

The Hadith al-Qudsi of the Ascension

Translator(s):

Yasin T. Al-Jibouri [3]

In the Name of Allah, the most Gracious, the most Merciful

In al-Daylami's book *Irshad al-Qulub*, it is stated that the Commander of the Faithful (P) is quoted as having said that the Prophet (S) pleaded to his Lord during the eve of the ascension saying,

"Lord! Which deeds are the best?"

Allah, the most Exalted, the most Great, said,

"Nothing is better with me than reliance on me and acceptance of what I have allotted. O Muhammad (S)! My love is mandated for those who love each other for My sake. My love is mandated for those who are affectionate to each other for My sake. My love is mandated for those who stay in touch with each other for My sake. My love is mandated for those who rely on Me, and there is no knowledge, nor goal, nor an end for My love. Whenever I take away some type of knowledge, I place for them another. These are those who look at the beings as I look at them, and they do not plead to creation when they need a thing. Their stomachs are light due to eating what is only permissible. Their joy in life is mentioning My Name, loving Me, and my Pleasure with them. O Ahmad (S)! If you love to be the most pious, be ascetic in this life and seek the Hereafter."

The Prophet (S) said,

"Lord! How do I renounce life and seek the Hereafter?"

The Almighty said,

"Take from this life light food and drink as well as clothing; do not hoard for tomorrow, and keep

remembering Me.”

The Prophet (S) said,

"Lord! How do I keep remembering You?"

The Almighty said,

"Do so by staying aloof from people, by hating what is sweet and what is sour, by keeping your stomach and home empty from the wares of life. O Ahmad (S)! Beware acting like a child who, upon seeing what is green and what is yellow, he loves it, and when he is given of what is sweet and what is sour, he is deceived by it.”

The Prophet (S) said,

"Lord! Lead me to a deed whereby I seek nearness to You.”

The Almighty said,

"Make your night a day and your day a night.”

The Prophet (S) said,

"How so, Lord?"

The Almighty said,

"Turn your sleep into prayer and your food into hunger.

O Ahmad (S)! I swear by My Dignity and Greatness that no believing servant secures four merits from me except that I permit him to enter Paradise:

- (1) He keeps his mouth shut and not open it except about what concerns him;
- (2) he safeguards his heart against delusion;
- (3) he safeguards My knowledge and My seeing him, and
- (4) the apple of his eye becomes hunger.

O Ahmad (S)! Were you only to taste the sweetness of hunger, silence, solitude, and were you to taste their legacy!"

The Prophet (S) said,

"Lord! What is the legacy of hunger?"

The Almighty said,

"It is wisdom, the safeguarding of the heart, the nearness to Me, continued grief, the carrying of a light burden compared to others, the saying of the truth without being concerned whether one lives in ease or in hardship.

O Ahmad (S)! Do you know during what time a servant becomes close to Allah?"

The Prophet (S) said,

"No, Lord, I do not."

The Almighty said,

"He does so when he is either hungry or prostrating.

O Ahmad (S)! I wonder about three kinds of My servants:

(1) a servant who starts his prayers knowing Who he is raising his hands to and before Whom he stands, yet he is drowsy! And

(2) I wonder about a servant who has what sustains him of vegetation or something else yet he worries about tomorrow! And

(3) I wonder about one who does not know if I am pleased with him or if I am wrathful against him, yet he laughs!

O Ahmad (S)! There is a mansion in Paradise of a pearl on top of a pearl and of a jewel on top of a jewel that has never been cut nor joined. In it are the elite to whom I look every day seventy times and speak to them. Whenever I look at them, I increase their domain seventy times, and when the residents of Paradise are pleased with food and drink, these find their pleasure in My speech, in remembering Me and in My talk."

The Prophet (S) said,

"Lord! What are their distinctive marks?"

The Almighty said,

"They are in life jailed; their tongues are imprisoned against curious talk and their stomachs against unnecessary food. O Ahmad (S)! To love for the sake of Allah is to love the poor and to be close to them."

The Prophet (S) said,

"Lord! Who are the poor?"

The Almighty said,

"They are those who accept what is little, who are patient when hungry, who offer thanks when in ease, who do not complain about their hunger or thirst, who do not lie when they speak, who do not feel angry with their Lord, who do not feel depressed for what they cannot attain, nor do they feel elated on account of what they earn.

O Ahmad (S)! Love for My sake is love for the poor; so, get close to the poor and let them get close to you, and keep away from the rich and keep them away from you, for the poor are the ones that I love.

