

SURKHEEL SHARIF

The 7's

Seven Rules for Seeking Sacred Knowledge

Seven Ways to Nurture Love of Allah

The Prophet's ﷺ Seven Rights

Seven Rights of the Heart

Seven Principles of Marriage in Islam

Islam's Seven Earth Ethics

Seven Steps for Salvation



The 7's

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IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, ALL-MERCIFUL, BESTOWER OF MERCY

INTRODUCTION

This is an anthology of seven short articles, each expressed in seven points, covering seven vital topics and themes for a seeker's journey to Allah and the Afterlife.

After a brief introduction to each topic, the material will be presented in bullet-point form. Some points may consist of a short paragraph, whereas others may require longer ones. Now, since the aim is to present a concise outline of the topic, many practical details will be absent. These articles are intended to offer a clear and practical overview of the topics discussed, rather than an exhaustive treatment of them.

Whenever any ambiguity or uncertainty arises — and there are bound to be some — the reader is strongly urged to consult a qualified and experienced scholar regarding the matter, or concerning how a particular point may best be understood or applied within our contemporary context. It is unwise to depend solely upon our own interpretations without seeking clarity

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from those versed in knowledge and experience. For seeking clarification from scholars regarding unclear matters, or discussing how sacred teachings ought to be applied within our social circumstances, is a vital aspect of the seeker's path. A meaningful connection to those grounded in sacred knowledge and the inner realities of faith is indispensable. Since without this, the journey is fraught with much danger, and the soul exposes itself to considerable spiritual pitfalls!

I ask Allah to make these articles of benefit to all the seekers, and that He make them a means of us being enlightened, purified, and drawn near. Indeed, He is the One to hear, and the One to respond.

Surkheel Abu Aaliyah
London, England
June, 2026

1. SEVEN RULES FOR SEEKING KNOWLEDGE

The various duties that are instated by faith are a necessary measure in order to regulate human affairs, guide people, prevent them from straying and dissuade them from harming themselves or harming others. By recognising that Revelation exists to guide and protect us, we can attain a reasonable balance in this world and joy in the next.

Essential to this is knowledge (*‘ilm*), as without it we wouldn’t know how to live out God’s Will in our lives. Therefore, a core body of sacred knowledge has been made obligatory upon each Muslim to acquire and to learn. And this is what is intended by this celebrated hadith: ‘The seeking of knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim.’¹

In our quest to gain and grow in such knowledge, the following seven rules should be kept at the forefront of our mind:

1. Ibn Majah, no.224, and it is *sahih*. Cf. al-Munawi, *Fayd al-Qadir* (Cairo: Dar al-Hadith, 2010), no.5264.

1. Allah loves and honours the scholars and seekers of knowledge. The Qur'an says: *Allah will raise to exalted ranks those who believe, and those among you who have knowledge.* [Q.58:11] A hadith says: 'Indeed, the world is accursed, and what is in it is accursed, except the remembrance of Allah and what is connected to it, and a scholar and a seeker [of knowledge].'² So knowing how Allah loves sacred knowledge ought to spur each of us on to gaining it and valuing its acquisition.

2. Knowledge is a means to the goal, it's not the goal itself. Rather, that goal is worship and action. In one hadith, it says: 'Whoever learns knowledge by which is sought the Face of Allah, but he does so merely to achieve some worldly gain, shall not smell [even] the scent of Paradise on the Day of Resurrection.'³ While Abu Qilabah, one of Islam's early pietists, stated: 'If Allah gives to you knowledge, give to Him worship; and let not your concern be to merely narrate to the people.'⁴ Knowing that knowledge is a means should help us sincerely seek Allah's pleasure when seeking sacred knowledge, so that the proof of our knowledge is in our acting upon it.

2. Al-Tirmidhi, no.2322, saying the hadith is *hasan gharib*.

3. Abu Dawud, no.3664. Al-Nawawi graded its chain as *sahih* in *Riyad al-Salihin* (Riyadh: Dar Ibn al-Jawzi, 2000), no.1399.

4. Cited in al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, *Iqtida al-'Ilm al-'Aml* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islami, 1977), no.38.

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3. Knowledge must be prioritised. At the base of the pyramid is learning the personal obligations, the *fard al-'ayn*. Ibn Rajab said: 'It is required of each Muslim to learn what is mandated by religion with respect to ritual purification, prayer and fasting. It is obligatory upon those who possess wealth to know what is due from it in regards to paying *zakat*, maintenance [of dependants], performing pilgrimage, or aiding jihad. Likewise, it is a duty on those in commerce to know what transactions are valid or invalid ... Realise, too, that knowledge of the lawful and prohibited should also be learnt.'⁵

4. So the rule here is: *afdal al-'ilm 'ilm al-hal wa afdal al-'aml hifz al-hal* – 'The most excellent knowledge is knowledge of one's current state, and the best action is guarding one's state.'⁶ Meaning, one must acquire as much knowledge as one requires, so as to fulfil the obligation of the moment or to shun a prohibition of the moment. Knowing that learning has priorities, as well as what to prioritise, saves us from all the endless confusion people fall into in this matter.

5. One must never acquire secular or worldly learning while being ignorant of one's *fard al-'ayn* duties. The

5. Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali, in 'Warathat al-Anbiya', *Majmu' Rasa'il Hafiz Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali* (Cairo: al-Faruq al-Hadithah, 2002), 1:22-23.

6. Al-Zarnuji, *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim* (Karachi, Dar al-Bushra, 2010), 7.

Qur'an states: *They know the outward appearances of the life of this world, but are heedless of the Hereafter.* [Q.30:7] Al-Hasan al-Basri commented on the verse in these words: 'By Allah! One of them knows about the world to the extent he can pick up a coin and tell you its worth, yet he doesn't know how to pray properly!'⁷ How many Muslims are there who are versed in the finer details of football, fashion, celebrity culture, or just the latest social media gossip, yet are ignorant about their *fard al-'ayn* duties, content to leave their religious knowledge at an infantile level?

