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Islamic Lessons

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DO NOT WASTE TIME

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

«وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ
وَمُهَيِّمًا عَلَيْهِ فَاحْكُم بَيْنَهُم بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ عَمَّا جَاءَكَ مِنَ
الْحَقِّ لِكُلِّ جَعَلْنَا مِنْكُمْ شِرْعَةً وَمِنْهَاجًا وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَكِنْ
لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرَاتِ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا
كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ»

(المائدة / ٤٨)

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

“And We have revealed to you the Book with the truth confirming what is before it of the Book and a guardian over it, therefore judge between them by what Allah has revealed, and do not follow their caprices (to turn away) from the truth which has come to you; for every one of you did We appoint a law and a way; and if Allah had willed He would have made you (all) a single nation, but that He might try you in what He gave you, therefore vie for good deeds; to Allah is the return of you all; so He will let you know that in that which you differed.”

Sura Ma'ida (5:48)

Time is a fundamental factor in planning, creating and implementing things. It is to existence as water is to life.

«... وَجَعَلْنَا مِنَ الْمَاءِ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ حَيٍّ...»

(الانبيا / ٣٠)

“.. and We have made of water every thing living..”

Sura Anbiya (21:30)

Since life is impossible without water, likewise there can be no things, events or deeds if there is no time. In other words it is a basic and essential factor for making and doing things. As the absence of water means certain death, so also the wasting of time or the failure to make proper use of it, means losing a creative opportunity. Therefore it is as crucial to life as life is to water.

Wasting time is a gross neglect of human energy and intellect. Not only the physical and psychological powers are stagnated, but mere wastage of time prevents ideas and things from being conceived or created.

Consequently, time is the most valuable element in human life and the most precious thing possessed by mankind in life. Life to a man is but the mark he would

leave behind and the goals he achieved. For he takes life for granted, like a plantation in whose tilling he has put all his efforts, activities, energies and abilities and the products of which he would like to enjoy. How wisely Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) describes it:

“This world is the plantation for the hereafter.”

Nevertheless, people tend to forget the importance of time and the value of their numbered years so often, that despite the fact of its being their only asset, they so lavishly dispense with it, in utter disregard to its quite limited nature. Each passing moment reduces a little from the years of one’s age and can never be recovered or replaced. It resembles the distance a traveller travels to cover his journey. Every step he takes certainly shortens the distance left for the journey, taking him nearer to his goal.

So, any mature individual possessing a sense of life, a sound understanding, and knowing the importance of time in his life span, respects his existence and is keen to utilize every precious second, minute and hour of his life. To lose one’s time in vain is to lose one’s years for no avail. It is too late if one grieves later over what one had foolishly lost; for contemplating with weeping eyes full of repentance, does not compensate for the missed opportunities. The Qur’an beautifully portrays the picture of an erring individual, who ruefully regrets his criminal wastage. He had disobeyed Allah, totally ignoring Him and had spent all his time in levity, vanity, perversion enjoyment and aimlessness, but

death suddenly woke him up from his deep slumber. He soulfully remembers the loss of power, wealth, position and energy which he had failed to use in doing good and in obeying Allah. Now when all is gone, biting his fingers out of remorse and dismay, he complains his loss, disappointment and destiny; so beautifully depicted by the glorious Qur'an:

«وَيَوْمَ يَعَضُّ الظَّالِمُ عَلَى يَدَيْهِ يَقُولُ يَا لَيْتَنِي اتَّخَذْتُ مَعَ الرَّسُولِ سَبِيلًا * يَا وَيْلَتِي لَيْتَنِي لَمْ أَتَّخِذْ فُلَانًا خَلِيلًا * لَقَدْ أَضَلَّنِي عَنِ الذِّكْرِ بَعْدَ إِذْ جَاءَنِي وَكَانَ الشَّيْطَانُ لِلْإِنْسَانِ خَذُولًا»

(الفرقان / ٢٧ - ٢٩)

“And the day when the unjust one shall bite his hands, saying: ‘O! would that I had taken a way with the Apostle. O, woe is me! would that I had not taken such a one for a friend! Certainly he led me astray from the Reminder after it had come to me; and the Satan fails to aid man.’”