O Ahmad (S)! Do not wear soft outfits, do not eat tasty food, and do not sleep on soft beds, for the *nafs* (evil-insinuating soul) is the haven of every evil and the companion of everything bad; you drag it to obey Allah while it drags you to disobey Him and opposes you when you try to obey Him. It obeys you in the doing of what you hate to do. It oppresses when satisfied, complains when hungry, is angry when you are impoverished, and it is arrogant when you are wealthy. It forgets when it achieves [worldly] greatness and is inattentive when it feels secure. It is the companion of the devil. The similitude of the *nafs* is like the ostrich: It eats a lot, and when it is charged, it does not fly. And it is like oleander: Its color is good and taste is bitter. O Ahmad (S)! Dislike life and its seekers, and love the Hereafter and its seekers."

The Prophet (S) said,

"Lord! Who are the seekers of life and who seek the Hereafter?"

The Almighty said,

"One who seeks this world eats a lot, laughs a lot, and sleeps a lot, and his anger is a lot, too. He is pleased only a little. He does not apologize to those to whom he misbehaves, nor does he accept the excuse of those who apologize to him. He is lazy when being obedient [to Me] and courageous when disobedient. His hopes are high and destination is near. He does not hold himself accountable; he is of little benefit while being talkative. His fear is little and he is quite happy when it is time to eat. The seekers of this life do not express thanks at the time of ease, nor are they patient at the time of affliction. What people consider a lot to them is a little. They praise themselves for what they do not do; they claim what is not with them; they talk about what they hope; they mention people's faults and hide their merits."

The Prophet (S) said,

"Lord! Is there anything else wrong with the seekers of this life?"

The Almighty said,

"O Ahmad (S)! The faults of the seekers of this life are many. Among them are those who are ignorant, who are fools, who do not humble themselves to those who teach them, and they consider themselves wise while those who know regard them as stupid.

O Ahmad (S)! The countenance of the seekers of goodness and of the Hereafter is kind; their modesty is a lot and foolishness is little; their plotting is little. People are at ease on their account while their own souls are wearisome. Their speech is balanced. They hold themselves to account, wearing them out; their eyes sleep but not their hearts. Their eyes are tearful and hearts are in remembrance. When people are recorded as oblivious, they are written among those who remember. At the beginning of a bliss they praise [their Lord] and at its end they thank [Him]. Their supplication is raised with Allah, their speech is heard. The angels are happy on their account. Their supplication runs under the veils. The Lord loves to hear their speech just as a mother loves her child. Nothing distracts them from Allah for a twinkling of an eye, nor do they want plenty of food, or plenty of talk, or plenty of clothing. In their regard, people are dead while Allah is Living, Subsisting, Great. They call upon those who depart from them back to their generosity and seek those who approach them with kindness. Life in this world and in the Hereafter is one to them. People die once, while each of them dies seventy times a day because of self struggle and opposition to what he desires even though Satan runs in his veins. If the wind moves, it shakes them, yet when they stand before Me, they are like a strong building. I see their hearts being occupied by no human; therefore, I swear by My Dignity and Greatness, I shall let them live a good life:

If the soul of one of them departs from his body, I shall not send the angel of death unto him, and none shall seize his soul except Me, and I shall order the Gardens to be decorated, the *huris* with large lovely eyes to be wedded, the angels to pray, the trees to produce their fruit, the fruits of Paradise to be more accessible, and I shall order a wind from those that blow under the Arsh to carry mountains of camphor and fragrant musk to become fuel without fire to accompany him as he enters, and there shall be no veil between Me and his soul. At the time when his soul is seized, I shall say, 'Welcome to your return unto Me! Ascend with honors, glad tiding, mercy, Ridhwan and gardens wherein they shall have a lasting felicity where they shall abide forever; surely Allah has with Him a great reward.' Had you only seen how each angel takes the soul and passes it on to another!

O Ahmad (S)! The people who seek the Hereafter are not pleased by food ever since they came to know their Lord, nor any calamity occupies their minds ever since they realized their sins. They weep on account of their sins, they wear their souls out and not seek their comfort. The restful time of the people of Paradise comes at the time of death, and the Hereafter is the restful abode of the worshippers. Their tears that overflow on their cheeks solace them and their sitting with the angels, on their right and on their left, and their soliloquy with the Great One Who is over His Throne. The hearts of the people of the Hereafter are inside them afflicted with ulcer; they wonder saying, 'When shall we get a rest from the vanishing abode and go to the abode of eternity?' O Ahmad (S)! Do you know what the ascetics shall get from Me in the Hereafter?"