6. The way to learn detailed, in depth knowledge is to study with qualified scholars who possess a license or *'ijazah* to teach by other recognised scholars: 'Indeed, this knowledge is religion; be careful from whom you take your religion'. In the absence of such teachers, form a study group, basing it on humility as well as an ability to say; 'I don't know' whenever needed. Think, reflect, ponder, question – but never invent your own rulings or fatwa. Instead, cling tenaciously to Allah's order: *Ask the people of knowledge if you do not know.* [Q.21:7] Knowing this will protect us from the dangers that many have stumbled into, by taking as teachers charlatans, DIY-*du'at*, and other pretenders unfit and unqualified to teach sacred knowledge.

7. As quoted in Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir Qur'an al-'Azim* (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah, 1987), 3:437.

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7. We must always know our own level and harbour no pretensions concerning how little we really do know. Simple ignorance (*jahl basit*) may not always be bad or blameworthy. For the act of asking is usually cure enough for lack of knowing. Compounded ignorance (*jahl murakkab*), however – an ignorance of actually being ignorant – is a different kettle of fish. We often find those who paddle in this pitiful state to be highly argumentative, hostile, bigoted, and an enemy to the pious. Al-Khalil b. Ahmad said: ‘There are four types of men: One who knows and knows he knows; he is learned, so follow him! One who knows and knows not that he knows; he is asleep, so awaken him! One who knows not and knows he knows not; he seeks to know, so teach him! One who knows not, but knows not that he knows not; he is a fool, so shun him!’⁸

CONCLUSION

It is vital that knowledge be internalised and rooted in the heart, so as to beget reverent awe before Allah and humility before people. Sound intention is key. Malik b. Dinar said: ‘Whoever learns knowledge so as to act by it, his knowledge humbles him. Whoever seeks it for other than that, only increases in pride by it.’⁹

8. In Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *Jami’ Bayan al-‘Ilm wa Fadlihi* (Saudi Arabia: Dar Ibn al-Jawzi, 1994), no.1538.

8. *Iqtida al-‘Ilm al-‘Aml*, no.31.

Al-Dhahabi said: 'Whoever seeks knowledge in order to act by it, his knowledge humbles him and causes him to weep at himself. But one who learns just to teach, give fatwas, or to brag and show-off, becomes foolish, proud, argumentative, perishes in his vanity and is despised by others: *He succeeds who purifies it [his soul], and fails who corrupts it.* [Q.91:9-10]'¹⁰

Let's end with these words of Yusuf b. al-Husayn: 'By means of refined conduct, knowledge is understood; by means of knowledge, acts are rectified; by means of action, wisdom is attained; by means of wisdom, one understands worldly detachment and is enabled to live by it; by means of detachment, one abandons worldliness; by shunning the world, one turns towards the Hereafter wholeheartedly; and by longing for the Hereafter, one attains the pleasure of Allah, mighty and majestic is He.'¹¹

10. *Siyar A'lam al-Nubala* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risalah, 1996), 18:192.

11. *Iqtida al-'Ilm al-'Aml*, no.27.

2. SEVEN WAYS TO NURTURE LOVE OF ALLAH

Love of Allah is the highest aspiration of a Muslim and the very essence of worship. Love of Allah is not merely an emotion; rather it is something that is cultivated through deliberate spiritual practice. Also, such love does not arise spontaneously; instead, it is nurtured and strengthened through conscious effort, reflection and devotion. Among the classical scholars who explored this topic most profoundly was Ibn al-Qayyim. In *Madarij al-Salikin*, he identifies ten means by which a servant can cultivate and deepen his love for Allah. A few of them are overlapping, so I merged them with others, resulting in a total of seven means. These are not abstract ideas, but practical pathways that help transform the heart and draw it closer to its Creator. The seven means to cultivate a deep, abiding love for Allah are:¹²

1. Reciting the Qur'an with *tadabbur*, with reflection and contemplation, so as to understand its meanings

12. Based on Ibn al-Qayyim, *Madarij al-Salikin* (Riyadh: Dar Taybah, 2008), 3:449-50.

and intended guidance. This nurtures love for Allah because reflecting over the Qur'an allows the person to comprehend Allah's guidance, wisdom, mercy and attributes, causing the heart to know Him better. For the more hearts truly come to know Allah, the more they grow to love Him.

2. Drawing closer to Allah by doing optional acts of devotion (*nawafil*), after the obligatory ones. As one hadith tells us, this leads to the rank of *mahbubiyah* or being loved by Allah. So the Prophet ﷺ once said, that Allah said: 'My servant does not draw closer to Me with anything as loved by Me than the obligatory duties I enjoin on him. Then My servant continues to draw closer to Me through the optional deeds, until I love him.'¹³ Foremost among such optional acts is to stand before Allah in the night prayer (*qiyam al-layl, tahajjud*), being alone with Him and conversing with Him intimately and reciting His Words.

3. Constant remembrance (*dhikr*) of Allah with one's tongue and with presence of heart. A person's share of Allah's love will be commensurate with their *dhikr* of Him. This is so because frequent remembrance of Allah keeps the heart attached to Him; and the more a person remembers Allah with depth and presence,

13. Al-Bukhari, no.6502.

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the more intense their attachment, love and longing for Him become. Ibn al-Qayyim said: ‘Allah has made all things to have a cause, and He has made constant remembrance a cause of love. Thus, whoever wishes to attain the love of Allah, mighty and majestic is He, should persist in remembering Him.’¹⁴

4. Reflecting over Allah’s goodness, kindness, favours and blessings to us — material and spiritual — draws the heart to love Him. For hearts naturally incline to love the one who continually bestows goodness upon them. The more we acknowledge that every blessing comes from Him, the more gratitude, attachment and love for Allah take root in the heart.

