

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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“Have you seen how many ‘likes’ my post received?” “How many people ‘follow’ you?” “Let me have a quick look at how many people ‘re-tweeted’ me.” “I wonder how many friends viewed my ‘story.’” “I have more ‘subscribers’ than you do.” “I might just have to ‘pin’ this on my board.”

There is much more to life than uploading ‘selfies’, ‘vlogs’, pictures of cars and meals on social media. To quote the Prophet of Islām ﷺ:

«نعمتان مغبونٌ فيهما كثيرٌ من الناس: الصحّة والفراغ»

“There are two bounties through which so many people are cheated: good health and free time.”⁽¹⁾

Time is ever-going; we are not getting any younger. Our health, too, can give us no guarantee. Time and again, we see our teenagers departing from this world - and even our women suffering a miscarriage. Of course, for such people, we hope for the best from Allāh ﷻ. Our beloved Prophet ﷺ is on record as saying:

«أيما امرأة مات لها ثلاثة من الولد، كانوا حجاً بآمن النار»

“Any woman who loses three of her children, they will be a barrier (for her) from the Fire.”⁽²⁾

This is not restricted to three children: even if fewer offspring leave the world, the reward is still promised.

The frequency of children and teenagers bidding us farewell is adequate evidence for us to realise that death does not discriminate between the old and young, nor the rich and poor. A younger school-friend⁽³⁾ of the writer left us in 2011 at the tender age of 17. Two months ago, another local youngster,⁽⁴⁾ aged 19, was sent forth to Allāh ﷻ. While we ask Allāh ﷻ to forgive their sins and grant them Jannah, we should also take heed from such incidences. As an Arab poet said:

وإذا المنيّة أنشبت أظفارها ألفت كل تميمة لا تنفع

“When death digs its nails, you will find all ailments useless.”

(1) Al-Bukhārī (6412).

(2) Al-Bukhārī (1249).

(3) Nasim Ahmed, Northampton. May Allāh ﷻ forgive his sins, have mercy on him and grant him Jannah.

(4) Haris Ali, Northampton. May Allāh ﷻ forgive his sins, have mercy on him and grant him Jannah.

This is something Allāh ﷻ declared in the Qur’ān:

﴿ وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلٌ فَإِذَا جَاءَ أَجْلُهُمْ لَا يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ سَاعَةً وَلَا يَسْتَقْدِمُونَ ﴾⁽⁵⁾

“For every people is an appointed time; so when their time comes, they can neither delay it for a moment, nor will they get ahead (of it).”⁽⁵⁾

This verse gives us a promise: a promise of death. Not only is our demise an imperative; the mere thought of it should trigger into us a more pro-active way to live. It is no wonder the beloved Prophet Allāh ﷺ said:

«كن في الدنيا كأنك غريب، أو عابر سبيل»

“Be in this world as a stranger - rather, as someone en route (to another destination).”⁽⁶⁾

We see frequent reminders of such *ḥadīths* - and other relevant messages - on social media; have we ever stopped to reflect over them? During a visit to Makkah, I recall seeing an eye-opening question at the back of small, white cars carrying dead bodies:

هل أعددت نفسك لمثل هذا اليوم؟

“Have you prepared yourself for a day like this?”

Such messages being circulated and video-clips doing the rounds are all a warning to us from Allāh ﷻ. Have we not had enough time to take heed? Allāh ﷻ says:

﴿ أَوْ لَمْ نُعَبِّرْكُمْ مَا يَتَذَكَّرُ فِيهِ مَنْ تَذَكَّرَ وَجَاءَكُمُْ التَّنْذِيرُ ﴾⁽⁷⁾

“Have We not given you a life long enough that when a warner comes, the one wishing to take heed can do so?”⁽⁷⁾

In another *āyah* of the Qur’ān, we learn about a particular type of people:

﴿ وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ ارْكَعُوا لَا يَرْكَعُونَ ﴾⁽⁸⁾

“When they are told to bow down, they do not bow down.”⁽⁸⁾

Just two verses later, Allāh ﷻ rhetorically asks:

﴿ فَبِأَيِّ حَدِيثٍ بَعْدَهُ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴾

⁽⁵⁾ [Al-A’rāf: 7/34].

⁽⁶⁾ Al-Bukhārī (6416).

