning: "silently," and "in an assembly," meaning "aloud."

Dhikr in a gathering can only be done aloud and in unison. The above hadith thus constitutes proof that *dhikr* done aloud in a gathering is an exalted kind of *dhikr* which is mentioned at the Highest Assembly (*al-mala' al-a`la*) by our Majestic Lord and the angels who are near to Him, "who extol Him night and day, and never tire" (21:20).

The affinity is clearly evident between those who do *dhikr* in the transcendent world, who have been created with an inherently obedient and remembering nature, namely the angels, and those who do *dhikr* in the dense world, whose natures contain lassitude and distraction; namely, human beings. The reward of the latter for their *dhikr* is that they be elevated to a rank similar to that of the Highest Assembly, which is sufficient honor and favor for anyone.

Allah has bestowed a special distinction upon those who remember Him. The Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "The single-hearted (*al-mufarridun*) have surpassed all." They asked, "Who are these single-hearted people, O Prophet of Allah?" He replied, "Those men and women who remember Allah unceasingly." (Muslim)

The mountain has overtaken the people because the mountain is reciting *dhikr* also. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya in *Madarij al-salikin* explains that the term *mufarridun* has two meanings here: either *themuwahidun*, the people engaged in *tawhid* who declare Allah's Oneness as a group (i.e. not necessarily alone), or those whom he calls *ahad furada*, the same people as (single) individuals sitting alone (in isolation). From this example it is evident that in the explanation of Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya, sittings of *dhikr* can be in a group, and can be all alone. In

another explanation of *mufarridun* also cited by Ibn Qayyim, the meaning is 'those that tremble from reciting dhikrullah, entranced with it perpetually, not caring what people say or do about them.' This is because the Prophet said: *udhkur Allaha hatta yaqulu majnun* "Remember / mention Allah as much as you want, until people say that you are crazy and foolish" (Narrated by Ahmad in his *Musnad*, Ibn Hibban in his *Sahih*, and al-Hakim who declared it *sahih*); that is: do not care about them!

The *mufarridun* are the people who are really alive. Abu Musa reported, "The likeness of the one who remembers his Lord and the one who does not remember Him is like that of a living to a dead person." (Bukhari)

Ibn `Umar reported that the Prophet said: "When you pass by the gardens of Paradise, avail yourselves of them." The Companions asked: "What are the gardens of Paradise, O Messenger of Allah?" He replied: "The circles of dhikr. There are roaming angels of Allah who go about looking for the circles of dhikr, and when they find them they surround them closely." Tirmidhi narrated it (*hasan gharib*) and Ahmad.

Abu Sa`id Al-Khudri and Abu Huraira reported that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "When any group of men remember Allah, angels surround them and mercy covers them, tranquility descends upon them, and Allah mentions them to those who are with Him." Narrated by Muslim, Tirmidhi, Ahmad, Ibn Majah, and Bayhaqi.

Muslim, Ahmad, and Tirmidhi narrate from Mu`awiya that the Prophet went out to a circle of his Companions and asked: "What made you sit here?" They said: "We are sitting here in order to remember / mention Allah (*nadhkurullaha*) and to glorify Him (*wa nahmaduhu*) because He guided us to the path of Islam and he conferred favours upon us." Thereupon he adjured them by Allah and asked if that was the only purpose of their sitting there. They said: "By Allah, we are sitting here for this purpose only." At this the Prophet said: "I am not asking you to take an oath because of any misapprehension against you, but only because Gabriel came to me and informed me that Allah, the Exalted and Glorious, was telling the angels that He is proud of you!" Note that the hadith stated *jalasna* -- we sat -- in the plural, not singular. It referred to an association of people in a group, not one person.

Shahr ibn Hawshab relates that one day Abu al-Darda' entered the Masjid of Bayt al-Maqdis (Jerusalem) and saw people gathered around their admonisher (*mudhakkir*) who was reminding them, and they were raising their voices, weeping, and making invocations. Abu al-Darda' said: "My father's life and my mother's be sacrificed for those who moan over their state before the Day of Moaning!" Then he said: "O Ibn Hawshab, let us hurry and sit with those people. I heard the Prophet say: If you see the groves of Paradise, graze in them, and we said: O Messenger of Allah, what are the groves of Paradise? He said: The

circles of remembrance, by the One in Whose hand is my soul, no people gather for the remembrance of Allah Almighty except the angels surround them closely, and mercy covers them, and Allah mentions them in His presence, and when they desire to get up and leave, a herald calls them saying: Rise forgiven, your evil deeds have been changed into good deeds!" Then Abu al-Darda' made towards them and sat with them eagerly. The hafiz Ibn al-Jawzi relates it with his chain of transmission in the chapter entitled: "Mention of those of the elite who used to attend the gatherings of story-tellers" of his book *al-Qussas wa al-mudhakkirin* (The Story-tellers and the Admonishers) ed. Muhammad Basyuni Zaghul (Beirut: dar al-kutub al-`ilmiyya, 1406/1986) p. 31.

The above shows evidence for the permissibility of loud dhikr, group dhikr, and the understanding of dhikr as including admonishment and the recounting of stories that benefit the soul. And Allah knows best.



Types and frequency of Dhikr

Because dhikr is the life of the heart, Ibn Taymiyya is quoted by his student Ibn Qayyim as saying that Dhikr is as necessary for the heart as water for the fish. Ibn Qayyim himself wrote a book, *al-Wabil al-sayyib*, on the virtues of dhikr, where he lists more than one hundred such virtues, among them (Quoted in Maulana M. Zakariyya Kandhalvi, *Virtues of Dhikr* (Lahore: Kutub Khana Faizi, n.d.) p. 74-76:

- It induces love for Allah. He who seeks access to the love of Almighty Allah should do dhikr profusely. Just as reading and repetition is the door of knowledge, so dhikr of Allah is the gateway to His love.
- Dhikr involves *muraqaba* or meditation, through which one reaches the state of *ihsan* or excellence, wherein a person worships Allah as if he is actually seeing Him.
- The gatherings for dhikr are gatherings of angels, and gatherings without dhikr are gatherings of Satan.
- By virtue of dhikr, the person doing dhikr is blessed, as also the person sitting next to him.
- In spite of the fact that dhikr is the easiest form of worship (the movement of the tongue being easier than the movement of any other part of the body), yet it is the most virtuous form.
- Dhikr is a form of *Sadaqa* -- charity. Abu Dharr al-Ghifari said: "The Messenger of Allah said: "*Sadaqa* is for every person every day the sun rises." I said: "O

Messenger of Allah, from what do we give *sadaqa* if we do not possess property?" He said: "The doors of *sadaqa* are *takbir* (i.e. to say: *Allahu Akbar*, Allah is Greater); *Subhan Allah* (Allah is exalted high); *al-hamdu lillah* (all praise is for Allah); *La ilaha illallah* (there is no god other than Allah); *Astaghfirullah* (I seek forgiveness from Allah); enjoining good; forbidding evil.... These are all the doors of *sadaqa* from you which is prescribed for you, and there is a reward for you even in sex with your wife." Narrated by Ahmad and Ibn Hibban, and there is something of similar effect in Muslim.

All words of praise and glory to Allah, extolling His Perfect Attributes of Power and Majesty, Beauty and Sublimeness, whether one utters them by tongue or says them silently in one's heart, are known as *dhikr* or remembrance, of Allah. He has commanded us to remember Him always and ever. Allah says:

"O you who believe! Celebrate the praises of Allah, and do so often; and glorify Him morning and evening." (33:41-42)

If anyone remembers Allah, He remembers that person:

"Remember me, I shall remember you." (2:152)

Remembrance of Allah is the foundation of good deeds. Whoever succeeds in it is blessed with the close friendship of Allah. That is why the Prophet, peace be upon him, used to make remembrance of Allah at all times. When a man complained, "The laws of Islam are too heavy for me, so tell me something that I can easily follow," the Prophet told him, "Let your tongue be always busy with the remembrance of Allah." [Narrated by Ahmad with two sound chains, also Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah through other chains, and Ibn Hibban who declared it *sahih* as well as al-Hakim.]

The Prophet, peace be upon him, would often tell his Companions, "Shall I tell you about the best of deeds, the most pure in the sight of your Lord, about the one that is of the highest order and is far better for you than spending gold and silver, even better for you than meeting your enemies in the battlefield where you strike at their necks and they at yours?" The Companions replied, "Yes, O Messenger of Allah!" The Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "Remembrance of Allah." (Narrated by Tirmidhi, Ahmad, and Hakim who declared its chain of narrators sound.)

Remembrance of Allah is also a means of deliverance from Hell Fire. Mu'adh reported, "The Prophet, peace be upon him, said, 'No other act of man is a more effective means for his deliverance from the chastisement of Allah than the remembrance of Allah.'" (Narrated by Ahmad.)

Ahmad also reports that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "Whatever you say in celebration of Allah's Glory, Majesty, and Oneness, and all your words of Praise

for Him gather around the Throne of Allah. These words resound like the buzzing of bees, and call attention to the person who uttered them to Allah. Don't you wish to have someone there in the presence of Allah who would call attention to you?"



The required amount of *dhikr* is as much as possible

Allah ordered that He should be remembered abundantly. Describing the wise men and women who ponder His signs, the Qur'an mentions:

"Those who remember Allah standing, sitting and on their sides," (3:191), and

"Those men and women who engage much in Allah's praise. For them has Allah prepared forgiveness and a great reward." (3:191, 33:35)

The author of *Fiqh al-Sunna* mentioned that Mujahid explained: "A person cannot be one of 'those men and women who remember Allah much' as mentioned in the above verse of the Qur'an, unless he or she remembers Allah at all times, standing, sitting, or lying in bed," and that when asked how much *dhikr* one should do to be considered as one of "those who remember Allah much," Ibn as-Salah said that "much" is "when one is constant in supplicating, in the morning and evening and in other parts of the day and the night as reported from the Prophet, peace be upon him."