Sura Furqan (25:27 - 29)

In another scene, the Qur'an illustrates the picture of an evildoer filled with contrition and misery on the Judgement Day:

«وَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوْتِيَ كِتَابَهُ بِشِمَالِهِ فَيَقُولُ يَا لَيْتَنِي لَمْ أُوتَ

كِتَابِيهٌ * وَ لَمْ اُذِرْ مَا حِسَابِيهٌ * يَالَيْتَهَا كَانَتْ الْقَاضِيَهٗ * مَا اَغْنَىٰ عَنِّي
مَالِيَهٗ * هَلَكْتَ عَنِّي سُلْطَانِيَهٗ * خُذُوهُ فَعَلُوهُ * ثُمَّ الْجَحِيمَ صَلُّوهُ»

(الحاقة / ٢٥ - ٣١)

“And as for him who is given his book in his left hand, he shall say: O would that my book had never been given me: And I had not known what my account was: O would that it had made an end (of me): My wealth has availed me nothing: My authority is gone away from me.

But it will avail him nothing for Allah will command:

“Take him and fetter him, Then cast him into burning fire.”

Sura Haqqah (69:25 - 31)

How vividly the Qur’an illustrates the fate of the prodigals, who squander away their precious life-span heedlessly, in reckless pursuits to satisfy their vanity and lust. They lose their wealth, power and age, despite the fact that the Qur’an is ever-present to constantly remind them. It exhorts mankind to make a correct use of their energies and efforts and invites them towards good deeds, construction, guidance and reformation in life.

«... وَلَكِنْ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرَاتِ...»

(المائدة / ٤٨)

“... but that He might try you in what he gave you,

therefore vie for good deeds...”

Sura Ma'ida (5:48)

The Qur'an defines the goals together with the impeding temptations of life clearly, so that man may discover his innermost self, and realize his real hidden identity whether good or bad. It encourages him to hasten towards the doing of good and not towards a playful life that exhausts human energies in debauchery, wickedness, hatred, perversion, corruption, and other vices. The spirit and the context of the above Qur'anic verse, encourages the proper utilization of time and the sound investment of the precious moments of life at the foremost opportunity before it is too late, and the chances slip away.

How wonderfully the Mercy for the creation, Prophet Muhammad (saw) says:

“Seize the opportunity of (offered by) five before (the setting-in of) five: Your youth before your old age; your health before your illness; your leisure before your occupation; your life before your death and your riches before your poverty.”¹

In other words the Messenger exhorts us to avail the opportunity life offers and to make the proper use of:

**** the energies of youth before old age sets in.***

****the vivacity of a good health before illness cramps it.***

1. Tabrasi, "Mishkat Al-Anwar fi Ghurar Al-Akhbar", ed. 1385 p. 170.

- * the span of life before death overtakes it.*
- * the time of leisure before one becomes occupied.*
- * the bounties of riches before poverty strikes.*

Quite often the one who has wealth, energy, time and youth may not consciously be aware of his energies and vital opportunities he has at his disposal, or else he may not fully assess their value and importance. He may not comprehend, nor make proper use of his talents and abilities to acquire knowledge, to worship Allah, to do good deeds, and take part in social activities. But he may feel acute repentance and regret for those lost vital abilities and missed opportunities later on. The weakening of his powers and abilities makes him incapable of acquiring knowledge; of participating in social activities, such as charity projects, good deeds, fighting for the cause of Allah, etc. He will keep recalling the good days of his youth and their fervour.

Filled with contrition, he will regret the chances he threw away to acquire, save, learn, do good, and make his provision for the hereafter, through dedication, worship etc. So many wealthy men have lost their wealth without utilizing or investing it properly in what might have been to their interest and good! So many strong and healthy men have wasted their energies and health in vain! So many men blessed with the boon of leisure have killed their time and burned out their days as if they were a heap of rubbish, unaware of the precious value of the vital element, called time.