5. Standing before Allah with a heart utterly broken and humbled before Him. This utter brokenness is a state of profound humility, need and dependence on Allah, in which the heart is stripped of its pride, self-reliance and self-admiration. Realising its neediness before Allah, the heart turns humbly to Him in hope, surrender, love and longing. Such a heart is especially beloved to Allah, and few things kindle Allah’s love in a servant’s heart more than standing before Him, and beseeching Him in heartfelt *du‘a*, in this state of sincere brokenness and need.

14. Ibn al-Qayyim, *al-Wabil al-Sayyib* (Damascus: Maktabah Dar al-Bayan, 2006), 84.

6. Preferring Allah's love over one's own desire when they conflict, and striving to attain His pleasure even when the path is difficult. This requires resisting the pull of the lower self, and keeping at bay everything that will distance the heart from its Lord. For love is strengthened by obedience and striving against one's lower self (*nafs*), while it is weakened by attachment to anything that competes with Allah for the heart's devotion.

7. Sitting in the company of the *muhibbun* — Allah's true lovers — benefiting from their wisdom, faith and spiritual discourse, while listening carefully and only speaking when there is benefit. Just as one carefully selects the finest fruits, the seeker should take from their words whatever nourishes the heart and sparks love of Allah. Restraining unnecessary speech guards the heart's focus and sincerity, whilst speaking with purpose can increase one's own spiritual state as well as benefit others.

CONCLUSION

Love of Allah isn't attained in an instant; but it grows and deepens through spiritual striving and devotion. Shaykhs of spiritual wayfaring explain that it begins with a simple interest in Allah — the Beloved, which then develops into attachment, then a longing, then ardent love, until it culminates in a state of complete

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devotion in which the heart belongs wholly to Allah and finds room for none besides Him. So every lofty station of love starts with a single spark — with these seven means being among the greatest ways to kindle such love and nurture it.

3. THE PROPHET'S ﷺ SEVEN RIGHTS

To travel through any Muslim land is to see tall, graceful towers – minarets – studded across the landscape from which, five times a day, the muezzin punctuates communal life by calling the faithful to prayer (*salat*). This simple call serves to remind the community that in their daily life – with its joys and pains, its hopes and disappointments – there runs a thread leading them to their ultimate purpose and end goal: Allah, and that it is time now – for a short while, at least – to put aside the world and restore to the soul a fuller and more natural awareness of Him. It is a call which helps put life into perspective.

The muezzin starts his call by first extolling Allah's greatness (*takbir*), and follows it by proclaiming the Declaration of Faith (*shahadah*). The first half of the *shahadah* is testifying to: *la ilaha illa'Llah* – 'There is no god worthy of worship but Allah'. The second half testifies to: *muhammadun rasulu'Llah* – 'Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.' The first half affirms the doctrine of *tawhid* or Abrahamic monotheism; while

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the second half speaks to the method by which to live out and implement this doctrine.

Now, maintaining that *Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah* obliges every Muslim to fulfil certain rights or *huquq* due to the Prophet ﷺ, all of which are clearly established in the Qur'an. Such rights can be summed up under seven headings:

1. *To believe in him*: Now, this doesn't mean to merely believe he was a historical figure of seventh century Arabia; instead, it means to believe or affirm faith in his prophethood and in Allah's message to him too. The Holy Qur'an says: *Believe, therefore, in Allah and His Messenger, and the light which We have sent down.* [Q.64:8] One hadith says: 'I have been ordered to fight mankind until they testify that there is no god except Allah, and until they believe in me and what I have been sent with.'¹⁵

2. *To obey him*: It is not enough to believe in him ﷺ. Rather, true faith necessitates that we be guided by his teachings and obey his orders: *O you who believe! Obey Allah and His Messenger, and turn not away from him when you hear him speak.* [Q.8:20] And in another verse, it says: *He who obeys the Messenger has obeyed*

15. Muslim, no.34.

Allah. [Q.4:80] One hadith declares: 'All my nation will enter Paradise except those who refuse.' They asked: 'O Messenger of Allah, who would refuse?' He said: 'Whoever obeys me will enter Paradise, but whoever disobeys me has in fact refused.'¹⁶

3. To emulate his example: The Qur'an says about the Prophet ﷺ: *Yours is indeed a tremendous standard of character.* [Q.68:4] It also states: *You indeed have in the Messenger of Allah a beautiful example.* [Q.33:21] Thus, every Muslim is required to take the Prophet ﷺ as a role model in belief, worship, character and conduct, striving to emulate his example both outwardly and inwardly. The closer one adheres to his example, the closer one draws to Allah. Within the overall duty to emulate him, there are issues where such emulation is mandatory; issues where it is encouraged, but not obligated; there are even some issues about his life that are just descriptive, and not prescriptive. Sound knowledge of *fiqh* should help us distinguish between these levels of imitation and emulation.

4. To love him: Here, the Holy Qur'an declares: *Say: 'If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your wives, your tribe, the wealth you have gained, the trade you fear my slacken, and the home you delight in are more loved by*

16. Al-Bukhari, no.7280.

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you than Allah and His Messenger, and striving in His cause, then wait till Allah brings about His command. Allah guides not the corrupt.' [Q.9:24] In one hadith, we read: 'None of you [truly] believes until he loves me more than his father, his children and the whole of mankind.'¹⁷

5. *To revere him:* True faith requires not only that the Prophet ﷺ be loved, but that he be honoured, revered and held in the highest esteem too. The Qur'an says: '*Those who believe in him, honour him, support him, and follow the light that was sent down with him — it is they who shall prosper.*' [Q.7:157] It also says: '*That you may honour him and revere him.*' [Q.48:9] This reverence (*ta'zim, tawqir, tabjil*) entails venerating his person, respecting his *Sunnah*, speaking of him with utmost courtesy, and guarding against anything which could diminishes his rank in the heart or upon the tongue. Scholars state that reverence is a loftier degree than just love: for one may love another without revering them, but all who revere necessarily love.