Concerning the above Qur'anic verses `Ali ibn Abu Talha relates that Ibn `Abbas said, "All obligations imposed upon man by Allah are clearly marked and one is exempted from them only in the presence of a genuine cause. The only exception is the obligation of *dhikr*. **Allah has set no specific limits for it, and under no circumstances is one allowed to be negligent of it.** We are commanded to 'remember Allah standing, sitting and reclining on your sides,' in the morning, during the day, at sea or on land, on journeys or at home, in poverty and in prosperity, in sickness or in health, openly and secretly, and, in fact, **at all times throughout one's life and in all circumstances.**"

We see by the above evidence that there is no such thing as too much *dhikr*. The Prophet is related to say: "He who loves something mentions it much." (Narrated by Abu Nu`aym in the *Hilya* and Daylami in *Musnad al-firdaws*. Sakhawi cites it in *al-Maqasid al-hasana* p. 393 #1050 and does not comment upon it.) We love Allah and His Prophet, and therefore we mention Allah and His Prophet. No one may declare a limit to such mention except those who do not have such love and they are undoubtedly the enemies of Islam.

Imam Ghazali said in the fortieth book of his *Ihya'* entitled "The Remembrance of Death and The Afterlife" (p. 124 in the translation of T.J. Winter, `Abd al-Hakim Murad):

It is man's soul and spirit that constitute his real nature... Upon death his state changes in two ways. Firstly he is now deprived of his eyes, ears and tongue, his hand, his feet and all his parts, just as he is deprived of family, children, relatives, and all the people he used to know, and of his horses and other riding-beasts, his servant-boys, his houses and property, and all that he used to own. There is no distinction to be drawn between his being taken from these things and these things being taken from him, for it is the separation itself which causes pain....

If there was anything in the world in which he had found consolation and peace, then he will greatly lament for it after he dies, and feel the greatest sorrow over losing it. His heart will turn to thoughts of everything he owned, of his power and estates, even to a shirt he used to wear, for instance, and in which he took pleasure.

However, **had he taken pleasure only in the remembrance of Allah, and consoled himself with Him alone, then his will be great bliss and perfect happiness.** For the barriers which lay between him and his Beloved will now be removed, and he will be free of the obstacles and cares of the world, all of which had distracted him from the remembrance of Allah. This is one of the aspects of the difference between the states of life and death.

On the same topic Imam Habib al-Haddad said (*Key to the Garden* p. 104):

Time and days are a man's capital, while his inclinations, desires, and various ambitions are the highway robbers. The way in which one profits on this journey lies in succeeding in coming to Allah and in attaining everlasting happiness, while one loses by being veiled from Allah, and being consigned to the painful torment of the Fire.

For this reason the intelligent believer transforms all his breaths into acts of obedience, and interrupts them only with the *dhikr* of Allah.



The importance of silent dhikr

The author of *Fiqh al-sunna* writes:

The purpose of dhikr is to purify hearts and souls and awaken the human conscience. The Qur'an says:

"And establish regular prayer, for prayer restrains from shameful and unjust deeds, and remembrance of Allah is the greatest thing in life, without doubt." (29:45)

In other words, the remembrance of Allah has a greater impact in restraining one from shameful and unjust deeds than just the formal regular prayer. This is so because when a servant opens up his soul to his Lord, extolling His praise, Allah strengthens him with His light, increasing thereby his faith and conviction, and reassuring his mind and heart. This refers to:

"those who believe, and whose hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of Allah, for without doubt in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find satisfaction." (13:28)

And when hearts are satisfied with the Truth, they turn to the highest ideals without being deflected by impulses of desire or lust. This underscores the importance of dhikr in man's life. Obviously it would be unreasonable to expect these results just by uttering certain words, for words of the tongue unsupported by a willing heart are of no consequence. Allah Himself has taught us the manner in which a person should remember Him, saying:

"And do bring your Lord to remembrance in your very soul, with humility and in reverence, without loudness in words, in the mornings and evening, and be not of those who are unheedful." (7:205)

This verse indicates that doing dhikr in silence and without raising one's voice is better. Once during a journey the Prophet, peace be upon him, heard a group of Muslims supplicating aloud. Thereupon the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "Give yourselves a respite, you are not calling upon someone deaf or absent. Surely He Whom you are calling upon is near you and He listens to all. He is nearer to you than the neck of your mount." [Muslim]

This hadith underlines the love and awe a person should feel while engaged in dhikr.

It is related from Sa`d that the Prophet said: "The best dhikr is the hidden dhikr, and the best money is what suffices." Ahmad narrates it in his *Musnad*, Ibn Hibban in his *Sahih*, and Bayhaqi in *Shu`ab al-iman*. Nawawi said the hadith was not firmly established.

In the *Fatawa fiqhiyya* of al-Haytami (p. 48): He was asked about Nawawi's saying at the end of the chapter entitled "Dhikr Gatherings" in his Commentary on *Sahih Muslim*: "Dhikr of the tongue with presence of the heart is preferable to dhikr of the heart [without]." Ibn Hajar said: "It is not because dhikr of the heart is an established worship in the lexical sense [i.e. consisting in specific formulae] that it is preferable, but because through it one intently means, in his heart, to exalt and

magnify Allah above all else. That is the meaning both of the aforementioned saying of Nawawi and of the saying of some that "There is no reward in dhikr of the heart." By denying there is a reward in it, one means "There is no reward in the words, which are not uttered"; and by establishing that there is reward in it, one means "in the fact that the heart is present," as we have just said. Consider this, for it is important. And Allah knows best."

According to the Naqshbandi masters, dhikr in the heart is more useful for the *murid* or student for it is more efficient in shaking the heart from indifference and awakening it. Shah Naqshband said: "There are two methods of dhikr; one is silent and one is loud. I chose the silent one because it is stronger and therefore more preferable."

Shaykh Amin al-Kurdi said in his book *Tanwir al-qulub* (Enlightenment of Hearts) p. 522:

Know that there are two kinds of dhikr: "by heart" (*qalbi*) and "by tongue" (*lisani*). Each has its legal proofs in the Qur'an and the Sunna. The dhikr by tongue, which combines sounds and letters, is not easy to perform at all times, because buying and selling and other such activities altogether divert one's attention from such dhikr. The contrary is true of the dhikr by heart, which is named that way in order to signify its freedom from letters and sounds. In that way nothing distracts one from his dhikr: with the heart remember Allah, secretly from creation, wordlessly and speechlessly. That remembrance is best of all: out of it flowed the sayings of the saints.

That is why our Naqshbandi masters have chosen the dhikr of the heart. Moreover, the heart is the place where the Forgiver casts his gaze, and the seat of belief, and the receptacle of secrets, and the source of lights. If it is sound, the whole body is sound, and if it is unsound, the whole body is unsound, as was made clear for us by the Chosen Prophet.

Something that confirms this was narrated on the authority of `A'isha: "Allah favors dhikr above dhikr seventyfold (meaning, silent dhikr over loud dhikr). On the Day of Resurrection, Allah will bring back human beings to His account, and the Recording Angels will bring what they have recorded and written, and Allah Almighty will say: See if something that belongs to my servant was left out? The angels will say: We left nothing out concerning what we have learnt and recorded, except that we have assessed it and written it. Allah will say: O my servant, I have something good of yours for which I alone will reward you, it is your hidden remembrance of Me." Bayhaqi narrated it.

Also on the authority of `A'isha: "The dhikr not heard by the Recording Angels equals seventy times the one they hear." Bayhaqi narrated it.



On Seclusion (*khalwa*, *`uzla*)

Silent *dhikr* is the *dhikr* of the servant who secludes himself away from people. Narrated Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri: A bedouin came to the Prophet and said, "O Allah's Apostle! Who is the best of mankind?" The Prophet said, "A man who strives for Allah's Cause with his life and property, and also a man who lives (all alone) in a mountain path among the mountain paths to worship his Lord and save the people from his evil." (English Bukhari, Volume 8, Book 76, Number 501) [Arabic: *Ja'a a`rabiyyun ila al-nabi faqala ya rasulallahi ayyu khayru al-nas? qala rajulun jahidun bi nafsihi wa malih...*]

Abu Sa'id al-Khudri said: I heard the Prophet say: "There will come a time upon the people when the best property of a Muslim man will be his sheep which he will take to the tops of mountains and to the places of rainfall to run away with his Religion far from trials. (English Bukhari, Volume 8, Book 76, Number 502) [Arabic: *ya'ti `ala al-nasi zamanun khayru mali al-rajuli al-muslim...*]

Malik narrates in his *Muwatta'*: that Humayd ibn Malik ibn Khuthaym was sitting with Abu Hurayra in his land of al-`Aqiq when a group of the people of Madina came to him. They dismounted and came to him. Humayd said: Abu Hurayra said [to me]: "Go to my mother and say to her: Your son send his salam and asks you to send us a little food." I went and she gave me three loaves of bread and some olive oil and salt. I carried it to them. When I put it in front of them Abu Hurayra said: "Allahu akbar. Praise be to Allah Who has sated us with bread after the time when our only food was the two black ones: water and dates." The people did not leave anything except they ate it. When they went away, he said: "Son of my brother: be kind to your sheep, wipe their mucus from them, improve their pastures, and pray in their vicinity, for they are from the animals of Paradise. By the One in Whose hand is my soul, there will soon come a time upon people when the flock of sheep will be dearer to its owner than the sons of Marwan [= human company?]."

Muslim and Tirmidhi narrate on the authority of Abu Hurayra who said: "While on the road to Mecca the Prophet passed on top of a mountain called *Jumdan* (= frozen in its place), at which time he said: Move on (*siru*)! Here is Jumdaan Mountain: and the single-minded (*al-mufarridun*) are foremost. They said: What are the single-minded? He said: The men and women who remember Allah much (*al-dhakhirun Allah kathiran wa al-dhakhirat*)." Muslim related it in his *Sahih*, beginning of the book of *Dhikr*.

The version in Tirmidhi has: The Prophet said: "The single-minded (*al-mufarridun*) are foremost. They said: What are the single-minded? He said: Those who dote on the remembrance of Allah and are ridiculed because of it (*al-mustahtirun bi dhikr Allah*), and whose burdens the *dhikr* removes from

them (*yada`u `anhum al-dhikru athqalahum*), so that they come to Allah fluttering (*fa ya'tun Allaha khifaqan*)."

al-Mundhiri said in *al-Tharhib wa al-tarhib* [The Encouragement to Good and the Discouragement from Evil]: "These are the ones who are fired up with the remembrance of Allah (*al-muwalla`un bi dhikrillah*)."

