

THREE DAYS FOR HALIMA MUSTAPHA

OF

MUHAMMAD SA'IDU JIMADA



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INTRODUCTION

In the name of Allah the Compassionate, the Merciful, the Only One deserving of worship and Preserver of all things and affairs. Perfect Peace and Blessings be upon His Messenger, his family, his companions and all of those who consciously stick to his model guidance. Amen and amen.

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, Who is irresistible as He makes His Will come to pass according to what pleases Him, with justice and love. Peace, Blessings and rewards be upon everyone and all believers who Allah enabled to make the last chapter of the life of Halima in this brief world, between her hospitalization and the condolences that followed her beautiful burial.

My very personal appreciation and gratitude to non-Muslim faithfuls who were specifically supportive with good testimonies of her lived character.

My utmost personal gratitude to Allah (SWT) who gave me Halima Mustapha from her primary school days at Ndayako to Saturday 27th April 2019, when He admitted her ahead of me to *Barzakh*. How can I be grateful enough, when I can still strive to join her to continue to blissful eternal life He has made freely available for whosoever chooses? Indeed the favours of Allah (SWT) are immeasurable. And I am one who continues to realize, recognize, appreciate, understand and witness them. Halima is one. Yes, Halima is part of it. No, both. Yes, at the same time.

This is NOT a remembrance that is commonly known, because it is not a recall or mere outline of personal things and affairs. I intend it for much more than that. I do not cling to anniversaries because they are necessarily subjective, to the person, the family, the group or even nation. They are at best, entertaining. It is also not the usual condolence of love and appreciation for public image. It is not a calling of office that an aide can scribble for even the enemy of his boss when death calls or that of the boss who is really relieved of the enemy.

This is a reflection on the total truth that continues to reveal itself from all angles for close observers. I am doing this for my personal goodly reference, my immediate family members that I head and all believers who care. Many have experienced the same, more, better. I am only recording mine. And I will be fulfilled if ONE person finds it worthy. This may be one of my wives. This may be one of my sons. This may be one of my daughters. This may be one of my wards. This may be one of my friends. This may be one of my relatives. This may be one of my associates. This may be one of my brothers or sisters in Islam.

May Allah (SWT) grant me and members of my family who stick to the Path of guidance His Forgiveness, His *Rahma*, His *Ni'ima* and *Noor*.

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6th May, 2019.

IN THE BEGINNING

She lived at Bida with her parents and was in school. I was in post primary school. They came to Minna and she was in the company of her mother. I saw her and took a liking for her. I informed my backing-mother. She simply replied that: you can have her if you do not change your mind. Then I went to Bida to spend part of my leave. I found out their house and visited. I visited and told the mother that I love her daughter. She said: I will inform the father and there should be no problem. I followed it up with gifts.

Then I went to the university. She was in Minna and decided to put up with my backing-mother. We met and we exchanged pleasantries. I asked her of her full names and in what class she was in and what school. She told me. We exchanged gifts.

Then she wrote her common entrance examination and passed. I was doing my vacation job with Ministry of Education. I approached my boss to get her fixed. He said I will be in the Team to place those who passed. We were taken to Kontagora to do it and I was in the group for filling up vacancies in girls' schools. He came around at the tail-end of the exercise. He asked me if she passed. I affirmed. He asked for the name and school and I gave him. He gave the name and school to our leader to fix her in Women Teachers College, Minna.

I had completed my undergraduate studies and was posted to Plateau State. I was doing my primary assignment at the Police Staff College, Kuru. She was in her final year. Then I received a letter by post. It was from her, stating at the end: I am now your wife.

Our gratitude and blessings of Allah (SWT) be upon our parents who took the responsibility of joining us free of our hustles. That remains princely and queenly. This now only appears to be the reserve of the royals, political giants, above average tycoons and questionable top technocrats. But it is not right. Indeed it is

a twist of mind that makes it so. Marriage should be simply bearable materially for all levels. This is why material possessions have not made it easier for the haves. And those who use them for reference inflict avoidable burden on themselves. In the end, the foundation is treated as the roof. How can it be comfortable? Praise be to Allah who has recognized and instituted A FREE GIFT BY THE MAN TO THE PROSPECTIVE WIFE. Special Peace and Blessings be upon *Rasul* who admitted a bronze ring and teaching of the Qur'an as dowry.