6. *To believe that Prophethood ended with him:* The Qur'an says: *Muhammad is not the father of any man amongst you, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the Seal of the Prophets.* [Q.33:40] So he is the last Prophet

17. Al-Bukhari, no.15; Muslim, no.44.

after whom there are no more Prophets. Henceforth, revealed truths will be revived and be reanimated by scholars, saints and renewers, but never again by any Prophet. That the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is the final Prophet is also confirmed through many hadiths, one of which says: 'There shall arise in my nation thirty liars, all claiming to be a Prophet. But I am the final Prophet; there is no Prophet after me.'¹⁸

7. To send blessings (salat) and prayers of peace (salam) upon him: Having informed us that Allah and also His angels continually extol, honour, and raise the rank of the Prophet ﷺ, the Qur'an tells the believers: *Allah and His angels send blessings upon the Prophet. O you who believe! Send blessings upon him and salute him with a worthy salutation.* [Q.33:56] So sending *salat* and *salam* upon the Prophet ﷺ is therefore both a divine instruction and a mark of sincere love and devotion. The Prophet ﷺ said: 'Whoever invokes one blessing upon me, Allah shall send ten blessings upon him.'¹⁹ Also: 'Those closest to me on the Day of Resurrection are those who invoke most blessings upon me.'²⁰ And then there is this stark warning from the Prophet ﷺ: 'The miser is one in whose presence I am mentioned

18. Muslim, no.2889.

19. Muslim, no.384.

20. Al-Tirmidhi, no.484, saying it is *hasan gharib*.

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and yet he does not invoke blessings upon me.²¹ So the believer keeps his tongue moist with prayers for the Prophet ﷺ, seeking thereby Allah's pleasure and nearness to His Messenger ﷺ.

CONCLUSION

These seven rights are not merely duties owed to the Prophet ﷺ; they are among the clearest signs of true faith and genuine love for him. The more faithfully a person fulfils them, the more complete his testimony that Muhammad is truly the Messenger of Allah then becomes.

20. Al-Tirmidhi, no.3546, saying the hadith is *hasan sahih*.

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The believer's spiritual life seldom unfolds in an orderly fashion, rather it has its ups and downs. For the spiritual life is subject to the sensitivities of the heart which, in turn, is subjected to a whole host of diverse influences, both negative and positive. The heart, by its nature, is constantly being flipped one way, then another, by these influences. In fact, the Prophet ﷺ struck this simile for the heart: 'The heart is like a feather in an open land, that the wind keeps flipping one way then another.'²² This is how moods of the heart alter from one moment to the next.

This is why the Qur'an urges that we each tend to our hearts above all else, and accord them the rights they were created to have. From the most critical of these rights are:

1. To adorn the heart with faith (*iman*), since one can possess nothing as precious than a heart illuminated with *iman*. For it is the heart that is the focus of the

20. Al-Tirmidhi, no.3546, saying the hadith is *hasan sahih*.

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Divine Gaze, as the Prophet ﷺ told us: ‘Indeed, Allah does not look at your forms or your appearances, but He looks at your hearts and your actions.’²³ Thus, the believer’s foremost concern should be to cultivate a heart filled with faith, sincerity, love and reverence for Allah. Hence the Prophet ﷺ would often pray: ‘O Allah! Endear faith to us, and adorn it in our hearts, and cause unbelief, immorality and disobedience to be odious to us, and make us of the rightly guided.’²⁴

2. To illuminate it with the Qur’an, about which the Qur’an itself says: *O people! There has come to you an exhortation from your Lord, and a healing for what is in the breasts, and a guidance and mercy for those who believe.* [Q.10:57] So the Qur’an describes itself to be a counsel and healing for hearts, curing them of doubts, anxieties or spiritual maladies. Its message consoles, reassures and revives hearts mired in heedlessness, false desire or disbelief. Through its guidance, hearts find clarity, calm and closeness to Allah.

3. To guard it from sins. Keeping our heart free from sins is another great right the heart has over us. For sins stain the heart and poison it. The Qur’an states: *By no means! That which they earned has veiled their*

23. Muslim, no.2564.

24. Al-Nasa’i, *Sunan al-Kubra*, no.10370. It was graded *sahih* in al-Albani, *Sahih al-Adab al-Mufrad* (Saudi Arabia: Dar al-Siddiq, 1994), no.538.

hearts. [Q.83:14] This veil (*rayn*) has been described in the *tafsir* literature as: ‘The effects of sins upon one’s heart.’ With each sin, with every act of disobedience, these veils grows thicker, dulling spiritual perception and hardening the heart, until it becomes unable to recognise truth clearly or even respond to the light of divine guidance. We read in one hadith: ‘Temptations will be presented to the heart, just like a reed mat is interwoven strip by strip. Any heart which soaks it in will have a black stain upon it. Any heart that rejects it will have a white mark on it. Thus hearts will be of two types: one white, like a smooth stone, that shall not be harmed by temptations as long as heavens and earth endure. The other, rusty and damaged, like an old, cracked jug, unable to recognise good, nor reject wrong, but overrun by its desires.’²⁵ The antidote to the poison of sins, or lifting such veils, is in sincere repentance — as in the next hadith: ‘Indeed, when a servant commits a sin, a black spot is marked upon his heart. If he desists, seeks forgiveness and repents, his heart is polished clean. But if he returns to the sin, the blackness increases until it covers his heart completely. That is the veil which Allah mentioned: *‘By no means! That which they earned has veiled their hearts.* [Q.83:14]’²⁶

25. Muslim, no.144.

26. Al-Tirmidhi, no.3334, declaring it is *hasan sahih*.

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4. To bring it tranquility. So another right of the heart is that it be granted peace and serenity. One hadith informs: ‘Detachment from the world brings relief to the heart and body, while craving for worldly increase brings worry and anxiety.’²⁷ Though modern life offers unprecedented comforts, many remain burdened by stress, anxiety, discontent and the endless pursuit of more. The Qur’an points to the true source of inner peace: *Indeed, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find tranquility.* [Q.13:28] And the Prophet ﷺ reminded us: ‘Richness is not having many possessions; rather, richness is in contentment of the soul.’²⁸ Thus, being at ease with what one has and not fretting over what one doesn’t have, along with simplicity of living and the *dhikr* of Allah, are amongst the surest paths to a tranquil heart.