Nawawi writes in *Sharh Sahih Muslim*, Bk. 48, Ch. 1, Hadith 4: "Some pronounced it *mufridun* (= those who isolate themselves)... Ibn Qutayba and others said: The original meaning of this is those whose relatives have died and they have become single (in the world) with regard to their passing from them, so they have remained remembering Allah the Exalted. Another narration has: They are those who are moved at the mention or remembrance of Allah (*hum al-ladhina ihtazzu fi dhikrillah*), that is, they have become fervently devoted and attached to His remembrance. Ibn al-I`rabi said: 'It is said that "a man becomes single" (*farada al-rajul*) when he becomes learned, isolates himself, and concerns himself exclusively with the observance of Allah's orders and prohibitions.'"

Dhikr in isolation or seclusion (*khalwa*) is corroborated by the hadith in Bukhari: "Seven people will be shaded by Allah..." The seventh is: "A person who remembers Allah in seclusion (*dhakara Allaha khaaliyan*) and his eyes get flooded with tears."

In Tirmidhi: `A'isha relates: "In the beginnings of Allah's Messenger's Prophethood, at the time Allah desired to bestow honor upon him and mercy upon His servants through him, he would not have any vision except it came to pass as surely as the sun rises. He continued like this for as long as Allah wished. Most beloved to him was seclusion (*al-khalwa*) and there was nothing he loved more than to be alone in seclusion." Tirmidhi narrates it and said: *hasan sahih gharib*. Bukhari and Muslim narrate something very similar through different chains and the word *khala'* is used instead of *khalwa*.

Ibn Hajar said in *Fath al-Bari* in the commentary on Bukhari's chapter on seclusion:

Ibn al-Mubarak relates in *Kitab al-raqa'iq* from Shu`ba from Khubayb ibn `Abd al-rahman from Hafs ibn `Asim that `Umar said: "Take your part of fortune from seclusion." And what a good saying is al-Junayd's saying, may Allah grant us the benefit of his *baraka*: "Undergoing the difficulty of seclusion is easier than mixing with society unscathed." al-Khattabi said in his "Book of Seclusion" (*Kitab al-`uzla*): "If there were not in seclusion other than safety from backbiting and the sight of what is forbidden but cannot be eliminated, it would have been enough of an immense good." Bukhari's title [Chapter on Seclusion As Rest From Keeping Company Towards Evil] refers to the hadith cited by al-Hakim from Abu Dharr from the Prophet with a fair (*hasan*) chain: "Isolation is better than to be sociable

in committing evil." However, what is usually retained is that it is a saying of Abu Dharr or Abu al-Darda'. Ibn Abi `Asim cited it... al-Qushayri said in his *Risala*: "The method of the one who enters seclusion is that he must have the belief that he is keeping people from his evil, not the reverse, for the former presupposes belittlement of himself, which is the attribute of the humble, while the latter indicates that he considers himself better than others, which is the attribute of the arrogant."

Abu Bakr ibn al-`Arabi writes in *Sharh Sahih Tirmidhi*, Book 45 (*da`awat*), Ch. 4:

If it is said that the times have become so corrupt that there is nothing better than isolating oneself, we say: one isolates oneself from people in one's actions, while he keeps mixing with them with his physical body, however, if he cannot succeed, then at that time he isolates himself from them physically but without entering into monasticism (*ya`taziluhum bi badanihi wa la yadkhulu fi al-rahbaniyya*) which is condemned and rejected by the Sunna.



***Dhikr* with the name "ALLAH"**

Allah said in His Book: "And mention the name of your Lord and devote yourself to Him with a complete devotion" (73:8). Qadi Thana'ullah Panipati said in his *Tafsir Mazhari* (10:111): "**Know that this verse points to the repetition of the name of the Essence (*ism al-dhat*),**" that is: "*Allah*." The same meaning is intimated also by the end of verse 6:91 in Surat *al-An`am*: "Say ALLAH. Then leave them to their play and vain wrangling."

The Prophet said: "The Hour will not rise before *Allah*, *Allah* is no longer said on earth." And through another chain: "The Hour will not rise on anyone saying: *Allah*, *Allah*." Muslim narrated both in his *Sahih*, Book of *Iman* (belief), chapter 66 entitled: *dhahab al-iman akhir al-zaman* "The Disappearance of Belief at the End of Times."

Imam Nawawi said in his commentary on this chapter: "Know that the narrations of this hadith are unanimous in the repetition of the name of Allah the Exalted for both versions, and that is the way it is found in all the authoritative books." (*Sharh Sahih Muslim*, Dar al-Qalam, Beirut ed. vol. 1/2 p. 537)

Imam Muslim placed the hadith under the chapter-heading of the disappearance of belief (*iman*) at the end of times although there is no mention of belief in the hadith. **This shows that saying "Allah, Allah" stands for belief. Those who say it show belief, while those who don't say it, don't show belief. Therefore those who fight those who say it, are actually worse than those who merely lack belief and do not say "Allah, Allah."**

Nawawi highlights the authenticity of the repetition of the form to establish that the repetition of the words "Allah, Allah" are a *sunna ma'thura* (practice inherited from the Prophet and the Companions) as it stands. Ibn Taymiyya's claim that the words must not be used alone but *obligatorily* in construct, e.g. with a vocative form ("*Ya Allah*"), contradicts the Sunna.

One who knows that the dhikr "Allah, Allah" has been mentioned by the Prophet himself, is not at liberty to muse whether it was used by the Companions or not in order to establish its basis. It suffices for its basis to establish that the Prophet said it.

One who knows that *Allah, Allah* is a dhikr used by the Prophet, is not at liberty to object to similar forms of dhikr such as HU and HAYY and HAQQ. "To Allah belong the most beautiful names, so call Him by them" (7:180). As for the hadith of the ninety-nine names, it does not limit the names of Allah to only ninety-nine, as Nawawi made clear in his commentary of that hadith.

It is established that Bilal used to make the dhikr *Ahad, Ahad* while undergoing torture. Ibn Hisham says in his *Sira*: Ibn Ishaq narrates [with his chain of transmission] saying: "Bilal was a faithful Muslim, pure of heart... Umayya ibn Khalaf used to bring him out in the hottest part of the day and throw him on his back in the open valley and have a great rock put on his chest; then he would say to him: You will stay here until you die or deny Muhammad and worship al-Lat and al-'Uzza. He used to say while he was enduring this: *ahad, ahad* -- One, One!" Ibn Hajar cites it in *al-Isaba* (1:171 #732).

It is noteworthy that the Siddiqi translation of *Sahih Muslim* mistranslates the first narration cited above as: "The Hour (Resurrection) would not come so long as Allah is supplicated in the world" and the second as "The Hour (Resurrection) would not come upon anyone so long as he supplicates Allah." This is wrong as translation goes, although it is right as a commentary, since saying *Allah, Allah* is supplicating Him, as is all worship according to the hadith of the Prophet: "Supplication: that is what worship is." (Tirmidhi and others narrate it.) However, concerning accuracy in translation, the word form highlighted by Nawawi must be kept intact in any explanation of this hadith. It is not merely "supplicating Allah." It is saying: *Allah, Allah* according to the Prophet's own words.



Dhikr "*hu*", "*hayy*", "*haqq*"

- "*Hu*" and "*Hayy*" are a pronoun and name of Allah Almighty in the Qur'an according to ayat al-Kursi:

Allahu la ilaha illa HU AL-HAYY al-Qayyum (2:255)

Allah! There is no god except HE, the LIVING the Self-Subsistent

- "*Haqq*" is one of the names of Allah in the hadith in Bukhari and Muslim enumerating the ninety-nine Names (see below).

Furthermore, the Prophet prayed to Allah with the following invocations:

(a) "*Labbayka ilah al-Haqq*" [At your command, O the God of Truth]. It is narrated in the book of Hajj in al-Nasa'i's *Sunan*, and in the book of *Manasik* in Ibn Majah's.

(b) "*Anta al-Haqq*" [You are Truth]. Bukhari and Muslim.

- Allah said: "*Wa lillahi al-asma' al-husna fad`uhu biha*" : To Allah belong the Most beautiful Names, so call Him with them (7:180). **These names are not confined to ninety-nine**, as Nawawi explicitly stated in his commentary on the hadith in Bukhari and Muslim whereby the Prophet said: "*Inna lillahi ta`ala tis`atan wa tis`ina isman, mi'atan illa wahidan, man ahsaha dakhala al-jannat...*": "There are ninety-nine names which belong to Allah, one hundred less one, whoever memorizes (or recites) them enters Paradise..."

- The Prophet used to call Allah by ALL His Names: "*Allahumma inni ad`uka bi asma'ika al-husna kulliha*": O Allah, I invoke You with all of Your beautiful Names. Narrated by Ibn Maja, book of *Du`a*; and by Imam Malik in his *Muwatta'*, *Kitab al-Shi`r*.



Dhikr in Dim Surroundings

- Allah said to the Prophet: "*Wa min al-layli fa tahajjad bihi nafalatan laka*" : "And some part of the night awake for it, a largess for thee" (17:79), and He said: "Lo! the vigil of the night is a time when impression is more keen and speech more certain." (73:6).

The superiority of prayer at night is known in all books of hadith and fiqh because of the elimination of worldly distractions at that time. That is why Imam Ghazali wrote on that topic: "The root of thought is the eye... He whose *niyyat* (intention) is fine and who aims high cannot be diverted by what occurs in front of him, but he who is weak fall prey to it. The medicine is to cut off the roots of these distractions and to shut up the eyes, to pray in a dark room, not to keep anything in front which may attract attention and not to pray in a decorated place. For this reason, the saints used to worship in dark, narrow and unspacious rooms." *Ihya' `Ulum al-Din*, Book of *Salat*.



Movement during dhikr

We have already mentioned above the version of the hadith of Muslim whereby the Prophet praised the *mufarridun* or those who are single-minded in their remembrance of Allah: Nawawi said: Another narration has: "They are those who shake or are moved at the mention or remembrance of Allah (*hum al-ladhina ihtazzu fi dhikrillah*), that is, they have become fervently devoted and attached to His remembrance."

