



# HOLDING ON...

TO THE ROPE OF ALLAH

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**ASWAATUL QURRAA**

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## I. QUARANTINE

The walls are closing in on me. Walls that are far too high for me to scale, far too strong for me to break.

It's called quarantine - except I imagine, it feels like purgatory.

Everywhere I look, I come up against a brick wall. They're all around me, waiting to cave in on me, to destroy me. Screaming doesn't really help, for even those around me are trapped within the confines of their own walls. Each of us trapped in towers of our own, battling our own fears, wondering if we'll ever be saved.

What has us under lock and key?

A virus.

At least that's what they say. It's a tiny virus, unseen to our eyes. They call it CoVid 19, yet something tells me it's not our only enemy – never was, never will be.

But... I'm really struggling to breathe at the moment. It must be the panic and anxiety – they rise and fall like ocean tides, albeit with much less predictability.

Who even has the energy to think?

All I can see are the walls closing in on me. I shift my gaze. I'm so sick of seeing these walls!

I can either look down at the ground but that feels like giving up already or I can at least *try* to look up. The height of the walls, scare me, but up - way up - in the distance, I see a tiny gap. Is this my Light at the end of the tunnel...?

No.

What I now see, is more than just a Light at the end of the tunnel. It's an illuminated, infallible Rope: the Only Rope that can save all our lives, *bi-idhnillah*.

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## II. THE ROPE

With sanitizers, gloves and face masks flying off the shelves, everyone is now dying to know: What is this Rope that can save our lives?

Many of us are panicking. Others frustrated. Some are even depressed.

Life, as we know it, is already morphing into something we can't recognize. We're losing our grip. It feels like all the walls we built to defend ourselves are closing in on us, daring to crush us completely.

Our health is at risk. Our loved ones are at risk. Our education is at risk. Our jobs are at risk. Our sanity is at risk. Our lives are at risk. Most terrifyingly yet – even our Faith is at risk.

We need all the help we can get. We're desperate for it.

So, what is this Rope?

Well, you already know it. But as humans, we often tend to completely forget about The Rope. Perhaps, it's because we're so busy looking at the walls all around us - we don't have time to look up and appreciate The Rope. Yet, this very Rope is our only authentic lifeline.

For those of us who need help remembering it:

بَعْدَ أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ :

وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا ۗ وَاذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنْتُمْ أَعْدَاءً فَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ بِنِعْمَتِهِ إِخْوَانًا وَكُنْتُمْ عَلَىٰ شَفَا حُفْرَةٍ مِنَ النَّارِ فَأَنْقَذَكُمْ مِنْهَا كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ

*Possible translation: "And hold on firmly to The Rope of Allah [which He extends to you], altogether, and do not become divided; and remember the Favour of Allah upon you, when you were enemies, then He joined your hearts so that you became, through His favour, brothers; and you were right on the edge of the Pit of Fire, and He saved you from it. Like this, Allah makes His signs clear to you, so, hopefully you will be guided".<sup>1</sup>*

The above Aayah encourages us to hold on firmly to the Rope of Allah.

<sup>1</sup> Surah Ale-Imran, Aayah 103

Ibn Kathir mentions in his Tafsir that حَبْلِ اللَّهِ, the Rope of Allah, refers to the Holy Qur'an. The blessed Companion, Abdullah ibn Mas'ud رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ narrates a Hadith in which the Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said:

كِتَابُ اللَّهِ، هُوَ حَبْلُ اللَّهِ الْمَمْدُودُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ

*"The Book of Allah is the Rope of Allah, extended from the Heavens to the Earth"*

In another Hadith, by the Noble Companion, Zayd ibn Arqam رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, the words are quoted as:

حَبْلُ اللَّهِ هُوَ الْقُرْآنُ

*"The Rope of Allah is the Qur'an".*

A narration from Kanz-al-Ummal states that the Prophet ﷺ also said something to this effect:

إِنِّي تَارِكٌ فِيكُمْ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ هُوَ حَبْلُ اللَّهِ مَنْ اتَّبَعَهُ كَانَ عَلَى الْهُدَى وَمَنْ تَرَكَهُ كَانَ عَلَى الضَّلَالَةِ

*"I am certainly leaving amongst you the Book of Allah; it is the rope of Allah. Whoever follows it, will be guided and whoever leaves it will be misguided".<sup>2</sup>*

Yet another narration mentions the following:

عَنْ جُبَيْرِ بْنِ مُطْعِمٍ قَالَ كُنَّا مَعَ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فِي الْجُحْفَةِ قَالَ أَلَيْسَ تَشْهَدُونَ أَنَّ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَأَنَّ الْقُرْآنَ قَدْ جَاءَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ قُلْنَا بَلَى قَالَ فَابْشُرُوا فَإِنَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ طَرَفَهُ بِيَدِ اللَّهِ وَ طَرَفَهُ بِأَيْدِيكُمْ فَمَسْكُوا بِهِ فَانْكُمْ لَنْ تَهْلِكُوا وَلَنْ تَضَلُّوا بَعْدَهُ أَبَدًا

*It is narrated from Jubayr ibn Mut'im: We were with Rasoolullah ﷺ in al Juhfah. He asked, "Do you not testify that there is none worthy of worship besides Allah and I am the Messenger of Allah and that the Qur'an was revealed by Allah?" We replied, "Yes, indeed!" He then said, "Glad tidings! Indeed one end of this Qur'an is with Allah and the other end is in your hands. Hold onto it, for you will never be destroyed and you will never go astray after it".<sup>3</sup>*

In Arabic, the word حَبْلٌ HABL, may also mean 'covenant' and in an absolute sense, it refers to anything that can be used as a connecting link. This means that anything that connects one thing to another, or joins two things that can otherwise be separated, may be considered a 'Habl', because in essence, the function of a rope is to keep two things together so that they remain close and connected, instead of distant and apart.

<sup>2</sup> Kanz al 'Ummal, Vol.1, Pg.47 with reference to Ibn Shaibah

<sup>3</sup> Musnad al-Bazzaar, 3421

As the above Ahadith mention, the Qur'an is described as the 'Rope' of Allah. This metaphor explains how the Qur'an is the connecting link between Allah and every human, possibly even every Jinn.

Aayah 103 of Surah Ale-Imran, further explains that the Qur'an does not merely connect Allah to every human, but as a result of holding firmly onto The Rope of Allah, all those who do so sincerely, remain united with each other as well. Thus, the Qur'an, serves as the link between Creator and creation, and as the connecting link amongst creation. Those who sever their connection with the Book of Allah, have thus let go of The Rope and thus lost their connection with Allah.

The beauty of this analogy then continues in the imagery it creates.

Remember the scene mentioned earlier, describing someone about to be trapped and destroyed?

Whether someone is feeling caved in; or stuck on an island; or lost in the mountains; or crushed beneath the debris of war; or lost in the depths of a personal darkness – we tend to always look *up* for help. Even when someone falls, we try to "*help them up*", implying that help must come from above.

With this imagery in mind, it is as if the Qur'an is a strong Rope, and those who grip onto it firmly will always be saved from any possible falls, dangers and destruction, as they try to climb their way out of any trouble, and get closer to Allah. If people keep holding on to the Book of Allah with their total strength and sincerity, no enemy or evil will ever succeed in disuniting them from each other or separating them from The Unbreakable Rope of Allah.

Another remarkable aspect about this description is that it encourages us to think about every other Rescue Mission that exists.

When anyone is thrown a life-line, in any situation, then the chances of saving them successfully are influenced by three factors:

1. The strength with which they grab and hold onto the life-line
2. The strength of the life-line itself
3. The strength of the one offering the life-line

What's absolutely remarkable about being offered this Rope of Allah, is that in every other situation, with every other life-line, the strength of the above three factors is always variable, never guaranteed.

But, when it comes to the Qur'an being The Rope of Allah, 'with one of its ends with Allah and the other in our hands', the strength of two of the above factors is not just guaranteed – it's infallible. Completely invincible.

With Qur'an as our 'Rope' or 'life-line' and Allah as the One offering it to us, there is no way that either of them will ever fail. Their success is absolutely guaranteed - without a trace of doubt.

The only factor that remains questionable is the strength with which we grab and hold onto The Rope of Allah.

So, the question now is: how firmly will you hold on to this infallible Rope?

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### III. PANDEMIC

March 2020.

The month, in which, the Corona Virus was declared a pandemic.

Commonly known as CoVid-19, the Corona Virus is an infectious disease, which causes respiratory illness with symptoms such as a cough, fever, and in more severe cases, difficulty breathing. It was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) due to its rapid spread.

What is a pandemic?

A pandemic is the outbreak of a disease, throughout the world.

The virus, however, was not the only thing spreading across the globe in 'pandemic' proportions. One might argue that reactions of fear, panic, grief and even anger, spread faster amongst us than the virus itself. While Lockdowns were initiated in many places in an attempt to 'flatten the curve', for many – our emotions still run high.