5. To nurture in it tenderness and humility. Among the heart’s most crucial rights is that it be softened before Allah, freed from hardness, heedlessness, and spiritual pride. The Prophet ﷺ said: ‘Verily Allah has vessels from the people of the earth, and the vessels of your Lord are the hearts of His righteous servants:

27. Al-Tabarani, *al-Awsat*, no.6256. Al-Albani graded it as weak (*da’if*) and held it to be the words of one of the early pietists. See: *Silsilat al-Ahadith al-Da’ifah* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Ma’arif, 1988), no.1291. Nonetheless, the statement does express a sound, general truth.

28. Al-Bukhari, no.446; Muslim, no.1051.

the most beloved of them to Him are those that are the gentlest and softest.²⁹ This beautiful metaphor reminds us that just as earthly vessels are valued for what they hold or contain, the same is true of human hearts. It is righteous, godly hearts which are Allah's special vessels. Yet not all righteous hearts are equal. The most beloved of righteous hearts to Allah are the 'gentlest and softest' — hearts softened by humility, faith, compassion, empathy and receptivity to divine guidance. Such hearts are moved by the Qur'an, quick to repent whenever they slip, compassionate towards creation, and free from hardness, arrogance, cruelty, and callous indifference to the suffering of others. In fact, the Prophet ﷺ often pointed out or encouraged those acts that awaken the soul and that move it to tenderness and spiritual sensitivity; as in his saying: 'I used to prohibit you from visiting graves, but now visit them. For doing so softens the heart, brings tears to the eye, and reminds one of the Hereafter.'³⁰ For a tender heart is not always born naturally; it is grown by such acts that stir faith, deepen humility, increase compassion, and readily move it through reminders, guidance and truth.

29. Al-Tabarani, *Musnad al-Shamiyyin*, no.840; and it is *hasan*. Consul: al-Albani, *Silsilat al-Ahadith al-Sahihah* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Ma'arif, 1988), no.1691.

30. Abu Ya'la, *Musnad*, no.3705. It was graded *sahih* in al-Albani, *Sahih al-Jami' al-Saghir* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islami, 1986), no.4584.

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6. To keep it free from spiritual diseases. So here the Holy Qur'an informs: *The day when wealth and sons will not benefit, except he who brings to Allah a sound heart.* [Q.26:88-9] Keeping it sound means guarding it against two kinds of diseases, as Ibn al-Qayyim said: 'Diseases of the heart are of two types: the disease of doubts and misconceptions (*shubhah wa shakk*), and the disease of false desires and deviancy (*shahwah wa ghayy*).'³¹ Or in other words, the heart's soundness is threatened by false beliefs and misleading thoughts, on the one hand; and by false desires, appetites and worldly attachments, on the other. So a sound heart is one that sees truth clearly, and whose loves aligns with what Allah loves — kept safe from the darkness of doubts and the domination of false desires.

7. To pray constantly for the heart's guidance. This is another tremendous right of the heart. We must pray earnestly for its guidance, rectitude and purity, and that it not swerve from faith. This right can never be neglected. The Qur'an teaches us this prayer: '*O Lord, cause not our hearts to swerve after You have guided us, and bestow upon us mercy from Your Presence. Indeed, you are the Bestower.*' [Q.3:8]

Amin!

31. Ibn al-Qayyim, *Zad al-Ma'ad* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risalah, 1998), 4:5.

5. SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF MARRIAGE IN ISLAM

Marriage in Islam is more than a social contract or legal arrangement. It is a sacred institution ordained by Allah, exalted is He, through which faith, family, companionship, and human flourishing may be nurtured and preserved. Islam presents marriage as a solemn covenant built upon love, mercy, mutual rights and also shared responsibilities. The following seven principles highlight some of the most essential teachings that should guide every Muslim marriage and help it fulfil its higher spiritual purpose.

1. Marriage (*nikah*) — i.e. the shared life of a man and a woman — is commended in Islam as being virtuous and noble. It was the way of Allah’s Messengers and Prophets, upon whom be peace, with the exception of Jesus Christ, peace be upon him. The Qur’an says: *We sent Messengers before you, appointing for them wives and children.* [Q.13:38] Thus when intentions are right, rather than being a distraction from piety, marriage can be one of the arenas wherein faith, character and devotion to Allah are most fully expressed.

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2. The Qur'an describes the institution of marriage as *a solemn covenant* [Q.4:21] Given its sacred and solemn nature, marriage must not be entered into hastily or unadvisedly, but rather, honourably, reverently and soberly, and with trust in Allah. Given the gravity of this covenant, marriage ought to be preceded by wise counsel, consultation, prayerful reflection, as well as careful assessment of compatibility in faith, values, character, temperament and life expectations. These are among the greatest means to foster a stable and harmonious marriage.

3. The causes for marriage should be contemplated upon before embarking on this quest of intimacy. In Islam's legal literature, we find the causes for which marriage was ordained are deemed to be: [i] That the natural instincts of love and intimacy implanted by Allah might be given blessed expression. [ii] For the increase of humankind, and for children to be raised in Allah's remembrance and reverent thanks of Him. [iii] For the benefit of society at large: since family is the foundation of a just and caring society and is the realm where love, duty, commitment and sacrifice are first encountered and learnt.