Imam Habib al-Haddad said in *Key to the Garden* (p. 116):

Dhikr returns from the outward feature which is the tongue to the inward which is the heart, in which it becomes solidly rooted, so that it takes firm hold of its members. The sweetness of this is tasted by the one who has taken to *dhikr* with the whole of himself, so that his skin and heart are softened. As Allah said: "**Then their skins and their hearts soften to the remembrance of Allah**" (39:23).

The "softening of the heart" consists in the sensitivity and timidity that come as a result of nearness and *tajalli* [manifestation of one or more divine attributes]. Sufficient is it to have Allah as one's intimate companion!

As for the "softening of the skin." this is the ecstasy and swaying from side to side which result from intimacy and manifestation, or from fear and awe. No blame attaches to someone who has reached this rank if he sways and chants, for in the painful throes of love and passion he finds something which arouses the highest yearning....

The exhortation provided by fear and awe brings forth tears and forces one to tremble and be humble. These are the states of the righteous believers (*abrar*) when they hear the Speech and *dhikr* of Allah the Exalted. "Their skins shiver" (39:23), and then soften with their hearts and incline to *dhikr* of Him, as they are covered in serenity and dignity, so that they are neither frivolous, pretentious, noisy, or ostentatious. Allah the Exalted has not described them as people whose reasons have departed, who faint, dance, or jump about.



Hadiths on the Virtues of Dhikr

Abu Hurayra reported that the Prophet said: "When a servant of Allah utters the words *la ilaha illallah* (there is no god except Allah) sincerely, the doors of heaven open up for these words until they reach the Throne of Allah, so long as its utterer

keeps away from the major sins." (Narrated by Tirmidhi, who says it is *hasan gharib*. al-Mundhiri included in *al-Tarhib* 2:414)

Abu Hurayra also reported that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "Renew your faith." "How can we renew our faith?" they asked. The Prophet replied: "Say always: *la ilaha illallah*." (Narrated by Ahmad with a fair chain of authorities)

Jabir reported that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "The best remembrance of Allah is to repeat *la ilaha illallah* and the best prayer (*du'a*) is *al-hamdu lillah* (all praise belongs to Allah)." (Narrated by Nasa'i, Ibn Majah, and Hakim who declared its chain sound)

Abu Hurayra reported that the Prophet said: "There are two phrases that are light on the tongue but heavy on the scale of rewards and are dear to the Gracious One. These are: *subhan Allah wa bi hamdihi*, "Glorified is Allah with all praise to Him," and *subhan Allah al-`azim*, "Glorified is Allah, the Great." (Narrated by Bukhari, Muslim, and Tirmidhi)

Abu Hurayra also reported that the Prophet said: "I love repeating: *subhan Allah, wa al-hamdu lillah, wa la ilaha illallah, wallahu akbar*: "Glorified is Allah, and Praise be to Allah, and There is no God but Allah, and Allah is most Great," more than all that the sun shines upon." (Narrated by Muslim and Tirmidhi)

Abu Dharr reported that the Prophet said: "Shall I tell you the words that Allah loves the most?" I said: "Yes, tell me, O Messenger of Allah." He said: "The words dearest to Allah are: *subhan Allah wa bi hamdihi* "Glorified is Allah with all praise to Him." (Narrated by Muslim and Tirmidhi)

In Tirmidhi's version, we also find the following: "The words most dear to Allah which He has chosen for His angels are: *subhana rabbi wa bi hamdihi subhana rabbi wa bi hamdihi*, "Glorified is my Lord with all praise to Him, Glorified is my Lord with all praise to Him!"

Jabir reported that the Prophet said: "Whoever says: "Glorified is Allah, the Great, with all praise to Him" will have a palm tree planted for him in Paradise." (Narrated by Tirmidhi, who said it is *hasan*)

Abu Sa'id reported that the Prophet said: "Perform the enduring goods deeds (*al-baqiyat al-salihat*) more frequently." They asked, "What are these enduring good deeds?" The Prophet replied: *Takbir [allahu akbar], Tahsil [la ilaha illallah], Tasbih [subhan allah], al-hamdu lillah*, and *la hawla wa la quwwata illa billah*. (Narrated Nasa'i and Hakim, who said its chain is *sahih*.)

`Abd Allah ibn Mas`ud reported that the Prophet said: "During the Night Journey I met Ibrahim who said to me: O Muhammad, convey my greetings to your

Community, and tell them that the Paradise is of pure land, its water is sweet, and its expanse is vast, spacious and even. And its seedlings are:

subhan allah: Glory to Allah

wa al-hamdu lillah: and Praise to Allah

wa la ilaha illallah: and there is no god but Allah

wallahu akbar: and Allah is greatest.

(Narrated by Tirmidhi and Tabarani whose version adds: "There is no power nor strength save through Allah.")

Samura ibn Jundub reported that the Prophet said: "The dearest phrases to Allah are four: *subhan Allah, wa al-hamdu lillah, wa la ilaha illallah, wallahu akbar*: "Glorified is Allah, and Praise be to Allah, and There is no God but Allah, and Allah is most Great," There is no harm in beginning them in any order you choose while remembering Allah." (Narrated by Muslim)

Ibn Mas`ud reported that the Prophet said: "If anyone recites the last two verses of Surat al- Baqara at night (2:285-286), they will suffice for him." (Narrated by Bukhari and Muslim). That is, these two verses will bring him a reward equivalent to that of a night prayer, and will safeguard him from any hurt during that night. Ibn Khuzayma in his *Sahih* mentioned it under the chapter "The Recitation of the Qur'an Equivalent in Reward to a Night Prayer."

Abu Sa`id al-Khudri narrated that the Prophet asked: "Can anyone of you recite a third of the Qur'an during the night?" The Companions considered this difficult and they said: "Who among us can do so, O Prophet of Allah?" Thereupon the Prophet said: "*Allah, the One, the Eternally-Besought* [i.e. surat al-Ikhlās] is a third of the Qur'an." (Narrated by Bukhari and Muslim)

Abu Hurayra reported that the Prophet said: "Whoever says: *la ilaha illallahu wahdahu la sharika lah, lahu al-mulku wa lahu al-hamd, wa huwa `ala kulli shay'in qadir* -- There is no god but Allah, alone, without partner. His is the sovereignty, and His the praise, and He has power over everything -- a hundred times a day will have a reward equivalent to the reward for freeing ten slaves. In addition, a hundred good deeds will be recorded for him and a hundred bad deeds of his will be wiped off, and it will be a safeguard for him from Satan that day until evening, and no one will be better in deeds than such a person except he who does more than that." (Narrated by Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi, Nasa'i and Ibn Majah)

In the version of Muslim, Tirmidhi, and Nasa'i, we find this addition: "Whoever says: *subhan Allah wa bi hamdihi* -- Glorified is Allah with all praise to Him -- a

hundred times during a day, will have all his sins wiped off even if they were as numerous as the foam on the surface of the sea."



Istighfar

Anas reported that he heard the Prophet saying that Allah says, "O son of Adam, whatever you asked Me and expect from Me I forgave -- respecting that which you owed to Me -- and I don't care (how great this was). O Son of Adam, even if your sins pile up to the sky and then you seek My forgiveness I will forgive you, and O son of Adam, even if you have an earthful of sins but you meet Me without associating any other thing with Me I will forgive you." (Narrated by Tirmidhi who said it is *hasan sahih*.)

`Abd Allah ibn `Abbas said: "If one supplicates without fail for forgiveness from Allah, He finds a way out for him to get out of every distress and difficulty, and gives him sustenance through ways utterly unthought of." (Narrated by Abu Dawud, Nasa'i, Ibn Majah, and Hakim, who said its chain of authorities is sound.)

Juwayriyya bint al-Harith, one of the wives of the Prophet, reported that one day the Prophet left her apartment in the morning as she was busy observing her dawn prayer in her place of worship. He came back in the forenoon and she was still sitting there. The Prophet said to her: "You have been in the same place since I left you?" She said: "Yes." Thereupon the Prophet said: "I recited four words three times after I left you and if these are to be weighed against what you have recited since morning these would outweigh them, and these words are:

subhan allahi wa bi hamdihi `adada khalqihi wa rida nafsihi wa zinata `arshihi wa midada kalimatih

"Glory to Allah and praise to Him to number of His creation and to the extent of His pleasure and to the extent of the weight of His Throne and to the extent of ink used in recording words for His Praise." (Muslim and Abu Dawud)

Ibn `Umar reported that the Prophet told them, "A servant of Allah said: *ya rabbi laka al-hamdu kama yanbaghi li jalali wajhika wa li `azimi sultanik*. My Lord! All praise belongs to You as much as befits Your Glory and Sublime Majesty. This was too much for the two angels to record. They did not know how to record it. So they soared to the heaven and said: Our Lord! Your servant has said something which we don't know how to record. Allah asked them -- and, of course, He knew what the servant had said: What did My servant say? They said: He said: My Lord! All praise belongs to You as much as befits Your Glory and Sublime Majesty. Allah said to them: Write it down as My servant has said until he should meet Me and I reward him for it." (Narrated by Ibn Majah)

Abdullah ibn `Amr ibn al-As said: "I saw the Prophet counting the glorifications of Allah on his right hand's fingers." (Narrated by Tirmidhi who said *hasan gharib*, Nasa'i, Abu Dawud, and Ahmad.)

Yusayra bint Yasir reported that the Prophet commanded them (the Emigrant women) to be regular in remembering Allah by saying *tahlil* (*la ilaha illallah*) and *tasbih* (*subhan allah*) and *taqdis* (*allahu akbar*) and never to be forgetful of Allah and His Mercy, and to count them on their fingers, for the fingers will be questioned and will speak. (Narrated by Ahmad, Tirmidhi who said it is *gharib*, Abu Dawud, and al-Hakim. Shawkani in *Nayl al-awtar* 2:316 said that Suyuti declared sound (*sahih*) its chain of transmission.)