And she has remained my wife up to her time of transition. I must admit that it was pleasant in the beginning, through it and at *Asr* time of 27th April, 2019 up to past *Maghrib*, when I was assisted to lay her in her destined grave. May Allah reward those who prepared the grave and her burial bountifully. Already there is the provision of one *Qirat* for attending her prayer only and another *Qirat* for accompanying her to her grave. Should I not be grateful to Allah for this? Should the believers not be grateful for her serving as a window for such big rewards? The Face of Allah is there for us who enjoyed her company throughout her life and after death. A believer is always a source of Allah's blessings, in life and at death. This will be less, in the case of a woman who dies with the displeasure of her husband. This will be less, in the case of a believer whose death is considered as a relief. This will be less, in the case of a believer who the living hesitate to join in her prayer or escort to her grave.

We therefore started living together on our own. We were weaned to form a new union, a new home, a new family. And this was not by word of mouth. It was by living. My backing-mother who will worry if she has not seen me by sunset, did not pay us visits or delegate someone to do so, for fear or love of whatever. My father had no idea of where my house was. Her mother never stepped into our house even when she had cause to be in Minna. When her father fell ill, we went to Bida. She proceeded home ahead of me from where I parked my car. I met her returning to me. The father had told her that she has no recovery to give him and

should return to me immediately, without entering into his house. That was Mallam Mustapha. Her younger brother called on us with the air of his sister. I drove him away. Parents, in laws, relatives, friends or associates were not and did not become part of our marriage. I was the husband and she remained the wife. I am also not a good passenger of ceremonies train. Our intimacy and friendship was allowed to freely grow and develop with me as the leader.

This is the solid foundation that enabled us to build a new home and family. We had no misfortune of being guarded or struggling with guards. I have no sibling attached to by any instructions or choices who will interfere or be invited to interfere in our affairs. She had none either. Beyond this none of us had anyone who will feel safe to do so or be entertained for attempting so by our parents.

And this is neither difficult nor impossible to provide children by parents who believe and trust in Allah after doing their best, in obedience to Him. Has Allah not defined limits for believers? Is associating anything or anyone with Him Not exceeding our limits? Is this not detailed by all the things He has prohibited? Is the identity of a family not to rest primarily on the leadership of the husband and the supportive submission of the wife? Praise be to Allah Who has freed the children from living the lives of the parents, relatives, siblings, friends or associates. How can a pun on the game board of Chess become accountable? Not even the powerful queen is. This is why the moment the King is gotten the game ends. However, this can be difficult to offer or permit by the Ignorant, Selfish, Hypocrite or Ambitious parents. And if a new family or a member has the misfortune of such parents or cockroaches, building will not be a fun.

I can testify that we were lovingly satisfied with this impacts and have embraced it wholeheartedly. I specifically adopted restraining any man who asks for the hand of my daughter in marriage from thinking, worrying or committing himself to providing boxes or whatever. We admit only the dowry, materially. I have also

personally gotten married without giving any boxes, by understanding. And I have given out three daughters and gotten married to three women after Halima. I wish I can do more. But it will be sufficient if anyone can follow suit. I have respected those women my sons ask for their hands in marriage. We oblige without hesitation, according to the circumstance.

This is a challenge of attending to self-imposed burden that is strictly supposed to be out of mention because it should be optional. But because it is not illegal it has grown to occupy the status of what is obligatory. This development has made it such a burden that the objective and tradition of marriage is gradually being made difficult. And the consequences of this overstretch of what is not illegal is making popular abominable practices. The window is sex before marriage. Some observe *Id'dah* before marriage. Some do not and simply top up with being joined. And both produce the following generation. This is far from the standard of believers. And parents are to largely blame. The infrastructure for supporting this foundation abuse include, getting the money sufficient for the project, getting a job, attaining a safe rank in employment, etc. Protected sex then becomes a culture and productive sexual partner follows before production of a male heir etc. This process of destroying the foundation of purity of any generation is rarely in view when we face calamities and desire to connect with trust in Allah for the solution. And because Allah is forgiving, compassionate and does as He pleases, we deadly ignore or overlook the other Face of Allah. Is He not Just and records EVERYTHING for accounting? Does not Allah give leave to the evil doers to help them to the self-destruction they have chosen? Is the compassion of Allah not covering all His creations? How and why do we feel so safe, as we cross the LIMITS of Allah arrogantly in dangerously subtle manners? Where are the parents and the scholars?

