

And hasten to forgiveness from your Lord and a garden as wide as the heavens and earth, prepared for the righteous.

Who spend [in the cause of Allah ] during ease and hardship and who restrain anger and who pardon the people - and Allah loves the doers of good. [Surah Aale-Imran 3:134]

A topic which affects many of us is the topic of forgiving others. Its commonplace that there are differences between people which can cause a father not to speak to their son, a brother to leave their own siblings, a spouse to turn away from their partner and a child to divorce their own family. And these are not over small matters. Many times, there are genuine grievances - perhaps **bad manners**, lying, cheating, disrespect, abuse, slander, disagreement over marriage or unfair treatment. And the hardest to deal with, because they are so important to us, is when its between those we are closest to - our best friends, our family members, our cousins.

Over the last few weeks, we have seen the sentencing victims of the Christchurch masjid shooting who killed 51 people at two mosques in New Zealand in 2019 had plans to target a third mosque, his sentencing hearing has heard.

In the 5<sup>th</sup> year after migration the Prophet (sall Allāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) and Companions were returning from the expedition of **Banī Mustaliq** when *Sūrah al-Munāfiqūn* (Chapter of the Hypocrites) was revealed.

‘Ā’isha is the wife of the Prophet (sall Allāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) in the hereafter as she was his wife in this world. She was a scholar from the Companions who they turned to over and over again for guidance in matters of faith after the death of the Prophet (sall Allāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam), and she narrated one quarter of the hadīth regarding rulings.

On the return journey from *Banī Mustaliq*, she became separated from the army while looking for a necklace and the army marched on thinking she was still seated in her carriage. It was customary for the Prophet (sall Allāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam) to keep one of the companions to trail behind to look for people who had become separated from the army and it was here that Safwān b. Al-Mu‘attal found ‘Ā’isha who had fallen asleep waiting for the army to return.

The most poignant of lessons from this entire episode teaches us the practice of *Hijāb* amongst the Companions. *Hijāb* is not merely a scarf that the Muslim women covers her hair with, but a conduct of honour which is maintained between the genders at all times. ‘Ā’isha states that,

*“By Allāh, he did not speak a word to me and I did not hear him say anything except, ‘Truly, to Allāh we belong, and truly, to Him we shall return.’”*

There was no casual talk to pass the time or alleviate the obvious anxiety of the situation. Safwān woke up the Mother of the Believers with the most honourable of addresses and proceeded to walk in front of the camel while she rode behind him so as to avert his gaze from her. Indeed ‘Ā’isha states that at the moment of hearing Safwān’s voice, ‘I woke up, and covered my face with my *Jilbāb* (outer garment)’, thereby confirming that the complete *Hijāb* consists of the *Jilbāb* and the face veil.

By midday, ‘Ā’isha had reached the army, but it was here that ‘Abdullāh b. Ubay made an insidious comment and ignited the great slander. Allāh said in Sūrah al-Nūr:

***Indeed, those who like that immorality should be spread among those who have believed will have a painful punishment in this world and the Hereafter. And Allāh knows and you do not know. Surah An-Nur [24:19]***

Today, I don’t want to focus on this evil, vile lie as we know Allah(SWT) cleared her name publicly. Rather, I want to focus on a character in this story, who was related to Aisha(Ra) – her second cousin, a man by the name of **Mistah b. Uthathah**. He was the son of the cousin of Abu Bakr (RA) – a companion of the Prophet(SAW). Not a hypocrite – rather he was one of those who left his family and his wealth for the sake of Islam – he was a Muajir (emigrant). He was young, unemployed, single and he had left everything he had behind him in Makkah. In fact, he witnessed Badr. For this reason and the fact that he was their cousin, Abu Bakr(RA) would personally give him gifts on a regular basis to sponsor him as he was unemployed and poor.

He too had naively fallen into the gossip and spread this great slander against ‘Ā’isha (Ra). When, Abū Bakr (RA) found out that his own cousin, who he would sponsor, had participated in spreading these lies, he took an oath to withhold his spending on him. Imagine, if any of us was in this situation, how we would have responded if our wife or sister was maligned in this way. How would we react? But this is Abu Bakr(RA) – he said, Wallahi, I will never pay him a dinar, as long as I live. After this, Allah(SWT) revealed the aayaat clearing Aisha(Ra) and then another verse was revealed.

