

## Light on the horizon

Today as we look upon a world that seems to be increasingly out of control on the path of self-destruction, I can hardly blame anyone who feels depressed about it. We the people, feel helpless to change conditions or rulers or their decisions and actions, which at least in our democracies are all done in our name. Yet we watch in horror, anger and despair, while all kinds of oppression is disguised and camouflaged in pleasant sounding jargon, the product of wordsmiths who appear to be the most sought after professionals, especially by every oppressive dictator. We want change to happen, and we want it to happen fast. The question to ask is, what are we willing to do about making it happen?

The first thing to do is to remember that we are in a race; we are living the test; we are on a journey the end of which is Jannah In-sha-Allahﷻ. We didn't come here to relax or have a holiday. We came here to work. We came here to demonstrate to the world a way of life that leads to peace, harmony and happiness in this life and Jannah in the Hereafter. The thing to do is to stay on the path. That is why Allahﷻ taught us in Sura Al-Fatiha, to ask for steadfastness on the path. On this path, every test is a graduation point with the difference that there is no punishment. We are given the right answers in advance, we get rewarded for trying, our mistakes are forgiven and what we have left is the lesson, as the prize of that test. While we are in the test, our dua is accepted and Allahﷻ sends His blessing on us. That is good news.

Allahﷻ told us two reasons why He tests us and taught us what to do when we are tested and what the result of that is, if we follow that path. He said:

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ  
وَالثَّمَرَاتِ وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ

الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمُ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ  
أُولَئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوَاتٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُهْتَدُونَ

*Baqara 2: 155 And certainly, We shall test you with something of fear, hunger, loss of wealth, lives and fruits, but give glad tidings to As-Sabirin (the patient ones).*

*156. Who, when afflicted with calamity, say: Truly! To Allah we belong and truly, to Him we shall return. 157. They are those on whom are the Salawat (blessings) from their Rabb, and (they are those who) receive His Mercy, and it is they who are the guided ones.*

Let us reflect on this. Allahﷻ told us three things:

1. That we **will be** tested
2. How to respond when **we are** tested
3. What the result of behaving in this way **will be**

We don't and should not ask for tests. But when we are tested, if we behave with dignity, don't complain and remember that all that we have is from Allahﷻ and to Him is our return, then we will receive Allahﷻ' s blessing and forgiveness. Ask, 'What is the value of that in Dunya and Aakhira?'

Allah ﷻ told us another reason that we have problems. He told us:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ

*Ar-Ra'ad 13: 11 Allah will not change the good condition of a people as long as they do not change their state of goodness themselves (by committing sins).*

So, we must introspect and ask ourselves what we did to attract the anger of Allah ﷻ? I don't think that needs too much effort. **“the answer is blowin in the wind.”**

Allah ﷻ also told us why He allows this to happen.

ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُمْ بَعْضَ  
الَّذِي عَمِلُوا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ  
قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلُ كَانَ  
أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُّشْرِكِينَ

*Rum 30: 41 Evil (sins, calamities, disease, etc.) has appeared on land and sea because of what the hands of men have earned (by oppression and evil deeds), so that Allah may make them taste a part of that which they have done, in order that they may return (by repenting to Allah, and begging His Pardon). 42: Say (O Muhammad ﷺ) Travel in the land and see what was the end of those before (you)! Most of them were Mushrikun (polytheists, disbelievers).*

وَلَنذِيقَنَّهُمْ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ الْأَدْنَىٰ دُونَ الْعَذَابِ الْأَكْبَرِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

*Sajda 32: 21 And verily, We will make them taste of the near torment (i.e. the torment in the life of this world, i.e. disasters, calamities, etc.) prior to the supreme torment (in the Hereafter), in order that they may (repent and) return (to Allah ﷻ).*

See the mercy of my Rabb, even in this; that He does the equivalent of a slap on the wrist, to warn us not to put our hands in the fire. The small punishment which itself seems so massive and unbearable, reminds us of the real punishment that we can save ourselves from if we repent.

My brothers and sisters, Allah ﷻ made this world a place of cause and effect. To get something, we must do something. Results are proportionate to effort. Allah ﷻ promised results to those who make the effort. And our own life experience shows us that this is true. So, let us stop complaining and look at what we need to do, to get the results we want. Rasoolullah ﷺ's life gives us the blueprint for action. Trust in Allah ﷻ and make the best effort possible. No shortcuts, no games.