Halima has been very supportive in ensuring that our daughters who have gotten married, learn to breathe freely with their husbands. And the parents of the wives

of my sons have not done less. None of my daughters doubts my ordinary disapproval of either making her home that of her siblings or my home her avenue for escape. My personal satisfaction with their husbands and trust in Allah is the basis of our relationship. No husband of my daughter is under guard and no daughter expects to be guarded against anything. Intrusion is out. We can only counsel at critical times or circumstances but NOT become part of their families. It will be shocking on the part of my sons to approach abuse of the trusts in their care. We are not envisaging approaching corrective actions or measures because these arise after mistakes. And I am grateful to Allah for my daughters, their husbands, my sons and their wives. Those to follow have examples of what is admissible.

But the story of this beginning or foundation that we had and have tried to reproduce couldn't have been in isolation of public arrangements. Our education was free. Indeed higher education was further supported with scholarship. And the leaders either knew or were guided and they worked with the guidance of building the members and wealth of the society. I recall that in the university, I opted to deposit about seventy percent of my scholarship with the university bookshop. Whenever I visited and pick materials, I approach the manager to deduct the cost from my deposit. Today, those who think that Information Technology (IT) is a cheaper option are ignorant of the fact that avoiding reading hard books is destructive of a part of human brain. While on long vacation, I will get a job. I will learn work and discipline in the process. I will learn to mix and relate. The father of Halima was a private craftsman. My father was a retiree.

The primary or fundamental purpose of government, governance or leadership is therefore to ensure that the VALUES of the society are protected. History is to build on what is on the ground that is cherished. And there is no excuse whatsoever. If the people believe in Allah and are cutting down His Limits, it will be unfortunate if they opt for a leader who has no respect for the values and it will

be irresponsible of the leader to watch the destruction or admit for them what will impact the same consequence. Even in a society where people do not believe or care about Allah, the leader will consider reading a book like WHY NATIONS FALL in order to guard against the traps or temptations. In our case, they will be better attracted to WHY POLITICIANS TELL LIES because they mistake burdensome responsibility for the opportunity to have fun. It is therefore not impossible to recover what we have lost. We do not need angels to come down to enable it. It is our responsibility. All we require is openness and sincerity of commitment. And everyone should be involved. It is a pity that the collapse of collective authority and responsibility propelled by Ignorance, Pride and shamelessness are weaving us into what we do not believe and is inevitably self-destructive.

The wool cover of population explosion is neither for believers nor intelligent humans. It fails to connect with the mightiness of Allah. Is He Who has created creations and provides sustenance for them in oversight of humans, His vicegerent on earth? For seekers who avoid the benefits of absolute guidance, have they not come to discover that the earth expands? Or do both imagine that there is no proportion in the amount of rain or sunlight or air that serve the creations in our space? However, if the limits of Allah are exceeded and His blessings are shortened, what do we consider must be the consequence? If we do as pleases us, then we must make do with the insecurities our compliance would have covered.

The government, governance, leadership, institutions, parents that cultured us and enabled us, are neither impossible today nor came from the moon. The difference is in the knowledge, discipline and orientation of the leaders and parents. The transition process that will enable the recovery of these along with upholding the benefits of our current ingredients of advancement will be COSTLY. The price is for payment across the board under the fair and judicial management of our

leaders. And it is impossible for the leaders to achieve this by excluding themselves from the payment of the price. It is both unreasonable and senseless to be in cozy comfort and really understand and feel poverty, regardless of the bowls of tears you can shed. This challenge of the leadership is more complex than the provisions and directions to project management, administration, management and leadership programs, courses, certificates or degrees.

SOME OF THE COVERINGS BY HALIMA

THE COVER OF INTIMACY

We are not logs of wood. And did not face hunger or starvation that would warrant mistakes of just any serving or gluttony or greed. The foundation of innocence is the beauty that attracts the blessings of Allah, overlooking trial mistakes. We had no knowledge of excesses and were thus saved from restraints connected to them. We were pleased with each other and I focused on my work. My work grew from one fulfilment to another. I had no worry of looking for who to marry. We both knew that my late maternal grandmother had made three proposals for me, but my backing-mother, my father and senior uncle had discouraged her.