**And let not those of status among you and wealth swear not to give [aid] to their relatives and the needy and the emigrants for the cause of Allah, and let them pardon and overlook. Would you not like that Allah should forgive you? And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful. [Surah An-Nur : 22]**

This verse taught Abu Bakr (RA) what it means to be a Siddeeq. Do not give an oath using Allah's name to stop giving money to your relative, and a poor person, and a Muhajir. Allah(SWT) in His boundless Mercy focused on the positives he had, rather than the negative. Abu Bakr(RA) - you are higher than this, you are better than this. Rather, you should forgive and erase this from your heart. Don't you want Allah(SWT) to forgive you? What if Allah(SWT) was to take you to account for your shortcomings?

When the verse was revealed, Abū Bakr (RA) immediately responded, "Yes, by Allah, O our Lord! We wish that You should forgive us." replacing his initial oath with a new oath to spend on Mistah, illustrating how Abū Bakr is one of those whom Allāh chose to be purified and attain a sublime standard through this trial. He said "Allah is my witness, I will continue to give sadaqa to him as long as I live." And he never stopped this, even though Mistah became wealthy and wasn't in need, but Abu Bakr(RA) stayed firm to his promise throughout his life.

This is the quality I want to focus on today. The importance of forgiving others.

When Prophet Yusuf (AS) was able to take revenge against his kidnappers, who had attempted to kill him and later sold him into slavery, who distanced him from his beloved father - none other than his own brothers. What did he say? "There is no blame upon you".

When the Prophet (SAW) was stoned by the youth of the streets of Ta'if and Allah(SWT) sent an angel It was Aisha(RA) who asked the Prophet(SAW), "Have you encountered a day harder than the battle of Uhud?" The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "Your tribes have troubled very much, and the worst was the day of Aqaba when I presented myself to Ibn Abd Yalail ibn Abd Kulal and he did not respond to what I intended.

I departed, overwhelmed with excessive sorrow, and I could not relax until I found myself at a tree where I lifted my head towards the sky to see a cloud shading me. I looked up and saw Gabriel in it.

He called me saying: Allah has heard your people's saying to you and how they have replied, and Allah has sent the Angel of the Mountains to you that you may order him to do whatever you wish to these people. The Angel of the Mountains greeted me and he said: O Muhammad, order what you wish, and if you like, I will let the mountains fall on them." The Prophet said, "No, rather I hope that Allah will bring from their descendants people who will worship Allah alone without associating partners with him." [Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 3059, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 1759]

When the Prophet (SAW) returned to Makkah, after 20 years of persecution, torture , assassination attempts and battles to destroy all the believers. When he entered Makkah without any bloodshed after 20 years, standing at the door of the Ka'bah, holding its frame and facing those who had killed his uncle, his dear companions, those from his families and tribes, he asked them, "Men of the Quraysh! What do you think I will do to you?". They said, "We hope for the best. You are a noble brother and the son of a noble brother!". They had forgotten this when they persecuted him but look at his response, the Prophet (ﷺ) replied, "I say to you what Yusuf said to his brothers, 'No reproach shall be on you this day.' Go on your way, you are free." Abu Sufyan, leader of the Quraysh, who had led armies against the Prophet(SAW), who had done terrible things to the Muslims and he knew what they deserved, was absolutely shocked. When full power is in the hands of the Prophet(SAW), he could not but utter his amazement out loud - how generous and kind and forgiving you are! The entire city, barring a handful, accepted Islam and these were the early Muslims - **won over through forgiveness.**

Note that each of these were actual wrongs done against the victim - slander, torture, kidnapping, exile - and yet, they are able to forgive. What about the petty things between us and our family members. Our differences over money, over some words said in haste or perhaps a real wrong done to us. Allah(SWT) reminds us that we have not been tested like these greats before us and its not just that we should forgive our relatives, rather forgive all of the people.

the residents of Makkah pleaded with him saying "You are he forgave them. Mistah accused Aishah (ra) such a big thing... but when Abu Bakr as-Siddiq got [his] time to take revenge, Allah helped him to forgive him. This is something to keep in mind. Believers don't take revenge unnecessarily. If Allah commands them [to take revenge] they will do but, not for themselves. When the time comes for you to hurt people, you should become strong.

