

Qur'ānic Reflections

SESSION 9

تَسْبِيح
the tasbeeh project

Reminder: Reflecting on the Holy Qur'ān

“

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَتْلُونَهُ حَقَّ تِلَاوَتِهِ...

Those to whom We have given the Book
read it as it ought to be read... ”

SŪRAH AL-BAQARAH (2:121)



Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (as): “They recite its verses **slowly**, and **understand** it, and **act** according to its orders, and **hope** for its promises, and are **afraid** of its threats, and take **lessons** from its stories, and **obey** its commandments, and **desist** from what it prohibits.”



**A truly immersive,
transformational
experience!**

Tafsīr and Tadabbur

Tafsīr: reveal the meaning of a verse. The task of the Holy Prophet (saw), his righteous successors and specialist scholars.

Tadabbur: reflection and pondering on the message of a verse, internalising the implicit meaning of the verse, taking admonition and making changes. An order for all - Surah Muhammad (47:24):

أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ أَمْ عَلَى قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَالُهَا

Do they not contemplate the Qur'ān, or are there locks on the hearts?

Session 9:

Surāh al-Taghābun

(64:11)

“

مَا أَصَابَ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ يُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ
يَهْدِ اللَّهُ لَهُ وَيَهْدِ قَلْبَهُ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

No affliction visits [anyone] except by Allah's leave. Whoever has faith in Allah, He guides his heart, and Allah has knowledge of all things.

”

SŪRAH AL-TAGHĀBUN (64:11)

Aṣāba means to befall or descend upon. It refers to any event in a person's life, good or bad (4:79).

Muṣībah is a noun derived from *aṣābah*, but is only used for unpleasant events (2:155-156).

God allows affliction to befall His servants as part of His role in guiding them, with full knowledge.

Context: 64:10-13

Verse 10: Those who disbelieve and deny

Verse 11: No affliction except with Allah's leave

Verse 12: Obey Allah and His messenger

Verse 13: No God but Allah so place trust in Him

The existence of evil and affliction has always served as an excuse for disbelievers to deny God / God's justice in this world.

Types of Affliction

1. Afflictions that are part of human life, and beyond a person's control, such as illness, loss and death. Good tidings to the patient in the face of such afflictions (2:155):

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالثَّمَرَاتِ ۗ وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٥٥﴾

"We will surely test you with a measure of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth, lives and fruits; and give good news to the patient."

2. Afflictions where man's actions have played some role, due to certain sins or lapses in judgement (42:30) – also see Du'ā Kumayl's reference to sins that bring down adversity.

وَمَا أَصَابَكُمْ مِّنْ مُّصِيبَةٍ فَبِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَيَعْفُوا عَنْ كَثِيرٍ ﴿٣٠﴾

Reminder of Allah (swt)'s forgiveness: in most cases affliction in this world due to sins will be accompanied by ease in the hereafter.

"Whatever affliction that may visit you is because of what your hands have earned, though He excuses many [an offence]."

“...except by Allah’s leave”

- *Idhn* means allowing something to occur or not preventing it from occurring.
- It is a conscious act, requiring knowledge of what is being allowed.
- For humans it relates to rational things – e.g. you give someone permission to enter a room, but you don’t give fire permission to burn.
- In relation to Allah (swt), every part of creation has some level of awareness and can only act with the explicit permission of God - see 7:58 (vegetation) and 14:25 (fruit).
- *Idhnullah* can be *takwīni* (existential) which encompasses every phenomenon as nothing exists without Allah (swt)’s permission. It can also be *tashrī-i* (legislative) where it is specifically commanded by Allah (swt). In this verse, *idhnullah* is *takwīni*.
- *Idhnullah* can also refer to Allah (swt)’s knowledge, as nothing happens without God knowing it.

Reasons for affliction?

A test of one's faith

(29:2): *"Do the people suppose that they will be let off because they say 'We have faith,' and they will not be tested?"*

(2:216): *"...Yet it may be that you dislike something while it is good for you, and it may be that you love something while it is bad for you..."*

"It is through the change of circumstances that the true worth (faith) of a person is revealed."

Imam Ali (as)

A penalty for sin

This is a mercy since being cleansed from sin in the *dunyā* is better than entering the next realm with that sin in the soul.

"Allah (swt) has said, 'I swear by My honour, I do not take a servant of Mine from the dunyā, if I intend mercy for him, until I efface all of his sins, either by straightening his livelihood, or by an affliction in his body, or by a fear that I cause him to experience. And if anything remains on him thereafter, I make his death difficult'."

Imam al-Baqir (as)

A stimulus for growth

This allows a person to truly know the strength of their commitment to God thru' encountering affliction without losing faith, and with patience, as a result of which their attachment to God becomes stronger.

"There may be a servant who has a station before God that he cannot attain through his actions [alone], so God tries him through an illness, or his possessions, or his children. Then, if he displays patience, God raises him to that station."