Today it is not uncommon to have the partner or choice becoming a serious issue. Proposals by parents will either not be attempted or at a great risk of being declined. This is because the parties are old enough to decide on what is best for them. This is not completely wrong. But the absolute facets of having a fitting partner are more dynamic than fixed. I have therefore advised my daughters to for instance note that courtship beyond quality two weeks is not likely to yield any results. You can see your looks, know your residential addresses, your names, what occupations you are engaged in, your level of schooling and your parents. But the beauty of your combination is more dependent on your relationship in wedlock against circumstances that unfold, with time. For instance, no amount of interaction will reveal to the man if he will actually be marrying the woman alone,

along with her mother, along with her father, along with her siblings or associates or whatever, until they are joined together. The very same applies to the woman, whether she will be getting married to the man alone or with another or others. Take the presentation of either party. Is it not true that any of the parties can be appearing in borrowed outfits? Indeed beyond the risk of being led AWAY from the real truth of partnership, the blessed foundation required to build on may be overlooked or over-sighted. One party may not know that the other was born out of wedlock or not of known biological parents to those who present themselves as the parents. The partner in view can be a product of right parents who had the partner wrongly. Indeed we have cases where the parents presented are actually grandparents. While it is not the fault of the party, in Islam such are suitable only for their likes. If this is avoided, you will just be cross breeding of bodies in disregard of the flow of what Allah admits. But the implications are obvious. It is worse than repairing a car with a fake spare part or treating an ailment with an expired drug. So, where do we place, complexion, height, social background, level of schooling, employment, figure eight or hour-glass structure, six-pack muscles, bank account, voice or whatever of a partner?

I did not have to worry about cutting corners either by way of divided attention or tolerable dishonesty on assumption of work, to prepare for marriage expenses or get accommodation or meet the expectations or dictations of the prospective spouse or pay-back project of my parents or hers. Today, this can be a stubborn factor to deal with because of the common misfortune of misplacements. Maybe the combination of the blessings and my strive to be hardworking and honest opened wider windows for me. Those who were my contemporaries at Advanced Teachers College know that I knew no one from Adam. But I started at a middle management level and handled trusts of top management. These were in finance and administration. And the bridge was my often vacation job boss. Even those

who will define this as luck will admit that it was more than luck. My sponsor and new bosses were faceless and objective. Today, it will be more uncommon.

Is it not an absolute truth that, if you have an unstable family it necessarily impacts on your work? Is it not worse if the victim is a leader? Can we compare a leader who has to or often states his own side of a story or has followers choosing between him and his spouse for attention on matters relating to leadership against the one that is the focus of all and the spouse remains his informal support? The family resort of a man or a woman is always necessarily a critical influencing factor to the general ability of the husband or wife. The family does not cease to be critical after safe weaning of children from the parents. Halima fitted fairly well with me for the work I was engaged in. We joined right at the time for the right government. It enabled whatever productivity and level I can be associated with.

Halima is one. We are one, like many that have not been recorded. But without DOUBT, our likes are fading and we are worse for it. The parents, the government and leaders have to adjust.

THE COVER OF THE WILL OF ALLAH

It is either common place or not surprising when a couple get together to beget a child or children. However there is a serious difference between just having them and beginning with the search for them.

For Halima and myself, we got the blessing of children. All begets can be said to be blessings because there are no independent shops for getting them, and modern farming tricks have failed to provide equal assurance when compared to conception by sexual relationship. There is therefore a world of difference.

The will of Allah culminated in two boys followed by two girls. It was always fun to breastfeed them. There were options of getting a nurse, by law, but it did

not flash because Allah provided the milk. There was powdered milk for bottle feeding but the common trend was as a fashion or complementary. And each was at liberty of enjoying the full course of two years.

Neither myself, herself nor the two of us had a deliberate worry or program of having babies. It is entirely the choice of Allah. And it is the best approach. This is because children are a trust of Allah regardless of how pleasant you may find them. Every trust goes with the responsibility of due and diligent execution. This is why at puberty or maturity, sins and rewards are independently recorded. Accountability commences. Any who is provided is thus not a standard of superiority. Any who is saved of the trial is not a standard of inferiority. The standard of measure for believers is fear, love and closeness to Allah.

I have heard, read and even seen couples fighting for the custody of a child. But except the mother is sick, the child should reasonably and sensibly be allowed to be cared for by the mother, at least for the first two years of his life. After this, it will amount to undue politics. Wherever the child is kept, at maturity he will separate to be on his own. He will be accountable for himself. And if the fear is that the child will be negatively indoctrinated or influenced by the party, was it not the choice of the parents to come together? Why will the consequence be so scaring? And if any of the party will stand on truth, why the fear of tomorrow? In history, time opens up the truth inevitably. For believers, the party that stands on truth and fairness will never regret it.