Even, when it comes to murder. Allah(SWT) tells us "O you who have believed, prescribed for you is legal retribution for those murdered - the free for the free, the slave for the slave, and the female for the female. **But whoever overlooks from his brother anything, then there should be a suitable follow-up** and payment to him with good conduct. This is alleviation from your Lord and a mercy. But whoever transgresses after that will have a painful punishment. [Surah Al Baqarah 2:178]

Forgiveness is for our own growth and happiness. When we hold on to hurt, pain, resentment, and anger it harms us far more than it harms the offender. There's a famous saying "Before you embark on a journey of revenge, dig two graves." as your own anger will consume you. Your heart will continue burning thinking about another while they have

moved on, you cannot. Someone once said it is like **holding a burning fire in your hand** which you wish to unleash on the one who caused you pain, but instead it only burns you more. Blame keeps wounds open - only forgiveness heals.

Forgiveness frees us to live in the present. Reliving the wrong that was done to us keeps us living in the past and missing today's beauty. It's said that sometimes letting go is an act of far greater power than defending or holding on.

Forgiveness brings you back to good physical and mental health. The systems of the body respond to negative emotions, affecting the immune system in ways that would blow your mind. Releasing those emotions is a good idea.

I'm not suggesting you don't take your time to process your anger and hurt. Of course, get yourself into a safe space, physically and emotionally. Set new boundaries and recognise that it's your choice to forgive.

Forgiveness is not about forgetting. It is about remembering without pain.

We have options when we are hurt:

- Return evil with evil - qisas. We will not be punished but we will not be rewarded.
- Better than this is that you forgive and you move on.
- The highest level - the level of the siddeeq, is to forgive, mend and give better than what you got.

"Good and evil cannot be equal. [Prophet], repel evil with what is better and your enemy will become as close as an old and valued friend." [Surah Fussilat 41:34]

It is true that some of us are afflicted by a trauma or a difficulty which we experienced that we will carry until our dying day. And it is possible we hold a grudge until Judgement day and then we ask for it in the court of Allah(SWT), however, that is not the best option.

Don't forgive for their sake, rather forgive for your sake so that Allah(SWT) will forgive you on the day you need it most.

Abdullah ibn Amr (RA) reported: The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "Be merciful to others and **you will receive mercy**. Forgive others and Allah will forgive you." Source: Musnad Ahmad

Anas ibn Malik (RA) reported: We were sitting with the Messenger of Allah, peace and

blessings be upon him, and he said, "Coming upon you now is a man from the people of Paradise."

A man from the Ansar came whose beard was disheveled by the water of ablution and he was carrying both of his shoes with his left hand. The next day the Prophet repeated the same words, and the man came in the same condition. The third day the Prophet repeated the same again, and the man came in the same condition. When the Prophet stood up to leave, Abdullah ibn Amr followed the man and he said, "I am in a dispute with my father and I have sworn not to enter my home for three days. May I stay with you?" The man said yes.

Abdullah stayed three nights with the man but he never saw him praying at night. Whenever he went to bed, he would remember Allah and rest until he woke up for morning prayer. Abdullah said that he never heard anything but good words from his mouth.

When three nights had passed and he did not see anything special about his actions, Abdullah asked him, "O servant of Allah, I have not been in dispute with my father nor have I cut relations with him. I heard the Prophet say three times that a man from the people of Paradise was coming to us and then you came. I thought I should stay with you to see what you are doing that I should follow, but I did not see you do anything special. Why did the Prophet speak highly of you?"

The man said, "I am as you have seen." When Abdullah was about to leave, the man said, "I am as you have seen, except that I do not find any hate in my soul towards the Muslims and I do not envy anyone because of the good that Allah has given them." Abdullah said, "This is what you have achieved and it is something we have not accomplished." [Musnad Ahmad 12286]