The Prophet (S) said,

"No, Lord."

The Almighty said,

"The beings are resurrected and questioned during the accounting, while they remain safe from all of that. The least that I shall give the ascetics in the Hereafter shall be the keys to the gardens, all of them, so they may open whichever gate they wish, and I shall not veil My countenance from them, and I shall let them enjoy the hues of pleasure from My speech. I shall let them be seated in seats of the truth, and I shall remind them of what they had done, how they were exhausted in the short life, and I shall open for them four gates: one for gifts from Me to enter upon them in the morning and in the evening, one from which they look to Me however they wish without any hardship, one from which they look at the fire and see how the oppressors are being tormented, and one from which the maids of honor and the *huris* with large lovely eyes enter upon them."

The Prophet (S) said,

"Lord! Who are these ascetics whom you have thus described?"

The Almighty said,

"The ascetic who has no house to be ruined so he feels agonized because of its ruin, nor a son dies so he grieves for his death, nor extra food about which he inquires, nor a soft outfit.

O Ahmad (S)! The faces of the ascetics are yellowish because of the exhaustion of the night and the fast of the day; their tongues tire except when mentioning Allah Almighty; their hearts are in their chests stabbed by their frequent opposition to their desires. They have made themselves lean because of being silent for so long. They willingly exert themselves not because they fear the fire, nor out of their eagerness for Paradise, but because they look into the domains of the heavens and the earth and come to know that Allah, the Praised and the most Exalted One, is worthy of being adored."

He (S) said,

"Lord! Do you grant all of this to any from among my nation?!"

The Almighty said,

"O Ahmad (S)! This is the rank of the prophets and the truthful from among your nation and from other nations and people from among the martyrs."

He (S) said,

"Lord! Who are the most numerous, the ascetics from among my nation or those of the Children of Israel?"

The Almighty said,

"The ascetics of the Children of Israel among those of your nation are like a black hair in a white cow."

He (S) said,

"Lord! How can this be while the number of the Israelites is much greater than that of my nation?"

The Almighty said,

"It is so because they doubted after being convinced and reneged after having testified."

The Messenger of Allah (S) then said,

"I, therefore, praised Allah and thanked Him a great deal and supplicated for them saying,

'Lord! Protect them, have mercy on them and safeguard their creed which You accepted for them, and bless them with the conviction of the believers beyond which there is neither doubt nor shirking, piety beyond which there is no desire, fear beyond which there is no inattention, knowledge beyond which there is no ignorance, reason beyond which there is no foolishness, nearness beyond which there is no distancing, submission beyond which there is no cruelty, remembrance beyond which there is no forgetfulness, honor beyond which there is no humiliation, patience beyond which there is no disaffection and clemency beyond which there is no haste.

Fill their hearts, Lord, with the feeling of being shy about You so they may be timid on Your account at all times. Show them the perils of this life and those of their own selves and the hissings of Satan, for You know what my *nafs* contains; You know what is unknown.'

The Almighty said,

"O Ahmad (S)! Hold tight to piety, for piety is the zenith of the creed, the middle of the creed, and the seal of the creed; piety brings a servant closer to Allah Almighty.

O Ahmad (S)! Piety is like the earrings among the jewels, the bread among the foods. Piety is the head of belief, the pillar of the creed. The similitude of piety is the ship: Nobody is safe [from drowning] except those who are in it; likewise, no ascetic is safe except through piety.

O Ahmad (S)! No servant ever came to know Me and humbled himself to Me except that I humbled Myself to him.

O Ahmad (S)! Piety opens unto the servant the gates of adoration, so he is honored with the Creator, and it gets him to reach Allah, the most Exalted, the most Great.

O Ahmad (S)! Take to patience, for the most sound of hearts are the hearts of the righteous and those who take to silence, and the most ruined of hearts are those of folks who talk about things which do not concern them.

O Ahmad (S)! Adoration is ten portions nine of which is seeking what is permissible; so, if you succeed

in making sure that your food and drinks are permissible, you shall remain in My protection, under My care.”

He (S) said,

"Lord! What is the beginning of adoration?"

The Almighty said,

"The beginning of adoration is silence and fast.”

He (S) said,

"Lord! What is the legacy of fast?"