⁽⁷⁾ [Fāṭir: 35/37].

⁽⁸⁾ [Al-Mursalāt: 77/48].

“Now, in which discourse, after this, will they believe?”⁽⁹⁾

We seek Allāh’s ﷻ protection from being of such nature.

While reading this, a thought might cross one’s mind: “We are quite busy right now; as soon as x, y and z are over, we will definitely rectify ourselves.” This means we have misunderstood the cycle of life. As Allāh ﷻ articulately tells us, the human’s life goes through five phases:

﴿ أَعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَلَهُمْ زِينَةٌ وَتَفَاخُرٌ بَيْنَكُمْ وَتَكَاثُرٌ فِي الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ كَمَثَلِ غَيْثٍ أَعْجَبَ الْكُفَّارَ نَبَاتُهُ ثُمَّ يَهِيجُ فَتَرْتَهُ مُصْفَرًّا ثُمَّ يَكُونُ حُطَبًا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانٌ وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْغُرُورِ ﴾

“Know well that the worldly life is nothing but a play, an amusement, a show of beauty, an exchange of boastful claims between you, and a competition of increase in wealth and children. (All this is) like a rain, the growth of which attracts the farmers, then it withers; and you see it turning yellow, then it becomes straw. And in the Hereafter, there is a severe punishment (for the disbelievers), and forgiveness and pleasure from Allāh (for the believers and righteous). The worldly life is nothing but a material of delusion.”⁽¹⁰⁾

- 1) Play:** As infants, we play with almost anything we could get our hands on and place it in our mouths, not knowing any better.
- 2) Amusement:** This is when, as older children, we constantly play on games consoles and watch hours of television, assuming that is the only pleasure of life.
- 3) Vanity:** As teenagers, we go through a time where we wish to look attractive to members of the opposite sex. This is also when we add ‘gangsta’, ‘princess’ and other such titles to our e-mail addresses.
- 4) Boast:** When we reach adulthood, we boast about the specifications of cars and gadgets, always on a mission to obtain the latest releases and out-do our peers.
- 5) Competition of Increase:** Finally, as elders of the community, we are only concerned with wealth: how much more money we can make; how many acres of land our parents have left us in inheritance; showing off the large number of grandchildren at our disposal to play with.

During every phase, we assume we will ‘change’ at the end of it, completely oblivious to the fact that another phase is to come. How much longer will we live like this? This is precisely the moral we learn from the āyāt quoted above. To assist in keeping our focus on reality, the Prophet ﷺ advised us:

«أَكْثَرُوا ذِكْرَ هَازِمِ اللَّذَاتِ»

⁽⁹⁾ [Al-Mursalāt: 77/50].

⁽¹⁰⁾ [Al-Ḥadīd: 57/20].

“Frequent the remembrance of the destroyer of pleasures.”⁽¹¹⁾

In 2009, I had written a poem, the chorus of which is:

When will we realise we’re living a lie?
What will we do when we’re about to die?
Life’s rushing forward; it will crash like a wave.
It seems so quick from the cradle to the grave.⁽¹²⁾

These are reality-checks from which the believers benefit. To quote the Qur’ān:

﴿وَذَكِّرْ فَإِنَّ الذِّكْرَى تَنْفَعُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ﴾

“And keep reminding, because reminders benefit the believers.”⁽¹³⁾

Let us learn from these lessons which Allāh ﷻ teaches us day in and day out. Let us ‘unfriend’ the seeking of fame and material pleasures, ‘re-tweet’ the message of Allāh ﷻ and His Rasūl ﷺ, ‘pin’ the reality of life onto the ‘board’ of our heart, rewrite our ‘story’ by ‘subscribing’ to the delights of Jannah, and ‘share’ this journey with our friends.

May Allāh ﷻ grant us His closeness and shower us with His love. *Āmīn.*

⁽¹¹⁾ Al-Nasā’ī (1823) and al-Tirmidhī (2307). The ‘destroyer of pleasures’ is death.

⁽¹²⁾ *Living a Lie*, © Riyāḍul Jannah, vol. 18, issue 5 (Jumāda al-Ūlā 1430 AH / May 2009 CE), p. 18.

⁽¹³⁾ [Al-Dhāiyāt: 51/55].