The causes of this phenomenon of wasting time are numerous. By minutely and carefully studying the causes of mankind's moral, economic, ideological and social afflictions, one is apt to realize that waste and extravagance are the basic causes of backwardness and the cultural vacuum from which man is so deeply suffering. Mankind generally suffers from the following three psychological modes of conduct:

1. Prodigality:

The use of things, such as food, drinks, clothes, etc. beyond the limits of actual need and reasonable want.

2. Extravagance:

Squandering one's assets, such as money, property and other useful things for no avail.

3. Waste:

Negligence of energies, opportunities and possibilities, and the failure to use them for creative purposes. Laziness is a fatal attitude and a destructive conduct caused by ignorance and psychological abnormality. A normal man is keen on utilizing what Allah has bestowed upon him of talents, youth, health, wealth, time, etc. and makes use of them, wisely and pragmatically without wasting any part of his natural faculties.

Consequently, Islam, as the religion of action and practicability, is keen on grooming the human faculties and nature's gifts fully for humanity's benefits and happiness, both in this world and the hereafter.

Allah has blessed man with bounties of nature, such as the fertile earth, the abundant sources of sweet water, wealths from animals, minerals and other natural resources, as well as the unlimited energies of sunshine, fresh air, and the like. Allah has also granted man, the great human faculties, foremost among them, the wonderful brain and the power of speech. If these should be dealt with according to the sound divine programme, the fertile earth would become more yielding, life would become prosperous, and civilization would reach such great heights that man would happily live in peace and security.

«وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَهْلَ الْقُرَىٰ آمَنُوا وَاتَّقَوْا لَفَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِم بَرَكَاتٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ
وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَكِن كَذَّبُوا فَأَخَذْنَاهُم بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ»

(الاعراف / ٩٦)

“And if the people of the towns had believed and guarded (against evil), We would certainly have opened up for them blessings from the heaven and the earth, but they rejected (our Apostles), so We overtook them for what they had earned.”

Sura A'raf (7:96)

«يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولُنَا يُبَيِّنُ لَكُمْ كَثِيرًا مِمَّا كُنْتُمْ تُخْفُونَ
 مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَيَعْفُوا عَنْ كَثِيرٍ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ نُورٌ وَكِتَابٌ مُبِينٌ * يَهْدِي
 بِهِ اللَّهُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ رِضْوَانَهُ سُبُلَ السَّلَامِ وَيُخْرِجُهُم مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ بِإِذْنِهِ
 وَيَهْدِيهِمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ»

(المائدة / ١٥ - ١٦)

“O followers of the Book! indeed our Apostle has come to you making clear to you much of what you used to conceal of the Book, and passing over much; indeed there has come to you light and a clear Book from Allah; With it Allah guides those who will follow His pleasure into the ways of safety, and brings them out of utter darkness into light by His will and guides them to the right path.”

sura Ma'ida (5:15 & 16)

Islam does not encourage man to acquire knowledge and scientific learnings only for the sake of developing his natural faculties and abilities, nor for the fear of losing them due to their disuse, but it regards man responsible for them, and answerable about their proper use, on the Day of Resurrection. These faculties are actually a trust to man which he had willingly agreed to bear. So, he must take good care of them, and use and direct them properly along the correct path which his Creator guides him to. Nothing in this world should be considered as a trifle nor allowed to be wasted. Everything has been created in a measure, and placed in its proper place so as to play its designed role and

achieve the purpose of its existence. Whatever man was provided with and which he accepted to take care of and put it to proper use is his responsibility and consequently he will be questioned for it.

The following tradition of the Prophet expounds this scientific truth in order to awaken human conscience and develop the social and devotional senses, and also to inspire in them good and protect them against excess and loss as well as to prevent them from slipping into the abysmal depths of poverty, sin and deviation.