Now while all these emotions are quite natural, it helps to remember that in life, 'the problem is not the problem, the problem is your attitude about the problem'.

And so we decided to turn to that which always brings us peace...

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### IV. REFLECTIONS

It appeared as part of the commentary of a single Aayah from the Quran.

The commentary of a single Aayah, that is so very relevant to the current situation of the world, that it simply has to be shared.

This Aayah is Aayah 243 of Surah Baqarah:

بَعْدَ أَعُوذٍ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ :

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ خَرَجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَهُمْ أُلُوفٌ حَذَرَ الْمَوْتِ فَقَالَ لَهُمُ اللَّهُ مُوتُوا ثُمَّ أَحْيَاهُمْ إِنَّ  
اللَّهَ لَذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَشْكُرُونَ

*Possible translation: Did you [Oh Muhammad ﷺ] not think of those who left their homes, in the thousands, fearing death? Then Allah said to them, "Die". And then He brought them back to life. Truly, Allah is full of Favour towards mankind, but most humans do not give thanks. <sup>4</sup>*

### General Overview of Aayah 243

This Aayah, tells us about a really large group of people, described as أُلُوفٌ, which means there were thousands of them, who fled from their homes, because they feared Death. Allah then said to this very same group of people: "Die" and so they all died, despite having tried to get away. Then after some time, Allah brought them all back to life.

This Aayah then goes on to say that Allah is the One who possesses all favour over Mankind, meaning Allah is the only One who keeps doing favours for mankind, and Allah is the only One with the ability and power to do this for humanity, yet, most humans don't show any form of thanks.

While the Aayah does not explicitly mention any details regarding who exactly these people were, or where this incident occurred, or when it occurred in History, Tafsir ibn Kathir explains this event as follows, on the authority of the Noble Sahaaba (رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ) and the Tabi'een.

### Details of the Event according to Tafsir Ibn Kathir:

There was a group of Israelites, whose city was struck with an epidemic of sorts. The inhabitants of the city, who were thousands in number, panicked as they feared that this epidemic would lead to their sudden death. They thus fled their hometown, making camp in an open field, located between two mountains. Here, they thought they would be safe.

Allah, in His Infinite Wisdom, then sent two angels who stood on two ends of the plain and let out a shrill cry. This caused every single one of them to drop dead immediately. No one, from this group, was left alive. When the people from a neighbouring area heard about this event, they hurried to the site. Making arrangements to shroud and bury ten thousand human beings was no easy task, so

<sup>4</sup> Surah al Baqarah, Aayah 243



they enclosed the whole area with a fence of boughs, making a hovel-like shed, for the corpses which, in due course, were decomposed leaving bare bones lying around.

After some time, one of the Prophets sent to Bani-Israeel, identified as *Hizqeel* (Ezekiel) عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام, passed through this location. He was amazed to see human bones strewn inside the enclosed shed. The story behind these remains was then revealed to him. On learning this, the Prophet Hizqeel عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام prayed to Allah to bring these people back to life. Allah answered his prayer. Hizqeel عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام was asked to address the skeletal remains as follows:

أيتها العظام البالية، إن الله يأمرك أن تجتمعي

*"Oh Bones, old and worn, Allah commands you to come together, joint by joint, as you were."*

The Bones received the command of Allah through these words of Prophet Hizqeel عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام and obeyed it.

The very dead bones that are considered, by many, as useless and devoid of reason, obeyed the Command of Allah, and why would they not? As Allah says in Aayah 79 of Surah Yaseen:

قُلْ يُحْيِيهَا الَّذِي أَنْشَأَهَا أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ ۗ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ خَلْقٍ عَلِيمٌ

*"Say, He will revive them, the One who created them the first time. And He knows everything about every Creation"*

When the bones had assembled to form their skeletal frames, Prophet Hizqeel عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام was instructed by Allah to give the next command:

أيتها العظام، إن الله يأمرك أن تكتسي لحما و عصبا و جلدا

*"Oh Bones, Allah commands you to wear your muscles, flesh, nerves and skin."*

In immediate obedience to this call, every skeleton was clothed in its respective muscles, flesh, nerves and skin. Bodies that were once reduced to mere bones were now fully-formed again.