Use of prayer-beads (*masbaha*, *sibha*, *tasbih*)

Sa`d ibn Abi Waqqas reported that once the Prophet saw a woman who had some date-stones or pebbles which she was using as beads to glorify Allah. The Prophet said to her, "Let me tell you something which would be easier or more excellent for you than that." So he told her to say instead:

subhan allahi `adada ma khalaqa fi s-sama',
subhan allahi `adada ma khalaqa fi al-ard,
subhan allahi `adada ma khalaqa bayna dhalik,
subhan allahi `adada ma huwa khaliq,
Allahu akbaru `adada ma khalaqa fi al-sama',
Allahu akbaru `adada ma khalaqa fi l-'ard,
Allahu akbaru `adada ma khalaqa bayna dhalik,
Allahu akbaru `adada ma huwa khaliq,
al-hamdu lillahi `adada ma khalaqa fi al-sama',
al-hamdu lillahi `adada ma khalaqa fi l-'ard,
al-hamdu lillahi `adada ma khalaqa bayna dhalik,
al-hamdu lillahi `adada ma huwa khaliq,
la ilaha illallahu `adada ma khalaqa fi al-sama',
la ilaha illallahu `adada ma khalaqa fi al-ard,
la ilaha illallahu `adada ma khalaqa bayna dhalik,
la ilaha illallahu `adada ma huwa khaliq,
la hawla wa la quwwata illa billahi `adada ma khalaqa fi al-
sama',
la hawla wa la quwwata illa billahi `adada ma khalaqa fi al-
ard,
la hawla wa la quwwata illa billahi `adada ma khalaqa bayna
dhalik,
la hawla wa la quwwata illa billahi `adada ma huwa khaliq.

"Glory be to Allah as many times as the number of what He has created in Heaven,
 Glory be to Allah as many times as the number of what He has created on Earth,
 Glory be to Allah as many times as the number of what He has created between them,
 Glory be to Allah as many times as the number of that which He is creating."
 and then repeat all of the above four times but substituting "Glory be to Allah" by:

- "Allah is the most great" in the first repetition,
- "Praise be to Allah" in the second repetition,
- "There is no god but Allah" in the third repetition, and
- "There is no change and no power except with Allah" in the fourth repetition. (Narrated by Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi who said it is *hasan*, Ibn Majah, Ibn Hibban in his *Sahih*, al-Nasa'i, and al-Hakim, who said it is *sahih* according to the criterion of Muslim. Dhahabi concurred.)

Safiyya bint Huyayy the Prophet's wife said: The Prophet came in to see me and in front of me there were four thousand date-stones with which I was making *tasbih* [counting *subhan Allah*]. He said: "You make *tasbih* with so many! Shall I teach you what surpasses your number of *tasbih*?" She said: "Teach me!" He said: "Say: *Subhan Allah`adada khalqih* -- Glory to Allah the number of His creation." Narrated by Tirmidhi who said it is *gharib*, and both al-Hakim and Suyuti declared it *sahih*.

Allah says in His Holy Book to His Holy Prophet, "Remind people, for reminding benefits them." The reminder of Muslims has various forms, public and private. A public form of this reminder is the *adhan*. The *masbaha* or *sibha* or *tasbih*, or prayer-beads, has had since the earliest Companions the function of a private reminder. It is for that reason that the *tasbih* was called by them *mudhakkir* or *mudhakkira*-- "reminder," and there is a narration traced to the Prophet whereby he said: *ni`ma al-mudhakkir al-sibha*: "What a good reminder are the prayer-beads!" Shawkani narrates it from `Ali ibn Abi Talib as evidence for the usefulness of prayer-beads in *Nayl al-awtar* (2:317) from Daylami's narration in *Musnad al-firdaws* with his chain, and Suyuti cites it in his fatwa on prayer-beads in *al-Hawi li al-fatawi*(2:38).

The statement propagated nowadays by "Salafis" whereby counting dhikr on beads is an innovation, is undoubtedly false. The use of beads for counting dhikr is definitely established as a practice allowed by the Prophet and a Sunna of the Companions. This is proven by the *sahih* hadith of Sa`d ibn Abi Waqqas, who related that the Prophet once saw a woman using some datestones or pebbles (*nawan aw hasan*), and did not prohibit her to use them. This hadith is

found in Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi, Nisa'i, Ibn Maja, Ibn Hibban, and Hakim. Dhahabi declared it *sahih*. Another *sahih* hadith to that effect was related by Safiyya, who was seen by the Prophet, Peace be upon him, counting "Subhan Allah" on four thousand date stones. This hadith is found in Tirmidhi, Hakim, and Tabarani, and was confirmed as *sahih* by Suyuti. It is also related from the Prophet's freedman, Abu Safiyya, that a mat would be spread for him and a basket made of palm leaves brought which was filled with pebbles with which he would make *tasbih* until mid-day. Then it would be taken away, and then brought back after he had prayed, and he would make *tasbih* again until evening. This is narrated in Ibn Hajar's *Isaba* (7:106 #652) with his chain, who says that Bukhari narrates it [in his *Tarikh*], as well as al-Baghawi through two chains. Shawkani cites it, as seen below.

Shawkani said in *Nayl al-awtar* (2:316-317):

The Prophet justified the counting of *dhikr* on the fingers by the fact that the fingers will be questioned and will speak, that is, they will witness to that effect. It follows that counting *tasbih* on them, because of this aspect, is better than using *dhikr*-beads or pebbles. But the two other hadiths [of Sa`d ibn Abi Waqqas and Safiyya bint Huyayy] indicate the permissibility of counting *tasbih* with date-stones and pebbles, and similarly with *dhikr*-beads because there is no distinguishing factor between them in the Prophet's stipulation to the two women concerning it, and no disapproval of it. As for directing to what is better: this does not negate permissibility (*la yunafi al-jawaz*). There are reports to that effect.

It is related in Hilal al-Haffar's monograph through Mu`tamar ibn Sulayman from Abu Safiyya the Prophet's freedman that a mat would be spread for him and a basket made of palm leaves brought which was filled with pebbles with which he would make *tasbih* until mid-day. Then it would be taken away, and then brought back after he had prayed, and he would make *tasbih* again until evening. Imam Ahmad narrates it in *Kitab al-zuhd* [with his chain].

Ahmad also narrates from al-Qasim ibn `Abd al-Rahman that Abu al-Darda' had a bag filled with date-stones and that whenever he prayed the noon prayer he would bring them out one by one and make *tasbih* on them until they were finished.

Ibn Sa`d in his *Tabaqat* narrates [with his chains] that Sa`d ibn Abi Waqqas used to count *tasbih* on pebbles, and that Fatima bint al-Husayn ibn `Ali ibn Abi Talib used to make *tasbih* with a thread stringed with knots, and that Abu Hurayra made *tasbih* with a string of pebbles (*al-nawa al-majmu`*).

`Abd Allah the son of Imam Ahmad narrated in *Zawa'id al-zuhd* that Abu Hurayra had a thread stringed with one thousand knots and that he would not sleep until he had counted *tasbih* on them.

al-Daylami narrates in *Musnad al-firdaws* through Zaynab bint Sulayman ibn `Ali, and from Umm al-Hasan bint Ja`far from her father from her grandfather from `Ali, and it is traced back to the Prophet: "What a good reminder are the prayer-beads!"

Suyuti related reports with their chains in his monograph on the subject entitled *al-Minha min al-sibha* and it is part of his collected fatwas. He says towards the end of it: **"It is not related from any one of the Salaf nor the Khalaf that it is forbidden to count *tasbih* on the *sibha* (dhikr-beads). On the contrary, most of them used to count *tasbih* on it, and they did not consider it disliked."**

The Indian hadith scholar Zakariyya al-Khandlawi similarly relates in his book *Hayat al-sahaba* that Abu Hurayra said: "I recite *istighfar* (formula of asking forgiveness) 12,000 times daily" and that, according to his grandson, he had a piece of thread with 1,000 knots and would not go to sleep until he had said *subhan allah* (Glory to Allah) on all of these knots. According to her grand-daughter through Imam al-Husayn, Fatima also used to count her dhikr on a thread with knots.

Mawlana Zakariyya continues, "It is well-known that many other Companions of the Prophet, Peace be upon him, used beads in their private devotions, such as Sa`d ibn Abi Waqqas himself, Abu Safiyya the slave of the Prophet, Abu Sa`d, Abu Darda', and Fatima, May Allah be pleased with them all. Stringing or not stringing the beads together does not make any difference."

It is well-established that counting dhikr is a Sunna of the Prophet, Peace be upon him. He himself advised his wives, `Ali, and Fatima to count *tasbih* (*subhan allah*), *tahmid* (*al-hamdu lillah*), and *takbir* (*allahu akbar*) thirty-three times each before going to bed at night. Ibn `Amr relates that he saw the Prophet, count the times he said *subhan allah* on his right hand. This does not mean that it is not allowed to use the left also, as the Prophet simply said: "Count [the *dhikr*] on your fingers."

Imam Suyuti recounted in one of his fatwas entitled *al-Minha fi al-sibha* (The profit derived from using dhikr-beads) the story of `Ikrima, who asked his teacher `Umar al-Maliki about dhikr-beads. `Umar answered him that he had also asked his teacher Hasan al-Basri about it and was told: "Something we have used at the beginning of the road we are not desirous to leave at the end. I love to remember Allah with my heart, my hand, and my tongue." Suyuti comments: "And how should it be otherwise, when the prayer-beads remind one of Allah Most High, and a person seldom sees prayer-beads except he remembers Allah, which is among the greatest of its benefits."

As for Albani's statements against the prayer-beads, his rejection of the hadith *ni`ma al-mudhakkir al-sibha* (see his *Silsila da`ifa* #83), and his astounding

claim that whoever carries dhikr-beads in his hand to remember Allah is misguided and innovating, then we direct the reader to their refutation in Mahmud Sa`id's *Wusul al-tahani bi ithbat sunniyyat al-sibha wa al-radd `ala al-albani* (The alighting of mutual benefit and the confirmation that the dhikr-beads are a Sunna, and the refutation of Albani).

As for the idea that the prayer-beads come from Buddhism or Christianity, it was one of the Hungarian scholar Ignaz Goldziher's (fl. 1897 CE) legacies to orientalism.



Invoking blessings on the Prophet (*salawat*)

Allahumma salli `ala muhammadin wa `ala ali muhammadin wa sallim. O Allah, send blessings upon Muhammad and upon the Family of Muhammad, and grant them peace!

We have already expounded elsewhere on the fact that there is no such thing as invoking too much *salawat* on the Prophet and that we should be clear of anyone who makes such a claim. We will only mention here some evidence on this topic by way of a reminder.