“The feet of a man will not be allowed to move on the Judgement Day before he is asked about four (things): His age and how he spent it; his youth and on what it was wasted; his knowledge and how he put it to use; his wealth and how he earned it and on what he spent it.”¹

How wonderfully the Prophet explained our responsibilities and their eventual account on the Day of Resurrection.

Thus, it is clear that man has to answer for time and its dearness to life. He has been cautioned against wasting it away in idleness, sleep, aimlessness and senseless pursuits.

Countless are the precious hours, days and years

1. Tabrasi, “Mishkat al-Anwar fi Ghurar al-Akhbar”

which man wastes in aimless rambling through the streets, coffee shops, clubs, and time-killing meetings of no avail.

Perhaps many people do not recognize the importance of this vital factor in life. It is often seen that people make appointments with friends or clients, but are the least bothered either to keep them up or to be punctual. They are not merely late for a few minutes or for some hours, but even for days. Unfortunately they fail to assess the value of time and the dangerous consequences that may result, due to its waste.

The number of hours lazy people burn every day may run into millions, perhaps even more. People who just love to sleep most of the day, are actually burying the living time under the cemetery of bed-covers. While there are others, who simply exhaust their natural energies in clumsy yawnings and stretchings on doorsteps and sidewalks or idle gatherings without any useful purpose. Consider these actions of mankind in view of the Creator's wise instructions in the holy Qur'an:

«وَجَعَلْنَا نَوْمَكُمْ سُبَاتًا * وَجَعَلْنَا اللَّيْلَ لِبَاسًا * وَجَعَلْنَا النَّهَارَ مَعَاشًا»

(النبا / ٩ - ١١)

“And We made your sleep to be repose (for you). And We made the night to be a covering. And We made the day for seeking livelihood.”

Sura Naba' (78:9-11)

It means prayer was ordained at the breaking of the dawn, so that man may begin his day with worship, remembering Allah and contemplating His great signs, he is to start the morning hours and begin his day with activity in harmony with the stirring-up of life under the first rays of the sun.

The following traditions of the Prophet stress the benefits of rising up early and starting the day with activity, seeking of livelihood and lawful earnings:

“Blessed be my people for their early rising up.”¹

“Allah the Exalted the Mighty, dislikes an idle-man who loves sleeping.”²

“Too much sleep does away with both religion and the world.”³

“O People, you have certain (special) characteristics, so get to (emphasize) them and you have an end, so get to (be prepared for) it. A believer is between two anxieties: A time that has passed away, knowing not what Allah would do with him (about it); and a time at hand, knowing not what Allah’s judgement would be (concerning it). So, a servant of Allah should take (make provisions) for himself from his self; from his world (life) for his hereafter, during his youth before his old age, and in life before death. By the

1. Mas'udi, "Muruj Adhahab", Vol. 2, P. 294.

2. Kulaini' "Kafi". Vol. 5, Ch. "karaahat an-nawm wal-faragh."

3. *ibid.*

One in whose hand is Muhammad's soul, after death there will be no blaming, and after this world there is nothing except Paradise or Hell.¹

Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.), in one of his wise sayings, divides time and teaches man how to make the best use of it and to profit by it:

"A believer's time has three periods: The period when he is in communion with Allah; the period when he manages for his livelihood; and the period when he is free to enjoy what is lawful and pleasant. It does not behove a wise person to be away (from his house) except, for three (matters): for purposes of earning for, ensuring his hereafter, and for enjoying what is not prohibited."²

Imam ar-Redha (a.s), quotes his father Imam Musa ibn Jafar (a.s), on the same subject as follows:

"My father cautioned some of his sons: Beware of laziness and boredom, because they would prevent you from your share of this world and the hereafter."³

1-Ya'qubi, "Tarikh Al-Ya'qubi", Vol. 2, P. 89. Dar Sadir, Beirut.

2- Imam 'Ali (a.s) "Nahjul Balagha", Saying No. 390.