The Almighty said,

"Fast lets one inherit wisdom; wisdom lets one inherit knowledge and knowledge lets one inherit conviction. Once a servant reaches conviction, he does not care about how he starts his day, whether in hardship or in ease, and when such a servant is in the state of dying, angels stand at his head:

In the hands of each angel is a cup of the water of al-Kawthar and a cup of wine. They give his soul to drink till his stupor and bitterness are gone, and they convey to him the greatest glad tiding and say, 'Good, you are, and good is your abode! You are going to the most Great One, the Wise, the Near One!' His soul will then fly away from the hands of the angels and ascend to Allah Almighty faster than the blinking of an eye, and no veil, nor a curtain remains between it and Allah Almighty, while Allah, the Great, the Sublime, is eager to receive it.

It sits at a spring near the Arsh, and it is said to it, 'How did you leave the world [behind]?' It will say, 'My Lord! By Your Greatness and Honor! I know nothing about life! Since You created me, I remained fearful of You!' Allah Almighty will then say, 'You, O My servant, have said the truth; your body was in life while your soul was with Me. You are in My view, I see what you hide and what you reveal; ask Me and I shall give you, and make a wish, and I shall be generous to you by granting you this Paradise of Mine which you desire, and this is my neighborhood, so live in it.'

The soul will then say, 'Lord! You made me know You, so I was enriched by it and did not need besides it any of Your creation. By Your Greatness and Honor! Had Your pleasure been that I should be cut to pieces and be killed seventy times in the most severe way whereby people are killed, achieving Your Pleasure would have been more dear to me. How can I like myself while I am helpless unless You honor me, vanquished unless You grant me victory, weak unless You strengthen me and dead unless You give me life through Your remembrance? Had it not been for your covering, I would have been scandalized the very first time when I disobeyed You. Lord! How can I not seek Your Pleasure while You have perfected my reason till I came to know You, to know right from wrong, bidding from forbidding,

knowledge from ignorance and light from darkness.'

Allah, the most Great and the most Honored, will say, 'By My greatness and Honor! I shall not have a veil between Me and you at any time; thus do I fare with the ones that I love.'

O Ahmad (S)! Do you know which living is the most pleasurable and which life is the most enduring?"

He (S) said,

"No, Lord, I do not."

The Almighty said,

"As for the pleasurable living, it is that of one who never ceases remembering Me, nor does he forget My bliss, nor is he ignorant of My right. He seeks My Pleasure day and night.

As for the enduring life, it is that of one who labors for [the good of] his soul till life becomes worthless in his eyes and diminishes while the Hereafter becomes magnified; he favors what I desire over what he desires; he seeks what pleases Me, respects the right of My greatness, remembers that I know all about him, so he remains vigilant in the night and the day whenever he does anything wrong or commits any act of disobedience. He purifies his heart from anything that I hate. He hates Satan and his hissings and not permits any path for Satan to his heart.

Once he has done all of that, I shall let his heart be occupied by love, so much so that his heart becomes Mine when empty and when full, and I will then be his main concern. His speech will be of the blessing which I bestowed upon those whom I love from among My creation. I shall open the eyes of his heart and of his hearing till he hears with his heart and looks with his heart at My Greatness and Honor, and I shall let life be straitened on him and let him hold this life in contempt and hate every pleasure in it. I shall warn him against life and everything in it just as the shepherd warns his flock against the places of perdition. When he becomes as such, he shall flee away from people and be transported from the abode of extinction to the everlasting abode, and from the home of Satan to the home of the most Merciful One.

O Ahmad (S)! And I shall decorate him with awe and greatness, for such is the pleasurable living, the enduring life and the status of those who are pleased. If anyone acts upon My pleasure, I shall let him stick to three merits:

- (1) I shall acquaint him with appreciation that is not mixed with ignorance,
- (2) Remembrance that is not mixed with forgetfulness, and
- (3) Love wherein he does not prefer to love creatures over loving Me.

When he loves me, I shall love him and open the eye of his heart to see My Greatness, and I shall not hide from him the elite from among My creation. I shall address him in the darkness of the night and in the light of the day till his talk with the creatures stops, and he stops keeping them company.

And I shall let him hear My speech and the speech of My angels and inform him of the secret which I kept from My creation. And I shall outfit him with the outfit of modesty till all beings become shy of him, and he shall walk on the earth forgiven, his heart aware and seeing, and I shall not hide anything from him, whether of felicity or of torment, and inform him of the horrors and hardships which people will have to endure on the Day of Judgment, how I shall hold the rich and the poor to account as well as those who are ignorant and those who know. I shall let him sleep in his grave and send him *Munkar* and *Nakir* to ask him, and he shall not see the adversity of death or the darkness of the grave and the tomb, or the horror of leaving the grave. Then shall I install the scales for him and spread his record, and I shall place his book in his right hand; he shall read it wide open, and I shall not let between Me and himself any interpreter, for these are the merits of those who love Me.