Abu Hurayra reported that the Prophet said: "If people sit in an assembly in which they do not remember Allah nor invoke a blessing on the Prophet, it will be a cause of grief for them on the Day of Judgment." (Narrated by Tirmidhi, who graded it *hasan*.)

The author of *Fath al-`allam* said: "This hadith proves that it is incumbent on one to remember Allah and invoke blessings on the Prophet while sitting in an assembly, for whether we take the words "cause of grief" to mean torment of fire or any other chastisement, obviously a punishment is incurred only when an obligatory act is neglected or a forbidden act is committed, and here it is both the remembrance of Allah and the invoking of blessings on His Prophet that are apparently incumbent."



Excerpts on the remembrance of Allah from `Abd al-Rahman al-Sufuri's (d. 894)

NUZHAT AL-MAJALIS WA MUNTAKHAB AL-NAFA'IS

(The Pleasant Gatherings and the Select Precious Matters)

Allah, the Exalted, said: "Verily in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest!" (13:28). If it is asked: How is the meaning of this verse reconciled with that of His saying: "They only are the true believers whose hearts feel fear (*wajilat* = tremble or shake) when Allah is mentioned" (8:2), the answer is that in the latter the purpose of Allah's mention is to bring to mind His greatness and the intensity of His vengeance against those who disobey Him. This verse was revealed at a time when the Companions had a disagreement concerning the spoils of the battle of Badr. Therefore the mention or the remembrance of what is fearsome became appropriate. As for the former verse, it concerns whoever Allah guided and who has turned to Allah with love. Therefore the mention of Allah's mercy became appropriate.

The two meanings of fearsomeness and mercy are reunited in Surat al-Zumar: "Allah hath now revealed the fairest of statements, a Scripture consistent, wherein promises of reward are paired with threats of punishment, whereat doth creep the flesh of those who fear their Lord, so that (*thumma* = and then) their flesh and their hearts soften to Allah's reminder (or: to the celebration of Allah's praises; or: to Allah's remembrance)" (39:23), meaning, to Allah's mercy and generosity.

The Prophet said: "He who remembers Allah much, Allah loves him," and he said: "The night that I was enraptured to my Lord I passed by a man extinguished within the light of Allah's Throne. I asked, Who is this, and is he an angel? I was told No, and I asked again, Is it a Prophet? I was told No, and I said, Who then? It was said: This is a man who, while he was in the world, his tongue was constantly moist with the mention of Allah and his heart was attached to the mosques."

On the authority of Mu`adh ibn Jabal, the Prophet said that Allah said: "No servant of Mine mentions me in himself except I mention him in an assembly of My angels, and he does not mention Me in an assembly except I mention him in the Highest Company."

On the authority of Abu Hurayra who said that while on the road to Mecca the Prophet passed on top of a mountain called Jumdan, at which time he said: "Move on, for here is Jumdan which has overtaken the single-minded." They said: "What are the single-minded (*mufarridun*)? He said: "The men and women who remember Allah much" (33:35). Muslim related it.

The version in Tirmidhi has: "It was said: And what are the single-minded? He replied: Those who dote on the remembrance of Allah and are ridiculed because of it, whose burden the dhikr removes from them, so that they come to Allah fluttering!"

Al-Mundhiri said in *al-Tarhib wa al-tarhib* (The encouragement to good and the discouragement from evil]: "The single-minded and those who dote on the dhikr and are ridiculed for it: these are the ones set afire with the remembrance of Allah."

The Prophet said:

"The-one-who-mentions-or-remembers-Allah among those who forget Him is like a green tree in the midst of dry ones";

"The one who mentions or remembers Allah among those who forget Him, Allah shows him his seat in Paradise during his life";

"The one who mentions or remembers Allah among those those who forget Him is like the fighter behind those who run away";

"The one who mentions or remembers Allah among those who forget Him, Allah looks at him with a look after which He will never punish him";

"The one who mentions or remembers Allah among those who forget Him is like a light inside a dark house";

"The one who mentions or remembers Allah among those who forget Him, Allah forgives him sins to the amount of every eloquent and non-eloquent speaker," that is, the number of animals and human beings;

"The one who mentions or remembers Allah in the the marketplace, will have light in every hair of his on the Day of Resurrection."

The Sufis say that:

- dhikr has a beginning, which is a truthful application;¹
- it has a middle, which is a light that strikes;
- its has an end, which is a piercing difficulty;
- it has a principle, which is purity;
- it has a branch, which is loyalty;
- it has a condition, which is presence;
- it has a carpet, which is righteous action;
- it has a peculiar characteristic, which is the Manifest

Opening [cf. 48:1].

Abu Sa`id al-Kharraz² said: "When Allah desires to befriend a servant of His, He opens the door of dhikr for that servant. After the latter takes pleasure in dhikr, He

opens the door of proximity for him. After that, He raises him to the meetings of intimacy and after that he makes him sit on a throne of Oneness. Then He removes the veils from him and He makes him enter the abode of Singleness and unveils Majesty and Sublimity to him. When the servant beholds Majesty and Sublimity, he remains without "he". He becomes extinguished, immune to the claims and pretensions of his ego, and protected for Allah's sake."

Someone else said: "Dhikr is the medicine (lit. *tiryāq* = triacle) of the sinners, the familiarity of the estranged, the treasure of those who practice reliance, the repast of those who possess certitude, the adornment of those who are connected, the starting-point of knowers, the carpet of those brought near Him, and the intoxicant of lovers."

The Prophet also said: "Remembrance of Allah is firm knowledge of one's belief, immunity from hypocrisy, a fortress against satan, and a guarded refuge from the fire." It was mentioned by al-Layth al-Samarqandi.

Ibn al-Salah was asked about the measure by which the servant is estimated to be among "those who remember Allah much". He said: "If he perseveres in the forms of dhikr inherited in the Sunna morning and evening and in the various times and occasions, then he is of those who remember Allah much."

Musa said: "O my Lord! Are you near, so that I may speak to you intimately, or are you far, so that I may call out to you?" Allah inspired to him: "I am sitting next to the one who remembers Me." He said: "O my Lord, we are sometimes in a state of major impurity and we hold You in too high regard to dare remember You at that time." He replied: "Remember me in every state." Ghazali mentioned it in the "Ihya".

(ʿAbd al-Rahim ibn al-Hasan) al-Isnawi (al-Shafīʿi, 1305-1370 CE) said in his *Alghaz* (Riddles): "A man in a state of minor impurity is forbidden from certain forms of dhikr, as illustrated by the nullification of the act of worship incurred when entering such a state during the Friday sermon, because ritual purity is a condition for its validity."

Someone related in Qushayri's *Risala* (Treatise on tasawwuf) that he entered a jungle and found a man remembering Allah while attended by a huge beast. He asked: "What is this?" The man replied: "I have asked Allah to empower one of His dogs to watch me in case I became heedless from remembering Him."...



On the Dhikr of Inanimate Objects

"The seven heavens and the earth and all that is therein praise Him, and there is not a thing but hymneth his praise; but ye understand not their praise. Lo! He is ever Clement, Forgiving." (17:44)

Ibrahim al-Nakha`I³ said concerning Allah's saying: "There is not a thing but hymneth his praise" (17:44): "Everything praises Him, including the door when it squeaks." Someone else said: "The verse is general, and it applies particularly to the one endowed with speech, as in Allah's saying: "Everything was destroyed,"⁴ whereas the houses of `Ad were not destroyed, and in His saying concerning Sheba (Balqis): "And I have been given all things" whereas she had not been given Sulayman's kingdom."

It was also said that the verse (17:44) has a universal meaning whereby the one endowed with speech glorifies Allah by word, while the silent one glorifies through his state. This is by virtue of his being in existence: he testifies to His Maker through having been made.

I have seen in Taj al-Din Ibn al-Subki's *Tabaqat al-shafi`iyya al-kubra* -- may Allah be pleased with him, that the interpretation favored by our school (Shafi`is) is that all things make glorification through actual utterance, because such a thing is not impossible and it is indicated by many proof-texts. Allah the Exalted said: "We have placed the mountains under his dominion, they praise Allah at nightfall and at sunrise." The mountains' glorification through actual utterance does not necessitate that we hear it. I have seen in *al-Wujuh al-musfira `an ittisa` al-maghfira* [The Faces Made Radiant By the Vastness of Mercy] the following commentary: "It is more likely that they literally glorify, except that this phenomenon is hidden from the people and is not perceived except through the rupture of natural laws. The Companions heard the glorification of food and other objects placed before the Prophet.

"Concerning Allah's saying at the end of the verse: "Lo! He is ever Clement, Forgiving": it applies to the state of those addressed by the verse in three ways. First, in the vast majority of cases people are distracted from glorifying Allah the Exalted, unlike the heavens and the earth and all that is therein: these distracted ones become in need of clemency and forgiveness. Second, they do not understand the praise of all these objects, and this may be because they do not sufficiently contemplate and reflect upon them: they become in need of clemency and forgiveness. Third, the fact that they do not hear their praise may cause them to feel contempt towards them and drive them to neglect their rights: they again become in need of clemency and forgiveness.

"Without doubt he who beholds with full understanding the glorification of things in existence, honors and magnifies them in respect to this glorification, even if the Lawgiver ordered him to disdain them in another respect."

The author of *al-Wujuh al-musfira* cited the following story: "One of Allah's slaves sought to perform the purification from going to stool with stones. He took one stone, and Allah removed the veil from his hearing so that he was now able to hear the stone's praise. Out of shame he left it and took another one, but he heard that one praising Allah also. And every time he took another stone he heard it glorifying Allah. Seeing this, at last he turned to Allah so that He would veil from him their praise to enable him to purify himself. Allah then veiled him from hearing them. He proceeded to purify himself despite his knowledge that the stones were making *tasbih*, because the one who reported about their *tasbih* is the same Law-giver who ordered to use them for purification. Therefore in the concealment of *tasbih* there is a far-reaching wisdom."