3- Kulaini, "Al-Furu' min Al-Kafi", Vol. 5, p. 67.

How beautifully Islam teaches us to exploit the years of our age, explaining to us the proper ways of using the precious thing called time. It marvellously spells out how to organize the time at our disposal and to avoid laziness, indolence, boredom and aimlessness.

A Society that is overcome by laziness and sloth behaviour, and whose members squander their physical, mental and material resources in vain, is indeed, a backward society, miserably lagging behind others, weak and without any identity of its own.

Thus Islam warns the Muslims against slipping into this dark abyss of laziness. It exhorts them to be trend-setters, leading the way of knowledge and action, and to carry the banner of inviting the entire mankind to Islam towards peace and happiness.

The state of feeling lost and obscure may turn into a major problem complicating the life of the individual, and if this feeling spreads to others, the whole society may be afflicted, with this catastrophic ailment.

Such a feeling not only causes psychological tensions, destroying the peace and happiness of the individual himself, but its effects may in turn lead to social and moral problems in the society as a whole. A person who does not

use his energy to his benefit, in a natural way, nor is he inclined to find a useful pursuit for it, is very much apt to become an aggressive and aimless individual.

Human energy is like the enormous energy of water, which, if properly harnessed can produce a good crop and generate electricity, bringing life to the world; but if let loose, it turns into a devastating torrent, drowning and destroying everything in its path. Thus it is essential for mankind to think properly about the significance of time and utilize this vital essence of life to the full advantage, by duly filling up all the potentially dangerous patches of vacuum in our lives, here and there.

Duties of Parents and the State

Parents have a moral duty towards the building of a society, for it is they who lay its foundations, by properly bringing up their children. Therefore they should guide and encourage their children to be agile and energetic and urge them to lead a life of creative pursuits.

If parents are instrumental in building the base, it is the government and social establishments who give shape to the society's structure. Thus it is obliging on the government to make public welfare the cornerstone of its policies. It should plan and execute projects aimed at exploiting the talents of the people to the maximum

advantage, for on them depends the progress and flowering of the civilization.

But unfortunately the Muslim Ummah, despite Islam's emphasis on this vital element called time, failed to grasp its significance. It was imperialism which assessed the importance of time and energy and the pitfalls of wasting them. Consequently ungodly Imperialism, ruthlessly exploited this major weakness of the oppressed peoples, especially the muslims, by employing evil-minded experts to design sinister plots aimed at further enslaving them.

Since the muslims had ceased to act according to Islam and its lofty teachings, they fell an easy prey to colonialist strategems, one after the other falling to its bait. Corrupt governments and lackey rulers, who were the least bothered about the welfare of their societies, not only prostrated before the imperialist powers, but treacherously facilitated the imposition of alien ideologies, thoughts and manners. These imperialist instruments were craftily designed, attractive to behold, but in fact intended for fruitless pursuits, that would exhaust time and energies, without any concrete results, except the further tightening of the colonialist noose.

A glance at the university curriculum in muslim countries reveals how the students tire to waste their prime years, without obtaining anything of benefit, either for

themselves or for the society. The colossal amount of time they waste in acquiring the glittering degrees only serve to enhance further the devilish interests of the Arrogant colonialists, without benefitting either the muslim individual or the society.

Even Industry and Agriculture did not escape the machinations of the scheming Imperialists. They were part of the elaborate plans, skillfully designed to drain the muslim nation's energies and talents and keep it in perpetual bond. An analysis reveals that neither the production level ever rose-up compared to the time, effort and capital put into it, nor did the puppet rulers try to move from the light to heavy and subsequently towards the sophisticated industries, which would have definitely lessened the dependence on foreigners. In fact the Imperialist network was so intricate, that simultaneously they had spread out the dragnet of entertainment and idle pleasures, so as to lull the minds and conscience to sleep; thereby depriving the nation of its moral and material resources. Time and energies of the muslims were not only wasted away on fruitless toils, whose only benefit was the filling-up of Imperialist coffers, but the outward glamour of the West deceived them into wasting away their precious hours of leisure in the vain pursuit of idle pleasures. On one hand the exploiter reigned supreme enjoying the fruits of the exploited's labour, and on the other hand the unsuspecting exploited, trapped in the wicked pleasures,

designed to rob their conscience, plunged deeper and deeper into a state of backwardness, imagining it to be the society's progress.