Since difficulties are the result of our evil actions and disobedience, then it follows that changing our ways will result in the changing of our circumstances. Islam doesn't stop us from creating and implementing strategies of this world, but it draws our attention first and foremost to the cause of success or failure of any strategy and that is the help of Allah ﷻ.

A strategy that has the help of Allahﷻ is bound to succeed while one which doesn't have the help of Allahﷻ is destined to fail. As a Change Leadership Consultant in my corporate role, let me tell you the three critical steps that we, individually and collectively, must take to succeed in our turnaround strategy.

1. Face the brutal facts
2. Connect with Allahﷻ and device a strategy that pleases Him
3. Prepare to work with steadfastness for Allahﷻ' s pleasure alone

We will speak about these things in more detail in the future. For now I will suffice to simply list these three steps for your reflection and consideration.

Let me begin with a word of hope. Allahﷻ assured us:

سَيَجْعَلُ اللَّهُ بَعْدَ عُسْرٍ يُسْرًا

*Talaq 65: 7 Allah will grant after hardship, ease.*

And then He said something even more hopeful and wonderful:

فَإِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا  
إِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا

*Al-Sharh 95: 5. So verily, with the hardship, there is relief, 6. Verily, with the hardship, there is relief (i.e. there is one hardship with two reliefs, so one hardship cannot overcome two reliefs).*

We can understand that ease follows hardship. But what is ease **with** hardship? Ask yourself what is your reflex action if you stub your toe? I am asking you as Muslims. We don't say, 'Ouch!' or use other less polite expressions or expletives. We say, "Allahﷻ!" As a little boy, when I would stub my toe or get hurt, my mother would say, "Dua karo, dua karo." She would tell me to make dua because Allahﷻ grants the dua of the one who is suffering. We don't ask for suffering, but it is a great comfort to know that when it happens, Allahﷻ accepts our dua when we are hurting. Ask Allahﷻ.

Remember that suffering is not confined to Muslims. Everyone suffers. But we have the benefit of knowing that we can call on Allahﷻ who is Living and Established (Al Hayyul Qayyoom) and is All-Powerful (Wahuwa A'ala kulli shayyin Qadeer). He is able to order anything and do anything He wills (Yaf'alu ma yasha wa yahkumu ma yureed). He is the One who hears and sees (Huwa Samee ul Baseer) and knows what is in our hearts (Wahuwa Aleemum bi dhaatis sudor). He is aware of our condition and provides us as He wishes.

اللَّهُ لَطِيفٌ بِعِبَادِهِ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَهُوَ الْقَوِيُّ الْعَزِيزُ

*Ash-Shura 42:19 Allah is very Gracious and Kind to His slaves. He gives provisions to whom He wills. And He is the All-Strong, the All-Mighty.*

He is Allahﷻ. There is nobody worthy of worship other than Him.

So, the first thing to do when we are suffering is to make dua for relief. Allahﷻ promised to answer our dua and He will do so at a time which is best for that. That is why we must keep making dua and not give up and say, "I have been asking for so long and nothing happened, so what's the use?" It is our job to ask. And to keep asking until we receive. That is faith.

Abu Huraira (RA) reported: Rasoolullahﷺ said, *"Every one of you will have his duas answered, as long as he is not impatient and says: I have made dua but I was not answered."*

In another narration, Rasoolullahﷺ said, *"The slave will continue to have his duas answered as long as he does not ask for sin or cutting family ties and he is not impatient."*

They said, "Ya Rasoolullahﷺ, what is its impatience?" Rasoolullahﷺ said, *"He says: I have made dua again and again, but I have not seen an answer. He becomes frustrated with that and gives up making dua."* Bukhāri & Muslim (*Muttafaqun Alayhi*).

The antidote to frustration is to remember what I said in the beginning; we are on a journey; this is a race the destination of which is Jannah. Our job is to keep steadfast and to keep walking, no matter how slow. And remember that our Rabb is watching, helping, and pointing us out to His Malaika. For despite our weakness, we don't give in because we have faith in Him.