Thereafter, the final command from Allah came, through His Prophet:

أيتها الأرواح إن الله يأمرك أن ترجع كل روح إلى الجسد الذي كانت تعمره

*"Oh Souls, Allah commands you to return to your respective bodies, that you once inhabited."*

As this call was given, every lifeless corpse came back to life, looking at each other in wonder. The only befitting response as they witnessed this Miracle of Resurrection was:

سبحانك لا اله الا انت

*"Perfection is Yours, [Our Rabb]. There is no one and nothing worthy of devoted worship besides You"*

While, this is the explanation given by Ibn Kathir, as the event possibly referred to in this Aayah, it is equally important for us to now review the incident mentioned, through the Words of Qur'an.

The Aayah begins with the words:

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ خَرَجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَهُمْ أُلُوفٌ حَذَرَ الْمَوْتِ

*'Have you not seen those who left their homes, and they were thousands, fearing death?'*

This incident happened thousands of years before the Holy Prophet's (ﷺ) arrival. Why then, are the words, *أَلَمْ تَرَ* "Have you not seen..." used?

The words *أَلَمْ تَرَ* may be literally translated to mean "have you not seen", with the word "seeing" referring to the physical act of seeing with one's eyes. However, it may also be translated to figuratively mean "have you not deeply thought about..." or "have you not contemplated over". The latter translation is said to apply in this context, but this definitely does not render the literal translation redundant. We must remember that the Qur'an is the most authentic account of Historical events and so by virtue of the Prophet's (ﷺ) unwavering Belief in this, when he was informed of any incident through Qur'an, it was as certain as if he was seeing it with his own eyes.

The next description the Aayah gives is that these people were large in number,

*وَهُمْ أُلُوفٌ*. The Aayah itself does not state who these people were, or how many they were exactly. Allah only explicitly tells us that they were in the thousands. In accordance to the rules of Arabic, the word *أُلُوفٌ*, is *Jam' al-Kathrah*. This means it is not usually used for something less than ten. So, it is thus deduced that their number was not less than ten thousand.

The words *حَذَرَ الْمَوْتِ* tells us that they left their homes, fearing Death. This makes us wonder. The Death which they feared was something, which even their huge numbers could not protect them from, and so instead of trying to 'fight' Death, they tried fleeing from it instead.

After this, Allah mentions: **فَقَالَ لَهُمُ اللَّهُ مُوتُوا ثُمَّ أَحْيَاهُمْ**.

Although they thought fleeing from Death would be a means of saving their lives, all it took was a single command from Allah and they all died, despite their large numbers and despite their attempts to escape. This further highlights Allah's Power – while we do not know the details of how Allah executed the command for them to all die – Allah caused all of them to die simultaneously, with one, single command. Think about it: A group of more than ten thousand people, all of them just die suddenly at the same time, and then, Allah brings all of them back to life - **سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ** . It is only Allah who has the complete Power to do this.

Allah then says **إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ** that it's surely Allah who is always full of favours towards humans. Allah keeps doing favours for all of humanity. Favours that we often forget and then favours which we don't even know about. This includes the favour Allah did to this group of people, by bringing them back to life instead of leaving them dead, without a second chance to rectify their ways. This also includes the favour Allah has done for every single one of us, by revealing this Qur'an and giving us examples of such incidents so that we may be taught how to pass this test of life.

The Aayah then ends off with the words: **وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَشْكُرُونَ**, "but most humans are not grateful", meaning most of us do not thank Allah for the favours He has always done for us.

Thinking about what Allah is saying in this Aayah, gives us much food for thought in our current situation and in situations to come. Here was a group of people, who were afraid of Death. As mentioned by Ibn Kathir, they were specifically afraid of Death through a plague.

This forces us to ask ourselves a critical question: Are we also afraid of Death?

Does CoVid 19 scare us because we're not ready to die...?

If yes, then why?

Death is described as a gift for the true Believer, for it is the bridge that allows those who love Allah to finally meet their Beloved. Why then, do we fear Death?

The Aayah gives us a subtle hint to this answer. We tend to fear Death when we forget about Life after Death. This very group of people were fearing Death, because perhaps they had forgotten about Life after Death, they had forgotten that Allah has the Power to cause our Death and then bring us back to life.

Perhaps they even forgot that when we live this life correctly, then the next life will be far better for us. So, Allah kindly reminded those people, and all of us by

extension, that it's not Death that we should fear... It's how we prepare for our Death, for our ultimate meeting with Allah that should be our greatest concern.