This is true, and I also saw in Fakhr al-Din Razi's *Tafsir* that what the scholars have agreed upon is that whoever is not alive is not empowered with speech, and it has been firmly established that inanimate objects praise Allah through the medium of their state. And Allah knows best.⁵



Six Benefits of Dhikr (Remembrance of Allah)

1. The Ranks of Dhikr

One of the commentators of Qur'an said concerning Allah's saying: "But among them are some who wrong themselves and among them are some who are lukewarm, and among them are some who outstrip others through good deeds, by Allah's leave" (35:32) that they are respectively the rememberer by tongue, the rememberer by heart, and the one who never forgets his Lord.

Ibn `Ata' Allah⁶ said: "The one who utters the Word of Oneness needs three lights: the light of guidance, the light of sufficiency, and the light of divine help. Whoever Allah graces with the first light, he is immune (*ma`sum*) from associating a partner to Allah; whoever Allah graces with the second light, he is immune from committing great sins and indecencies; and whoever Allah graces with the third light, he is protected (*mahfuz*) from the corrupt thoughts and motions that typify those given to heedless actions. The first light belongs to "the ones who wrong themselves," the second to "those that are lukewarm," and the third to "the ones who outstrip others through good deeds."

Al-Wasiti⁷ was asked about the remembrance of Allah, may Allah have mercy on him. He said: "It is the exiting from the battlefield of heedlessness into the outer space of direct vision (*mushahada*) on the mount of victory over fear and intensity of love."

One of the special attributes of the remembrance of Allah is that it has been placed in direct correspondence with Allah's own remembrance of us. Allah the Exalted said: "Remember Me, and I shall remember you" (2:152). Musa said - peace be upon him: "O my Lord, where do you dwell?" He replied: "In the heart of my believing servant."⁸ The meaning of this is the heart's rest brought about by His remembrance. Something like this will be mentioned in the last chapter on love (mahabba) insha Allah.

Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya⁹ said - may Allah be well pleased with him: "Verily the angels lower their gaze in the presence of the rememberer of Allah, just as the people lower their gaze before lightning."

2. Remittance of Sins Through Dhikr

It is related that a servant of Allah will join the gatherings of dhikr with sins the like of mountains and then rise and leave one such gathering with nothing left of them to his name. This is why the Prophet called it one of the groves of Paradise when he said: "If you pass by the groves of Paradise, be sure to graze in them," and someone said: "What are the groves of Paradise?" to which he replied: "The circles of dhikr." It will be mentioned again in the chapter on Allah-wariness (taqwa) insha Allah.

`Ata' said - may Allah the Exalted have mercy on him: "Whoever sits in a gathering in which Allah is remembered, Allah will remit for him ten evil gatherings of his."

Abu Yazid al-Bistami was told - may Allah be well pleased with him: "I have entrusted you with a secret for which you shall render Me an account under the Tree of Bliss (*shajarat tuba*)," whereupon he said: "We are under that tree as long as we remain in the remembrance of Allah."¹⁰

It is related on `Ali's authority - may Allah be well pleased with him - that Allah manifests Himself (*yatajalla*) to the rememberers during dhikr and the recitation of Qur'an. The Prophet said: "No group gathers and remembers Allah seeking nothing other than Him except a caller from heaven calls out to them: "Arise forgiven, for your bad deeds have been turned into good ones!"" Abu al-Darda' said that the Prophet said: "Allah verily will raise on the Day of resurrection people bearing light in their faces, carried aloft on pulpits of pearl, whom the people will envy. They are neither prophets nor martyrs." Upon hearing this a beduin Arab fell to his knees and said: "Show them to us (*ajlihim*), O Prophet of Allah!" - that is: "describe them for us." He replied: "They are those who love one another for Allah's sake alone. They come from many different tribes, countries, and cities. They gather together for the remembrance of Allah the Exalted, remembering Him."

Someone said concerning Allah's saying with reference to Sulayman -- peace be upon him: "I verily will punish him with hard punishment" (27:21) that it means: "Verily I shall drive him far from the gatherings of dhikr"... Al-Junayd said -- may Allah be well pleased with him -- concerning Allah's saying: "And (He is the One) Who causeth me to die, then giveth me life again" (26:81), that this means: "He causes me to die with heedlessness (of Him), then He causes me to live with remembrance (of Him)." Al-Hasan al-Basri said -- may Allah have mercy on him: "No people sit remembering Allah the Exalted with one of the people of Paradise in their midst except Allah grants him to intercede for all of them."

3. Dhikr of the Frogs

Dawud said - peace be upon him: "I shall praise Allah with a kind of praise that none among his creatures ever used before." Thereupon a frog called out to him: "Do you pride yourself before Allah for your praise, while for seventy years my tongue has been moist from remembering Him, and I have eaten nothing in the past ten nights because I kept busy uttering two words?" Dawud said: "What are these two words?" The frog replied: "O Praiser of Thyself with every tongue, O remembered One in every place!"

It is related in *Nuzhat al-nufus wa al-afkar* [The Recreation of Minds and Thoughts] that an angel once said to Dawud: "O Dawud, understand what the frog is saying!" whereupon he heard it saying: "Glory and praise to You to the farthest boundary of Your knowledge!" Dawud said: "By the One Who made me a Prophet, verily I shall sing my Lord's praise in this way." The commentators have said that the frogs' words are: "Glory to the King, the Holy One!" (*subhan al-malik al-quddus*) while al-Baghawi has: "Glory to my Lord Most Holy!" (*subhana rabbi al-quddus*), and of `Ali's words - may Allah be well pleased with him - is "Glory to the One Who is worshipped in the abysses of the sea!"

4. Dhikr of the Prophet Jonah

`Ali said - may Allah be well pleased with him: "In the time of Jonah - peace be upon him - was a frog which had lived past the age of four thousand years. It never rested from glorifying Allah. One day it said: "O my Lord, no-one glorifies You like I do!" Jonah said: "O my Lord, I say what it says!" and he said: "Glory to You by the number of times each of your creatures says "Glory to You," and glory to You by the number of times each of Your creatures does not say "Glory to You," and glory to You according to the expanse of Your knowledge and the light of Your countenance and the adornment of Your throne and the reach of Yours words!"

5. The Plagues of Egypt

The frog in a dream represents the righteous person. The frog poured water over Ibrahim's fire - peace be upon him - to help put it out. As for a multitude of frogs, they represent punishment.

The Exalted said: "So We sent them the flood and the locusts and the vermin and the frogs and the blood -- a succession of clear signs. But they were arrogant and became guilty" (7:133). Al-Razi said: "... The nation of Pharaoh said to Musa - peace be upon him: "Whatever signs you bring us, to us it is nothing other than mere magic and we shall not believe in you." Musa invoked Allah against them, and Allah sent down the flood upon them day and night. They sought help from Pharaoh, who sought help from Musa, who sought help from Allah. Allah then withheld the rain from them and sent down the winds. The earth grew vegetation and fruit in over-abundance. When they saw this they said: "Is this what we were anxious about? It is a great good for us!" and they disbelieved again. Allah then sent the locusts upon them, and they ate up all the vegetation until hardship became extreme and the sun was covered by the swarm of locusts. They sought help from Musa who sought help from his Lord. Allah then sent a wind which hurled the locusts into the sea. At this they said: "Whatever is left from what we had planted is enough for us," and they disbelieved again. Allah then sent the lice upon them. Sa`id ibn Jubayr said this is the maggot which issues from wheat. Tha`labi said it is a kind of tick. `Ata' al-Khurasani said it is the well-known lice, and it was also said that it means mosquitoes, and also wingless locusts. They did not leave a single green leaf except they ate it, and something like smallpox smote the bodies of the people. They sought help from Musa who sought help from his Lord. Allah sent a hot wind which burnt the lice. They still did not believe, so Allah sent upon them a swarm of frogs as thick as a pitch-dark night. The frogs entered their plantations, their food, and their beds cubit by cubit. They sought help from Musa again, and he sought help from his Lord. Allah caused the frogs to die and he sent down rain which carried them to the sea. They still disbelieved. Allah then sent down blood upon them so that their rivers ran red with blood. It is also said that Allah inflicted a state of permanent nosebleed upon them. For seven days they drank blood. Then they said: "O Musa, if you remove the filth (al-rijz) from us verily we shall pledge our belief for you." [Cf. 7:134: "If thou removest the terror from us we verily will trust thee and will let the Children of Israel go with thee."] Sa`eed ibn Jabir said that the "filth" (or "terror") was a sixth kind of punishment which is the plague, while others said that it is an expression for the five kinds already mentioned. Al-Razi said - and this is the strongest opinion: "Wahb said that they underwent each affliction for a period of forty days."

6. Lengthening the Pronunciation of LA ILAHA ILLALLAH

Ibn `Abbas said -- may Allah be well pleased with him and his father -- that the Prophet said: "The day Allah created the heavens and the earth he created an angel and ordered him to say: "There is no god except Allah alone" (LA ILAHA ILLALLAH). The angel lengthens his delivery as he utters it and will not rest from this until the trumpet is blown." One of the Companions said that whoever says: "No god except Allah" and lengthens his pronunciation intending thereby to magnify Allah, Allah will remit four thousand grave sins for him, and if he did not commit four thousand, Allah will remit the difference for his family and neighbors. It is related in the hadith: "Whoever says "No god except Allah" and lengthens his pronunciation intending thereby to magnify Allah, four thousand of his sins are struck thereby from the register of his sins." Hence it is praiseworthy to lengthen one's pronunciation upon uttering it, as Nawawi said, may Allah the Exalted have mercy upon him. The Prophet also said: "Whoever lengthens his pronunciation upon saying "No god except Allah," Allah will make him dwell in Paradise in the Abode of Majesty by which he has named Himself when He said: "There remaineth but the countenance of thy Lord of Might and Glory" (55:27), and Allah will grant him to behold His gracious countenance."

Anas ibn Malik said - may Allah be well pleased with him - from the Prophet: "O human beings! Whoever says "No god except Allah" in astonishment at something, Allah creates from each letter of his utterance a tree with as many leaves as the days of this world, each leaf asking forgiveness for him and praising Allah on his behalf until the Day of judgment."... It has been related that this phrase has on the side of Iblis the effect which a gangrenous sore would have on the side of a human being. al-Qadi `Iyad¹¹ relates in the "Shifa" from Ibn `Abbas that written on the door of Paradise is the inscription: "There is no god but Allah alone, Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah: Whoever says this, I shall not punish him."