4. Speaking of the profounder goal of marriage, and its actual spirit, the Holy Qur'an says: *And of His signs is that He created for you wives from yourselves that*

you might find tranquility in them, and He set between you love and affection. In this are signs for people who reflect. [Q.30:21] Thus, let spouses seek to be loving and loveable companions on a sacred journey. We read in one hadith: 'Nothing is better than marriage for two people who love one another.'³²

5. The Qur'an wants marital life to be lived in mutual kindness and companionship. It says while primarily addressing men: *Live with them in kindness.* [Q.4:19] It also says: *Give them their dowry in kindness.* [Q.4:25] Or if this is ever the case: *Keep them honourably or release them in kindness.* [Q.2:229] Allah also warns: *House them in your own homes in accordance with your means. But do not harass them, in order to make life intolerable for them.* [Q.65:6] Upon receiving sayyiduna 'Ali's proposal to marry his daughter, the lady Fatimah, the Prophet ﷺ advised him: 'She is yours provided you keep good companionship with her.'³³

6. As for a Muslim women's role in nurturing marital harmony, the Qur'an informs: *So virtuous women are humbly obedient, guarding in absence what Allah would have them guard.* [Q.4:34] In one hadith, a lady came to

32. Ibn Majah, no.1847. It was graded *sahih* in al-Albani, *Silsilat al-Ahadith al-Sahihah* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Ma'arif, 1995), no.624.

33. Al-Tabarani, *al-Kabir*, no.3570, with a *sahih* chain. Cf. al-Albani, *Silsilat al-Ahadith al-Sahihah* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Ma'arif, 1995), no.166.

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the Prophet ﷺ concerning a need she had. When her matter had been attended to, the Prophet ﷺ said to her: 'Are you married?' She answered: 'Yes.' He said: 'How are you with your husband?' She said: 'I do not fall short in serving him, except in what I am unable to do.' He said: 'Consider carefully where you stand with respect to him, for he is your Paradise and your Hellfire.'³⁴

7. The Qur'an describes how it wishes spouses to be with each other, employing this beautiful, warm and intimate imagery: *They are a garment for you and you are a garment for them.* [Q.2:187] So just like a garment provides comfort, warmth, dignity and protection, in a similar manner spouses are meant to be a source of tranquillity, support and mercy for one another. The verse portrays marriage, *nikah*, not as a relationship of domination or servitude, but as closeness, mutual care and companionship.

CONCLUSION

The entire institution of marriage in Islam is meant to be rooted in mutual love, compassion, understanding kindness and companionship. It flourishes when both spouses seek not merely their own rights, but the well-

34. Ahmad, 27352. Al-Arna'ut said its chain is a candidate for being *hasan*. Cf. *Musnad al-Imam Ahmad b. Hanbal* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risalah, 2001), 45:341

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being and happiness of each other. So when spouses enter their marital home, let them hang their egos on the coat peg: for marital becomes martial when the 'i' is pushed forward! The more room the ego occupies, the less room there is for love. Rather, a truly healthy marriage requires humility, patience, forgiveness and a willingness to give as much as one hopes to receive. It is sustained not by demanding one's rights, but by extending grace and understanding.

6. ISLAM'S SEVEN EARTH ETHICS

Our planet's state today is blighted by profound ecological imbalance and pollution. The natural equilibrium of the Earth has been severely disrupted, genocide and armed conflicts continue to spread, the economies of many nations are faltering under the excesses of global capitalism, and humankind edges ever closer to environmental devastation — perhaps to a point beyond repair.

Rather than serving as stewards of the Earth, modern humans have now become its most destructive, most deadliest predators — exploiting and abusing natural resources, devastating ecosystems, and harming one another. The Qur'an states: *Corruption has appeared on land and on sea for what men's hands have earned, that He may make them taste a part of that which they have done, so that they may repent.* [Q.30:41]

The Arabic term *fasad* (corruption) has been defined as: 'a thing leaving its balanced state.' That is to say, corruption occurs when something becomes marred,

damaged, polluted or thrown out of equilibrium and harmony. Its opposite is *islah*: to rectify, reform, and restore balance.

This should help serve as a reminder that Islam calls us to be *muslihun* – people of *islah* or reform, and not *mufsidun* – agents of *fasad* or corruption. We Muslims are commanded to heal and set things aright, not to spread mischief and disorder. What follows are seven core principles that help shine a light on the Qur'an's ethical vision for our relationship with the Earth:

1. Allah does not love corruption: *And when he turns away, he hastens about the land to do corruption in it, and to destroy crops and cattle; and Allah does not love corruption.* [Q.2:205] Thus, the primary reason why we Muslims must be people who heal or set things aright is that corruption is wicked, and Allah is displeased with it. So to work for justice, harmony, healing and restoration is not merely a social and environmental duty; rather, it is an act of obedience and devotion to our Lord.

2. Stewardship of the Earth. This stems from the idea of being *khalifahs* (stewards, caretakers, vicegerents of the earth). The Qur'an says: *Indeed, it is He who has appointed you stewards of the earth.* [Q.6:165] Classical scholars explain *khalifah* to mean: [i] One generation

succeeding another, and [ii] One delegated to uphold Allah's laws and administer justice – hence, steward or vicegerent.³⁵ Accordingly, Man is meant to tend to the earth, uphold the Divine purpose in it, establish justice upon it, keep it in harmony and equilibrium, and to: *work not corruption upon the earth after it has been set in order.* [Q7:56] The same sentiment is echoed in this next hadith: 'The world is green and verdant, and Allah has placed you as vicegerents in it, to see how you behave.'³⁶ Thus, this stewardship is both an honour and a sacred trust, for which humanity shall ultimately be held accountable before Allah. Hence, it demands that we act not as exploiters of the earth, but as its trusted guardians.

3. Not living excessively. The Qur'an reminds us that the earth and its resources have been created for the benefit of all humanity: *Allah created for you all that is upon the earth.* [Q.2:29] And: *He has subjected to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is upon earth.* [Q.45:13] And yet we live in a world of stark imbalance; a world where a tiny portion of humanity consumes a disproportionate share of the earth's resources to sustain increasingly consumerist lifestyles. The result is a world marked by grotesque excesses on the one

35. See: al-Sam'ani, *Tafsir al-Qur'an* (Riyadh: Dar al-Watn, 1997), 1:63-4; Ibn al-Jawzi, *Zad al-Masir* (Cairo: Dar al-Hadith, 2023), 1:507.