Allah did all of us a favour by allowing us to look forward to an Eternal Life after Death and by giving us all the instructions we need to save ourselves from His punishment and to attract His Unconditional Mercy. Once we realize that Allah has only blessed us with favours after favours, for every single one of us - our natural human reaction should be to thank Allah and to express our gratitude by obeying Him.

Imagine, someone is always good to you, not once, but over and over again, and then you're asked to do something by them. Would you refuse? Nay, out of sheer gratitude, you wouldn't think twice about doing it. You'd be happy to do it.

This single Aayah summarizes a very common problem among humanity and provides its solution: Humanity falls into fear of Death when they forget Allah and the Hereafter. The only way to get out of this fear is to remember all the favours of Allah, and to thus become grateful through obeying Him.

In Ma'ariful Qur'an, some important points to note from this Aayah are highlighted as follows:

- **Divine decree overcomes all human planning:** No effort can be effective against that which has been determined by Allah (*Taqdir*) and running away from *jihad* or plague or its likes cannot help one save his life, nor being in it can become a cause of death. The fact is that death comes at an appointed time; it can neither be earlier nor later and its timing is completely in Allah's control
- **Rules pertaining to the place of epidemic:** It is not permissible to escape out from an area affected by plague and its likes for safety elsewhere. In addition to this, as said by the noble Prophet ﷺ, it is not correct for other people to go there. It appears in a *Hadith*:

إن هذا السقم عذب به الأمم قبلكم؛ فإذا سمعتم به في أرض فلا تدخلوها عليه. وإذا وقع بأرض وأنتم بها فلا تخرجوا فرارا

*"Allah Almighty has, through this disease (plague), punished people who were before you. So, when you hear about it spreading in a certain area, do not go there; and if it spreads in an area where you already are, do not go out escaping from it."*  
[Bukhari and Muslim and Ibn Kathir]

It appears in Tafsir al-Qurtubi that Sayyidna 'Umar رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ once embarked on a journey heading for Syria. When he reached *Saragh*, a place near *Tabuk* bordering Syria, he came to know that the whole of Syria was affected by a severe plague. This was regarded as a great calamity in the history of Syria. This plague is known as

'Amawas', because it started from a town called 'Amawas' (located near *Baytul-Maqdis*) and spread throughout the country. Thousands died and became *shahid* in this plague including many *Sahabah* and *Tabi'in* (Companions and their Successors).

When Sayyidna 'Umar رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ heard about the severity of the plague, he decided to stay where he was and sought the advice of the noble Companions رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ whether they should go into Syria at such a time, or they should return back. There was not one blessed person present during the consultations who was aware of any guidance from the Holy Prophet ﷺ about this matter. Later Sayyidna 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ narrated the following *hadith*:

إن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ذكر الوجد فقال رجز أو عذاب عذب به بعض الأمم ثم بقي منه بقية فيذهب المرة ويأتي الأخرى فمن سمع به بأرض فلا يقدمن عليه ومن كان بأرض وقع بها فلا يخرج فرارا منها

*"The Holy Prophet ﷺ referring to the disease (plague) said: This is a punishment that was inflicted on some peoples; later on some of it remained. This remainder goes away for some time, then returns. So, one who hears that a certain area is affected by it, he should not go there; and one who is already there, he should not go running from it (the plague)." [Al-Bukhari and others]*

When Sayyidna 'Umar رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ heard this *hadith*, he ordered his men to return. Sayyidna Abu 'Ubaydah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ, the governor of Syria was present on the occasion. Taking notice of the orders given by Sayyidna 'Umar رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ, he commented: أفرارا من قدر الله (Do you want to run from Divine destiny?) In reply, Sayyidna 'Umar رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ said: 'O Abu 'Ubaydah, I wish this was said by someone else' meaning thereby 'a comment like this, and that too from you, is certainly surprising.' Then he said: نعم ، نفر من قدر الله إلى قدر الله: 'Yes, we do run from Divine decree to (nothing but) Divine decree' meaning thereby – 'whatever we are doing we are doing in obedience to none else but Allah and His command which the Messenger of Allah ﷺ has explained to us.'

There is great wisdom in the prophetic sayings about plague: In accordance with the *hadith* stated above, we have been told that it is prohibited for outsiders to enter an area affected by plague or its likes; while it is equally prohibited for those who live there to run for their lives from that area.

In addition to this, the basic Islamic belief is that neither going anywhere is the cause of death, nor running from anywhere is the source of deliverance from it. Keeping this cardinal belief of Islam in view, the given instruction is based on very far-sighted stances of wisdom.