I saw the following account as part of the explanation of Allah's saying: "And speak (O Musa and Aaron) unto him (Pharaoh) a gentle word" (20:44): Musa said: "O Lord, how can a word be gentle?" Allah replied: "Say to him: "Would you like a good compromise? You have followed your own self for four hundred and fifty years; follow our intent but for one year, and Allah will forgive you all your sins. If not one year, then one month; if not, one week; if not, one single day; if not, one single hour. If you do not (wish to humor us) for all of an hour, then say in a single breath: "There is no god but Allah" so that I shall be able to bring peace to you."

After Musa conveyed the message, Pharaoh gathered his armies and said to them: "I am your Most High Lord!" (79:24) At this the heavens and the earth shook and pleaded before Allah the Glorious and Exalted that Pharaoh be put to death. Allah said: "He is like the dog: only the stick is good for

him. O Musa, cast your staff" (cf. 7:117, 27:10, 28:31). Musa cast his staff (which became a huge snake) and the magicians (of Pharaoh's court) immediately submitted. Pharaoh fled to his bedchamber. Musa said: "If you don't come out, I shall order it to enter where you are." Pharaoh said: "Give me a little respite." Musa answered: "I have no permission to respite you." But Allah the Exalted inspired to him: "Respite him, for verily I am the Clement, I do not hasten to punish."

Pharaoh began to relieve himself forty times a day while previously he would relieve himself only once every forty days. Musa gave him a respite. When the day came Pharaoh exceeded his bounds and rebelled. Allah therefore "seized him and made him an example for the afterlife and the former" (79:25); that is, He punished him with drowning because of his former word ("I am your Most High Lord") and He punished him with Gehenna because of his latter word, when he said: "I know not that ye have a god other than me" (28:38). Ibn `Abbas said: "This is the former word, while the other came later, and between them lay forty years."

I saw mentioned in the book *Zumrat al-`ulum wa zuhrat al-nujum* (The Array of the Sciences and the Brightness of Stars) from the Prophet: He said: "Gabriel told me: "I stood in wait before Allah at the time Pharaoh said: "And what is the Lord of the Worlds?" (26:23) whereupon I outstretched two of my wings to smite him with punishment, but Allah the Exalted said: "Wait, O Gabriel! He hastens to punish who fears the lapse of time."

It was also mentioned in that book that when Pharaoh said: "I am your Lord the Most High" (79:24) Gabriel wanted to shake the earth from under his feet, but when he sought permission from his Lord the Exalted He did not give it to him and ordered him to ignore Pharaoh instead.

Al-`Ala'I¹² said in his explanation of the sura of the Story (al-qasas) that Iblis entered Pharaoh's presence as the latter was in the bath and said: "O Pharaoh, I enticed you with every transgression, but I never told you to claim absolute Lordship!" Then he gave him forty lashes and left him in anger. Pharaoh said to him: "O Iblis, should I take back this claim?" He replied: "It would not be right for you to take it back after making it."

A group of the disbelievers of Quraysh gathered among whom was the Pharaoh of this Community -- Abu Jahl -- at Abu Talib's house during the latter's last illness. Abu Jahl said to him: "You know what has taken place between us and your brother's son. Therefore obtain what is rightfully ours from him and what is rightfully his from us before you die." Abu Talib called the Prophet and said: "O my nephew, these are the nobility of your people, so leave them be and they shall leave you be." He replied: "Do they agree to

obey me if I ask them to say but one word?" Abu Jahl said -- may Allah curse him: "Nay, we shall obey you if you ask us to say ten!" The Prophet then said: "Say: La ilaha illallah," whereupon they said: "Are you asking us to reduce all our gods to only one? Truly you are asking us for the strangest thing!" and they dispersed. Abu Talib said: "O Muhammad, you have asked them for nothing excessive." That is: You have not asked them for anything difficult.

Concerning Allah's saying: "Judge aright between us and be not unjust (lit. do not exceed the proper bounds)" (38:22) -- that is: Do not swerve in your judgment -- the Prophet hoped that his uncle would profess Islam, so he said to him: "Say it (the phrase: There is no Allah but Allah alone), so that I will be permitted to intercede for you on the Day of the rising." Abu Talib replied: "Were it not that people -- that is: the Quraysh -- might think that I said it out of fear (of death), indeed I would say it." More will be said about this matter in the section on the Prophet's miracles insha Allah.

Al-Razi said in his explanation of the sura of Cattle (al-an`am): "Abu Talib said: "Ask me to say other than this because your people hate it." The Prophet replied: "I will never say other than this even if they were to dislodge the sun from its place and put it in my hand." They said: "Then stop cursing our gods, otherwise we will curse you and Him Who orders you to do this," whereupon Allah's saying was revealed: "Revile not those unto whom they pray beside Allah lest they wrongfully revile Allah through ignorance" (6:109).

If it is said: "To curse the idols is among the most meritorious acts of obedience to Allah; why then did Allah forbid it?" The answer is: Allah forbade it because cursing them might lead to the gravest of transgressions - - exalted is Allah far above the saying of wrong-doers -- namely cursing Allah and His Messenger, and it is an obligation to take precautions against it.



Allah's Similes For the Phrase of Oneness

Allah compared the Phrase of Declaring Oneness (*kalimat al-tawhid*):

- to water because water cleanses: similarly this phrase cleanses from sins;
- to soil because the soil gives forth much in exchange for a single seed: similarly this phrase multiplies its return;
- to fire because fire burns and this phrase burns sins;

- to the sun because the latter sheds light on the worlds, and this phrase illumines even the grave;
- to the moon because it dispels the darkness of night, and this phrase sheds light with the same certainty;
- to the stars because they are guides for travellers, and this phrase is a guide for the people of misguidance to follow the right way;
- to the date palm when He said: "A goodly tree, its root set firm, its branches reaching into heaven, giving its fruit at every season by permission of its Lord" (14:24-25).
- The date palm does not grow in every land; similarly this phrase does not grow in every heart.
- The date palm is the tallest fruit tree: similarly the root of this phrase is in the heart and the top of its branches are under the Throne.
- The value of the fruit does not diminish because of the pit: similarly the value of the believer does not diminish despite the disobedience lodged between himself and Allah the Exalted.
- The bottom of the date palm is thorns while its top is moist dates; similarly the initial stages of this phrase are duties, and whoever fulfills them reaches the fruit which is to behold Allah the Exalted.

The Phrase of Oneness is the key to the Garden of Paradise; "every key must have teeth,"¹³ and its teeth are to forsake all that is forbidden and do what is ordained. Allah the Exalted says: "Therefore know that there is no god but Allah alone" (47:19) and the Prophet said: "Whoever said: There is no god but Allah alone, taking care that it is unalloyed (mukhlisan bihi) and from the heart, enters Paradise." It was asked in what being-unalloyed (ikhlas) consisted. He said: "In barring one from what Allah the Exalted has declared forbidden." The Prophet also said: "O Abu Hurayra! Every good deed on your part shall be weighed on the Day of rising except the Witnessing that there is no god but Allah alone, for verily it can never be placed in the Balance."

The king of the Byzantines wrote to our Master `Umar ibn al-Khattab - may Allah be well please with him: "O Commander of the Faithful, Allah's Messenger has related to me that you have a certain tree whose fruit grows like the ears of donkeys, then splits into clusters more beautiful than pearls, then turns green so that it resembles emerald, then reddens and yellows like fragments of gold and ruby, and when it ripens it is more delicious than the soft honey-cake (faludhaj), and when it dries it is nourishment for the dwellers and provision for the travellers.

If he spoke the truth, then verily this is a tree from Paradise!" `Umar ibn al-Khattab wrote back: "Yes, he spoke the truth, and this is also the tree under which `Isa was born (cf. 19:23) and therefore it never invokes another god together with Allah."

Al-Razi said that there is a relation and a resemblance between the palm tree on the one hand and animals and human beings on the other which does not exist between the latter and the other types of trees; this is why the Prophet said: "Honor your stepmother the palm tree for she was created from the remainder of Adam's clay." This is because when Adam fell to earth his hair grew long and his body became soiled, whereupon Gabriel came with scissors, cut his hair and nails, removed the dirt from his body, and buried everything in the ground. Then Adam slept and when he woke up he saw that Allah had created the palm tree by his side: its body - that is its trunk -- was from his body, its fiber or luffa was from his hair, and its stalks were from his nails. It drinks from the top down while other trees drink from the bottom up.

Our Master `Ali said -- may Allah be well pleased with him: "The first tree that stood on the face of the earth is the palm-tree." Allah the Exalted mentioned it in the Qur'an : "Tall date-palms with shoots of fruit stalks, piled one over another" (50:10).¹⁴

The Prophet used to tell people to eat *balah* or green dates together with *tamr* or dried ripe dates¹⁵ for when the sons of Adam eat them shaytan is angry and says: "The sons of Adam are eating the new together with the old!" This is because green dates are cold and dry while dried ripe ones are hot and moist, and each possesses benefits that complement those of the other. The Prophet would join together cucumbers, *rutab* or fresh ripe dates, *sha`ir* or barley bread, and *tamr* or dry ripe dates, as well as mix cold water with honey and drink it on an empty stomach. All this makes for lasting good health, because good health endures when (foods of) hot and cold (elements) are joined. Physicians forbid eating fish together with eggs, or fish together with yogurt, and they forbid drinking honey with cold water after eating fish or before sleep, also drinking water after sexual intercourse, and entering the bath after drinking milk. Al-Samarqandi said in "Bustan al-`arifin" (The Orchard of Gnostics): "Whoever enters the bath on a full stomach and becomes afflicted with colic has no-one to blame but himself."

The Prophet said: "Let the one who fasts break his fast with *rutab* or fresh ripe dates," for fasting weakens the stomach and the liver, and sugar reaches the liver fastest because it likes sugar and accepts it, especially *rutab*. The Prophet said: "When the (time of) *rutab* comes, wish me well, O `A'isha."

Tamr or dry ripe dates are the best food in any land. The pith of the palm (*jummar*) confines the stomach and helps against jaundice and fever. Adding to its benefit is the consumption of ginger preserve following it. Finally, there is

nothing better than *rutab* for the menstruating woman, and nothing better than honey for the sick.