36. Muslim, no.2742.

hand, and deprivation on the other. So partake of the earth's blessings or benefits for our needs we must. Partake of them for our wants we certainly may. But partake of them excessively or irresponsibly we must not: *Eat and drink, but not excessively. For Allah loves not the excessive.* [Q.7:31]

4. To honour the balance. The Qur'an states: *And He has raised the heavens and has set a balance, that you may not upset the balance, but observe the balance and not fall short therein.* [Q.55:8-9] It reminds us that Allah has fashioned our Earth upon a profound and delicate equilibrium – a grand balance which is sustained by innumerable smaller equilibriums. We are invited to share in all its bounties: for our sustenance, shelter, trade, and the fulfilment of our God-given potential. Yet this privilege is bound by a responsibility: to take from the earth without disturbing its harmony, and to prosper upon it without upsetting the balance that Allah has ordained.

5. To be enchanted with nature. For the believer, the natural world is a mirror: beautiful in itself, yet also reflecting the infinitely greater beauty of its Maker. The Qur'an invites us to contemplate creation, to be captivated by its splendour, and through it to come to know and adore the One who fashioned it: *In the creation of the heavens and the earth, in the alternation*

of night and day, are signs for those of understanding. Those who remember Allah standing, sitting, and lying down, and contemplate over the creation of the heavens and the earth. [Q.3:191-2] To gaze upon creation, then, is to glimpse something of the Divine artistry. Thus, if the star-strewn heavens fill us with awe, if a newly blossomed rose incites our sense of beauty, or if the hushed stillness of an autumn woodland awakens a feeling of the sublime, how much more awe-inspiring, beautiful or sublime must be the Creator from whom all such beauty, majesty and wonder flow.

6. Celebrating the creation. In an intriguing passage, the Qur'an proclaims: *Have you not seen that all that is in the heavens and the earth glorifies Allah? And the birds as they spread their wings? Every creature knows its prayer and its glorification.* [Q.24:41] And this: *There is not a single thing that does not proclaim His praise, yet you do not understand their praises.* [Q.17:44] These verses invite us to view creation, not as a collection of lifeless objects, but as a cosmic chorus engaged in the remembrance of Allah. Every created thing — be it animate or inanimate — proclaims His praise in its own unique way. The Prophets, and many of Allah's saints (*awliya'*), were able to hear such praises, these subtle hymns, whilst certain objects even expressed their love for the righteous. Thus, in the lifetime of the Prophet ﷺ trees and stones spoke to him, or they

glorified Allah when he picked them up or passed by them.³⁷ And he ﷺ once said about Mount Uhud: 'This mountain loves us, and we love it.'³⁸ Creation is not, therefore, just a backdrop to human existence. It is a living, vibrant tapestry of praise and glorification of Allah; calling upon us to join its ceaseless celebration of the Creator.

7. Courtesy with life on earth. Inanimate things aside, with respect to the animal world, the Qur'an insists on courtesy: *There is not an animal in the earth, nor a creature flying on two wings, but they are communities like you.* [Q.6:38] This courtesy is one that is based on a sense of awe and respect for earth's living things. The Prophet ﷺ was once asked: 'Will we be rewarded for doing good to animals? He said: 'There is a reward for serving each living creature.'³⁹ In another hadith, he told a group who were mounted on their camels, talking to each other: 'Ride these animals safely and return them safely, but do not use them as chairs for your conversations in the streets or markets.'⁴⁰ And

37. A tree speaking is in al-Darimi, *Sunan*, no.16, and its chain is *sahih*. Cf. al-Albani, *Takhrij Mishkat al-Masabih* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islami, 1979), no.5868. Pebbles and food glorifying Allah is in al-Bukhari, no.3579. And stones greeting him is in Muslim, no.2277.

38. Al-Bukhari, no.4084; Muslim, no.1393.

39. Al-Bukhari, no.3321; Muslim, no.2245.

40. Ahmad, no.15639. Its chain was declared *hasan* in al-Arna'ut, *Musnad al-Imam Ahmad b. Hanbal*, 24:400.

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he ﷺ said: 'A woman was once flung into Hellfire for tying a cat until it starved to death.'⁴¹ Then there is a hadith where a man took an egg from a bird's nest, which then distressed the mother bird. Whereat the Prophet ﷺ urged: 'Have mercy upon the mother, and return her egg.'⁴² Such, therefore, is the courtesy that Islam enjoins towards other creatures with whom we share this earth.

CONCLUSION

Together, such principles sketch a sacred ethic of how we must inhabit the earth: to tread lightly upon it, to honour its balance, and to care for it as a Divine trust. In doing so, we then fulfil our calling as stewards and healers, rather than as corrupters.

41. Al-Bukhari, no.3318; Muslim, no.2241.

42. Abu Dawud, no.2675. Al-Nawawi declared its chain *sahih* in *Riyadh al-Salihin* (Saudi Arabia: Dar Ibn al-Jawzi, 1421H), no.1617.

7. SEVEN STEPS FOR SALVATION

We read the following in the Qur'an: *Whoever is distanced from the Fire, and is admitted into Paradise, has surely triumphed. The life of this world is nothing but the comfort of illusion.* [Q.3:185] Now, while many people define success primarily through wealth property, professional status, or social prominence, those guided by faith recognise that true success lies in attaining the pleasure of Allah and success in the Hereafter. Yet, given the powerful pull of worldliness (*dunya*), and the human tendency for distraction and forgetfulness, it is vital to regularly remind ourselves of the path that leads to salvation (*najat*). Among the greatest and the most essential means to attain this salvation are:

1. Affirming Allah's Oneness (*tawhid*): The Prophet ﷺ once asked one of his Companions: 'Do you know what the right of Allah is over His servants and what their right is upon Him?' He replied: 'Allah and His Messenger know best.' The Prophet ﷺ said: 'The right of Allah upon His servants is that they worship Him

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and not ascribe any partner to Him; and the right of the servants upon Allah is that one who ascribes no partners to Him will be saved from punishment.⁴³ No deed is more fundamental to one's salvation than to affirm Allah's absolute Oneness or *tawhid* — that He alone is Lord, Creator and Sustainer; and that none has the right to be worshipped save Him.