The work of a devil indeed! Nay the Imperialists even outdid the devil himself in terms of wickedness. By devising intrigues, hatching plots and playing one against the other, in order to keep the oppressed in a perpetual state of disorder, they tried to smother whatever sparks of conscience left in the muslims' minds. Sectarian conflicts, racial prejudices, nationalism, border disputes along the artificially created boundaries of the 'Nation States' and a host of other problems, ensured that time and energies of the muslims would be wasted in senseless wildgoose chases, and self-destructive issues, leaving the economic leash firmly in the Imperialist grip.

But the greatest conspiracy ever-hatched was the illegitimate planting of Zionist terrorists in the heart of the Muslim land. Palestine which contains the holy Qods (Jerusalem), was usurped and converted into the Zionist entity, run by a clique of hardened criminals. And its rightful inhabitants were turned into stateless refugees, forced to live in makeshift camps, even after 40 years.

In this way they drew vile plans to fritter away the time and energy of the Islamic Ummah, and keep it weak and backward.

Therefore wake up dear muslims and beware of the treacheries all around you, for time never waits for anyone. It is time you should acquire intellectual and cultural maturity, for time once past never returns. Time is the most precious jewel in your possession and once your conscience wakes up from this deep slumber, you will be able to utilize your energies in the way of Islam and reap the rich harvests thereafter. The exploitation of time and energies to the maximum, will not only enable you to shrug off dependence but will make the whole Islamic Ummah the torch bearers of conscience and guidance, that will eventually rid this world of sedition, tyranny, oppression and all other vices, making it a happy place to live in.

So let us start; better late than never. Let us promise ourselves that whatever hours of leisure we have at our disposal, we will spend on self-education, starting from our immediate family as a base. We know they will be hurdles in our way, set-up by the ignorant society and the environment we live in, but for a determined individual, seeking Allah's pleasure there is no despair. Allah helps those who help themselves. The following verse of the holy Qur'an should act as a stimulant to our conscience:

«... إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنفُسِهِمْ...»

(الرعد / ١١)

“...surely Allah does not change the condition of a

people until they change their own condition...

Sura Ra'd (13:11)

By reciting Allah's revealed word, the holy Qur'an, and by glorifying Him and seeking His forgiveness, we can contemplate on the realms of the earth and the heavens. The wonders of this beautiful creation should inspire us towards greater deeds, both in the social and scientific fields.

We humbly hope that our brief booklet will serve its purpose and make our readers time-conscious. Our spare time could be utilized for the learning of a useful profession or a new language, thus making our life full of energy and creation.

For man was created to construct the earth, and not to blow it up therefore it is incumbent on us as Allah's representatives, to utilize nature's abundant wealth for the welfare of the human beings.

«وَالَّذِي نَمُودُ أَخَاهُمْ صَالِحًا قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ
هُوَ أَنْتُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ وَاسْتَعْمَرْتُمْ فِيهَا فَاسْتَغْفِرُوا لَهُ ثُمَّ تَوْبُوا إِلَيْهِ إِنَّ رَبِّي
قَرِيبٌ مُجِيبٌ»

(هود / ٦١)

“And to Thamud (We sent) their brother Salih. He said: ‘O my people! worship Allah, you have no god other than He. He brought you forth from the earth, and made you dwell in it, therefore ask forgiveness of Him and repent to Him; surely my Lord is Near and Responsive.’”

Sura Hud (11:61)

Praise be to Allah; Lord of the worlds, may our humble endeavours be accepted by Him.