1. Lets look at the first element of wisdom in stopping outsiders from going into a plague-affected area. Isn't it quite possible that someone may be at the fag

end of his years and should he die because of this disease, it might have occurred to the deceased at some stage before his death that he might have lived had he not come into that area. Not only him, others might also think that his death occurred because he came there; although, whatever happened was pre-ordained. His age was no more than that. No matter where he lived, his death had to come at that particular time, It may be noted that the belief of Muslims has been saved from indecision through this instruction lest they should fall a victim to misunderstanding.

2. The second aspect of wisdom here relates to the guidance Allah Almighty has given to man that he should not go where there is a danger of being harmed, or an apprehension of being killed; in fact, he should do his best to keep away from everything that could cause harm or death. Not only that, it has been made binding on every man to save his life. This rule demands that one should, keeping his total trust and belief in Divine decree, take all necessary precautionary measures without any negligence. One of these measures is that he should not go to a place where his life may be in danger.

Similarly, the instruction, that residents of an area infected with plague should not escape out of their fearing death, has its own merits:

- a) The first wise counsel has a social and collective nature. For instance, should this escaping in panic become contagious, the rich and the powerful in the area would certainly run away. But, what would happen to those who are incapable of going anywhere. To begin with, left all alone, they will be terrified to death. Then there will be sick among them – who will take care of them? Should they die, who will manage their burial?
- b) The second point of wisdom here tells us that there will be some among the people present in that area who would be carrying germs of this disease. If they travel in that condition, they are likely to suffer more from all sorts of hardships. If they get sick while travelling, who knows what would come upon them. Ibn al-Madini has quoted the saying of scholars:

ما فر أحد من الوباء فسلم 'One who runs from an epidemic never stays safe.' [Qurtubi]

- c) There is still a third element of wisdom here. Isn't it that people infected by germs of the disease would be potential carriers of the epidemic wherever they go? If they elected to stay where they are, with patience and in trust, they might possibly get rid of the disease. And if, death was pre-ordained in this very disease, they will have the proud rank of *shahadah* (martyrdom) because of their patience and perseverance, as has been pointed out in *Hadith*.

Imam al-Bukhari has reported from Yahya ibn Ya'mur that Sayyidah 'A'isha al-Siddiqah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا told him that she had asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ about plague when he informed her that this disease was a punishment sent to a people who were to be punished by Allah's will. Then, Allah made it mercy for true believers. So, a slave of Allah who stays on with patience and peace in his locality believing that no harm can touch him except that which Allah has decreed for him – for such a person the merit in return shall be equal to that of a *shahid*.

And this also explains the *hadith* in which it is said: 'The plague is *shahadah* (martyrdom) and one who dies in the plague is a *shahid* (martyr).' [Qurtubi, vol. 3, p. 235]

### Some Exceptions

The words used in the *hadith* are: فلا تخرجوا فرارا منه (You should not go out running from it) which tells us that a person who goes somewhere else, not because of the fear of death, but because of some other pressing need, will not be affected by this prohibition. Similarly, if someone has a firm belief that he cannot escape his destiny wherever he goes, but he wants to go simply for change of climate, he is also exempted from this prohibition.

Similarly, if a person enters an area affected by plague because of some pressing need while he firmly believes that death will not come to him just because he is coming here – since death is subservient to the will of Allah, it will be permissible for him to go there.

Isn't it absolutely amazing how Allah has left no stone unturned in guiding us through every single one of life's lessons?

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## V. RESOLUTION

We're still in lockdown.

But, we now see families spending quality time together, gathering to pray Salaah and remember Allah. We're forced to appreciate even the small things, like toilet paper and hand sanitizer. We have more free time to read His words and realize that we need His Rope to get through this life.

It makes us wonder.

We may have not died a physical Death like those thousands of people from Bani Israel. But, perhaps we were spiritually dead because we had forgotten Allah. We took His favours for granted as we robotically charged through our materialistic lives with our entitlement attitudes... But Allah...

Oh, Allah... is still Most Kind to us...

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ

Allah is always doing favours for us humans and perhaps, this too is Allah's favour on us. He sent us a pandemic to remind us about all we have to be grateful for, to mend our ways and turn back to Him - before it is too late.

May we learn to be truly grateful and may this gratitude be the spark we need to change our attitude into one of loving obedience to the One who does everything for us.

Remember, the Rope of Allah is still right here, waiting for you. All you need to do is grab onto it and hold on. And all it starts with is a single phrase "Alhamdulillah". So go on and open the doors to your true success.

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