Imam al-Sadiq (as)

Alerting the heedless

When a believer who has become distant from the remembrance of God is afflicted with hardship, he is reminded of his utter dependence upon God. This helplessness forces him to break his ego so that he may return to God. Man remembers God more in adversity than ease.

"We shall surely make them taste the nearer punishment [dunyā] before the greater punishment [akhirah], so that they may come back [repent]."

Al-Sajdah (32:21)

Oppression

Why does Allah (swt) allow an oppressor to oppress others? Is this against His justice?

Immediate retribution is contrary to God's system of creation

God has granted people free will to act in this world and has shown mankind the right path through internal and external guidance, and invited us to get closer to Him.

If people were to be immediately punished for their oppression, they would not dare manifest their evil, there would be no point in having free will and the Day of Judgement.

God allows sinners respite to regret and seek forgiveness

God allows sinners respite for a while in case they regret their actions and seek His forgiveness and the forgiveness of those who they have oppressed. (35:45) reminds us that if people were immediately taken to task for their sins, no-one would remain on the earth. Sinners whose conscience is still alive, might be guided towards remorse and repentance due to this reprieve (and through their own affliction).

Blessings for the oppressed and they will receive Divine justice

God gives the oppressed faith, forbearance, compassionate people in their lives, and the ability to see it from a different perspective. Those who trust God's wisdom are able to exercise patience in the face of affliction and are promised greater blessings and mercy. Imam al-Sadiq (as) says when the oppressed supplicates, Allah (swt) says; *"I will certainly avenge you, even if it is after some time."*

Tested through good

Tests can include afflictions and also what we see as good (21:35):

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ وَنَبَلُّوكُم بِالشَّرِّ وَالْخَيْرِ فِتْنَةً وَإِلَيْنَا تُرْجَعُونَ

“Every soul shall taste death, and We will test you with ill and good by way of test, and to Us you will be brought back.”

“Health and self-sufficiency is ‘good’, and sickness and poverty is ‘evil’ and both of them are for trial.”

Imam Ali (as)



مَا أَصَابَ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ يُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ

Whoever has faith in Allah, He guides his heart

يَهْدِي قَلْبَهُ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

and Allah has knowledge of all things.

Faith includes submission to God's decrees and an understanding that every effect in the universe happens because of His permission and this permission is for a beneficial reason (*maṣlahah*).

Allah (swt) has knowledge of all things. He knows who is a believer and who is a hypocrite. He also knows what each servant needs.

The heart remains confused and unsettled until it acquires faith. When faith and belief enter a person's heart, he will find himself noticeably receptive to God's guidance, including patience, gratefulness and being satisfied with His decree.

When Allah (swt) besets a servant with affliction, it is to nurture him, remind him of his weakness and to remove his arrogance and heedlessness.

Holding fast to the Qur'ān

The Messenger of Allah (saw) said, “O’ People! You are in the period of *al-Hudnah*; you have been left free in the transient world and have been given free reign to do as you please. The transient world is quickly passing away. The night and day are making all new things old and long forgotten. It is also making all things which may be far away, near (to you) and is making every promise which was kept to be fulfilled!”

Miqdad said, “O’ Prophet of Allah, and what is *al-Hudnah*?”

The Holy Prophet (saw) replied, “*Al-Hudnah* means that the transient world is a place of test and examination and a period (which one must pass through) and is a time in which you have been left alone. Allah (swt) will not bother with you, and in the face of the sins which you commit and the actions which you perpetrate, He will not immediately punish you.”

The Holy Prophet (saw) then advised, “If events come upon you which resemble the darkness of the night (events which are full of terror and fear) then hold on fast to the Qur’ān...Whoever places the Qur’ān in front of him, it (the Qur’ān) will lead him towards Paradise; the person who tosses the Qur’ān behind him, it will push him to Hell.”



Reflections

- ▶ Afflictions I experience may be directly from God, due to what my own hands have earned or due to the oppression of others. However what matters is whether I grow closer to Allah (swt) through them. Does my response to affliction show the strength of my faith, remind me of the true purpose of life, remove my heedlessness and arrogance, and allow me to grow closer to Allah (swt)?
- ▶ If a student fails particular test questions this shows them their areas of weakness. What are some recent tests I have encountered and what did they tell me about the state of my soul, what areas I need to work on? Am I still having difficulty with basic tests, the ones I have been failing for years, or is there progress? It's far easier for me to take steps to purify my soul in this world, than when it's done for me in the hereafter!
- ▶ Tests can be through things I see as bad and also those which I see as good. Do I think of good in my life as a simple blessing, or do I understand that this also comes with responsibility? What blessings do I enjoy and what are the tests in them?

Making a Change

- ▶ Tadabbur means reflection and pondering on the message of a verse, internalising the implicit meaning of the verse, taking admonition and making changes.
- ▶ **What changes will I make in my life as a result of our reflections on these verses?**

How will I use my tests as a stimulus for growth, and to rid myself of arrogance and heedlessness?