O Ahmad (S)! Let your worry be only one; let your tongue be only one, and let your body be alive so you may not be oblivious of Me. Anyone who is indifferent to Me, I shall not care in what valley he shall perish.

O Ahmad (S)! Use your mind before it is gone, for anyone who uses his mind does not err, nor does he oppress.

O Ahmad (S)! Have you not come to know for what thing I have preferred you over all other prophets?"

He (S) said,

"No, Lord, I do not."

The Almighty said,

"I favored you with conviction, with good manners, with being outgiving, with being a mercy to the beings; so are the pillars of the earth: They did not become pillars except thus.

O Ahmad (S)! If a servant feels hungry, and if he safeguards his tongue, I teach him wisdom even if he may be an unbeliever; his wisdom will be evidence against him and perdition. If he is a believer, his wisdom will be light for him, proof, healing and mercy; so, he shall know what he did not and see what he could not. The first that I shall let him see will be his own faults so he will be distracted from the faults of others, and I shall let him see the minute things of knowledge so Satan may not enter upon him.

O Ahmad (S)! No part of adoration is dearer to me than silence and fast; so, whoever fasts but does not safeguard his tongue is like one who stands for prayers but does not recite anything [any verses from the Qur'an]. I will then grant him the rewards of standing but not those of the worshippers.

O Ahmad (S)! Do you know when a servant becomes an adorer?"

He (S) said,

"No, Lord, I do not."

The Almighty said,

"He becomes so when seven merits meet in him:

- (1) piety that shields him from committing what is prohibitive,
- (2) silence which suffices him from what does not concern him,
- (3) fear which every day increases his tears,
- (4) modesty whereby he feels shy of Me when he is alone,
- (5) eating what he has to,
- (6) hating the world because I hate it,
- (7) and loving the righteous ones because I love them.

O Ahmad (S)! Not everyone who says he loves Allah truly loves Me till he takes what only sustains him, wears less than what he really needs, sleeps prostrating, prolongs his standing [for prayers], takes to silence and relies on Me. He weeps a lot and laughs a little. He opposes his desires, takes the mosque as a home, knowledge as a companion, asceticism as a fellow, scholars as loved ones, the poor as companions, seeking My Pleasure, fleeing from the disobedient ones, keeping remembrance of Me, always praising Me, fulfilling his promise, remaining sincere to his word, his heart remaining pure, purifying himself with prayers, exerting himself in doing what is obligatory, desiring the rewards with Me, fearing My torment and remaining as a friend and companions of the ones whom I love.

O Ahmad (S)! Had a servant of Mine prayed as much as the [beings in the] heavens and the earth pray, and had he fasted as much as they fast, eating as angels eat [and angels do not eat any food], wearing as much as those who have no clothes wear, then I see in his heart as much love for the short life as the weight of an atom or as much as it is spacious, or coveting authority in it, ornaments or outfits, he shall not be My neighbor in My abode, and I shall take away from his heart any love for Me, and My peace be with you and My mercy, and all praise is due to Allāh, Lord of the worlds."

I have seen in some books the *Isnad* of this tradition; thus did Imam Abu Muhammad son of Ali al-Balkhi say, citing Ahmad ibn Isma'yl al-Jawhari from Abu Muhammad Ali ibn Mudhaffar ibn Ilyas al-'Abdi from Abu Nasr Ahmad ibn 'Abdullah al-Wa'iz from Abu al-Ghana'im from Abul-Hasan 'Abdullah ibn al-Wahid ibn Muhammad ibn 'Aqil from Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Hatim the ascetic in Syria who quotes Ibrahim ibn Muhammad quoting 'Abdullah ibn 'Abd al-Rahman from Abu 'Abdullah 'Abd al-Hamid ibn Ahmad ibn Sa'id from Abu Bishr from al-Hasan ibn 'Ali al-Maqri from Abu Muslim Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Maqri from Imam Ja'far ibn Muhammad al-Sadiq (as) who cites his father quoting Imam 'Ali ibn Abu Talib saying that this was the request put forth by the Messenger of Allah (S) to his Lord in the Night of Ascension, mentioning a similar tradition, up to the end of the narrative.

Topic Tags:

Hadith al-Qudsi [4]

Miraj [5]

Ascension [6]

Category:

Hadith Collections [7]

Person Tags:

Prophet Muhammad [8]

Featured Category:

Introducing Islam [9]

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