2. Safeguarding the five daily prayers. The Prophet ﷺ said: 'Whoever safeguards their performance, it shall be a light, a proof and salvation for him on the Day of Judgement. Whoever does not safeguard them, he will have no light, proof or salvation, and on the Day of Judgement he will be with Korah, Pharaoh, Haman and Ubayy b. Khalf.'⁴⁴ So this hadith underscores the central place of prayer (*salat*) in the pursuit of one's salvation.

3. Controlling the tongue. Our Prophet ﷺ was asked: 'In what does salvation lie?' He ﷺ replied: 'Control your tongue, keep to your house and weep over your sins.'⁴⁵ Here, some of the foundations of salvation are gathered in this brief counsel. We are taught to avoid unnecessary social mixing and social involvement in

43. Al-Bukhari, no.2856.

44. Ahmad, no.6576, with a *hasan* chain. Cf. al-Arna'ut, *Musnad al-Imam Ahmad b. Hanbal*, 11:141-2.

45. Al-Tirmidhi, no.2406, saying the hadith is *hasan*.

that which does not concern us, but instead be more concerned with tearful repentance and remorse over our own sins and folly. The notion of keeping to our houses so as to avoid unnecessary mixing and social harms applies equally – maybe more so – to public engagement on social media platforms, where loose or sinful talk, false argumentation, or other spiritual tribulations and pitfalls are greatly amplified. As for restraining the tongue, it is to guard it from its major sins: backbiting, lying, tale-carrying and slandering, and to cultivate the virtue of being an affable person of few words who speaks only when there is a benefit. The Prophet ﷺ said: ‘Whoever is silent is saved.’⁴⁶

4. Helping those in difficulty. A hadith says: ‘Whoever wishes Allah to save him from the hardships of the Day of Resurrection, let him grant relief to a debtor in difficulty or waive what is owed by him.’⁴⁷ Hence, helping those in difficulty is a clear manifestation of mercy and compassion towards Allah’s creation, and a tremendous means for being saved in the Afterlife. As the hadith shows, whoever alleviates the hardship of another – especially one burdened by debt – can hope that Allah will alleviate his own hardship on the Day of Resurrection, when relief and salvation will be

46. Ahmad, no.6481. It is *hasan*, as per al-Arna’ut, *Musnad al-Imam Ahmad b. Hanbal*, 11:19.

47. Muslim, no.1563.

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needed most. Serving the needy or those burdened by difficulty is a huge cause of drawing down the Divine Assistance or *madad* in our lives too.

5. Fearing Allah and being mindful of His commands. The Qur'an says: *Allah will save those who feared Him to their [abode of] everlasting glory. No harm will touch them nor shall they grieve.* [Q.39:61] Here, 'fear of Allah' is the rendering for the Arabic word *taqwa*. But *taqwa* mean so much more. It may equally be translated as piety, godliness, God-consciousness, mindfulness of Allah, or guarding against sins. At the base level, it is about guarding against disbelief (*kufr*), and guarding against sins: these are the two required levels. After this comes an encouraged level that isn't obligatory: to guard against what is lawful, yet disliked (*makruh*). Then comes the peak; a level unimaginable by any in our age: to guard the heart from anything other than Allah entering into it! But for our age, it's enough to know that the Prophet ﷺ said: 'Guard against what is forbidden, and you will be [counted among] the most devout of people.'⁴⁸

6. Remembrance (*dhikr*) of Allah. To this end, we hear the Prophet ﷺ advise: 'A person can do nothing better to save himself from the chastisement of Allah than

48. Al-Tirmidhi, no.2305. The hadith, via its collective routes, is *hasan*. Cf. al-Albani, *Silsilat al-Ahadith al-Sahihah*, no.930.

the remembrance of Allah.⁴⁹ For Allah's *dhikr* keeps the heart vibrant, strengthens faith, and guards one from heedlessness or sin. For this reason, it is one of the greatest means by which a servant is saved.

7. Constancy in our inner and outer journey to Allah. In one comprehensive piece of advice, the Prophet ﷺ said: 'There are three salvific matters: reverent fear of Allah in private and public, justice when angry or pleased, and moderation in poverty or wealth.'⁵⁰ Now, at first sight, these three matters do not seem to have much in common. But these three traits are united by the fact that they require one to remain steadfast on obedience to Allah regardless of changing fortunes or circumstances. Alone or in public, angry or pleased, poor or wealthy, one doesn't allow inner impulses or external conditions to divert us from *taqwa*, justice or balance. They point to some level of self-control and consistency in virtue, and so are among the greatest causes of salvation.

CONCLUSION

These, then, are among the greatest causes of *najat* or salvation mentioned in the Qur'an and *Sunnah*. While

49. Al-Tabarani, *al-Mu'jam al-Kabir*, no.2296, and it is *sahih*. Cf. al-Albani, *Sahih al-Jami' al-Saghir* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islami, 1988), no.5644.

50. Al-Tabarani, *al-Mu'jam al-Awsat*, no.5754. It was declared *hasan* in al-Albani, *Sahih al-Jami' al-Saghir*, no.3045.

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varied in form, they all nurture faith, purify the soul, and draw a servant nearer to Allah, thereby preparing him or her for ultimate success in the Hereafter. They encompass the rights of Allah, rights of His servants, and rectification of one's inward and outward states. Whoever tries to uphold them sincerely can hope for Allah's mercy, grace and salvation on the Day where neither wealth nor status will avail, but only a heart filled with *tawhid* and loving submission.