It is for that reason a self-imposed burden to start with the notion that all women are fruitful. It is self-deceit to plunge into the belief that all child bearings are fulfilling. Have not children plotted the killing of their parents? It is insane to prefer one gender over the other. Is honour, responsibility or leadership the reserve of any gender? Not in Islam. We therefore escaped trial marriage to establish fruitfulness before joining. We escaped programming by myself,

ourselves and parents to have babies. We were healthy against gender preference. We had no plans to check the will of Allah, which is foolish, by setting the time from which we will be ready to have a baby. We did not resort to special prayers to have babies that often omits, BLESSED ONES. We did not resort to herbs, drugs, sperm banks, volunteer wombs and experts to have babies. We did not resort to orphanages or pay health personnel collaborators to have a child. There were no throw-aways for pick. You can only imagine the amount of time and resources now commonly engaged in the opposite direction of submitting to Allah and the consequences we have been building up. We abuse the limits of Allah, we appear to be achieving the same end some of the times and open windows of dry and painful livelihood for ourselves.

The growing pattern now is that, it is the read, the schooled, some of the learned, the haves and most of the leaders that are in the forefront of this DIVERSIONS. What then can we expect of the weaker and innocent or naive followers? The moment you miss the rightness of the beginning, you qualify for immediate correction or risk diverting or self-destruction by admitting ANYTHING that appears to lead to the same objective or result.

The blessings that the compliance of believers can attract covers a variety of benefits that Allah will permit. This can be Forgiveness of mistakes or wrongs committed to give way further or continuous admission of activities of the believer by Allah. This can be pleasure of Allah and opening more windows for benefits. This can be rewards reserved for claims and use in the hereafter. This can be physical or spiritual or a combination of the two. This is because whatsoever takes place between the heavens and the earth are with the knowledge and permission of Allah but only those consistent with His guidance are pleasant to Him. And He can choose those to overcome those in deviation. This is why He has assured believers that those who ask for His Forgiveness, he will grant His benefit of rainfall, children and wealth. The Path of Allah is therefore the right

and safe one. Those who deviate will find difficulties and the end results will only appear to be the same, like a sane and insane persons sleeping. Allah is consequently not far. But our choices determine the quality of results we can get for our benefits in this world and in the hereafter.

THE COVER OF PRIVACY

Privacy in marriage is the foundation for the identity of the couple or family. It is the positive discrimination of what differentiates the union from another individual or union. I know and Halima accepts by recognition that we have an honourable identity. I did not marry her along with her siblings or parents or associates. She also did not get married to me along with my siblings, parents or associates. The limits were known, respected and kept to, by both parties. And all others stick to it.

I am never the subject of discussion with anybody by her, in our house, in their house, at her place of work, at any occasion she is in attendance, in Niger State, Kaduna State, Sokoto State, Federal Capital Territory, Abuja or any other place for that matter. It is not my trade in respect of her, with anyone anywhere. We had no cause to take our matters to any third party or invite or entertain the intrusion of any such party in our marriage. The much that anybody or people know about us is that we are one. We have no problems. This is not because we never had disagreements. Indeed they were very few. And when we do have them, we easily resolved them by her submitting to my choice or preference. She consistently trusted my sense of judgment in the first instance, in all matters. In the very few cases where she still differed it was very easy for me to side with her.

It is very possible ALL THE TIMES because we never disagreed for up to a quarter of daytime. We will interact. We will communicate. We will express ourselves. We will eat together. I will not be on the run and return only in the

night or avoid the house completely. It is never herculean to say: I AM SORRY, by either party. Indeed I had to say it more. My heart never skips to head home. We had most of our time to ourselves. My house is not a social centre for anyone to just pop in at leisure. Even social centres require tickets and programs to admit people.

This is personal discipline for the development of marriage relationship. It does not mean that we know it all, every and all the right things to do, without help. No. But we have sufficiently knowledgeable and disciplined parents that remained our primary or principal point of reference, along with what we were learning. The parents will often say: Do not involve me; Go and sort it out together; So what? The position of Islam is . . . ; and I am not interested.

The most embarrassing, disgraceful and irresponsible experience that the marriage of a family can be exposed to, is volunteering its affairs to others or welcoming others for entertainment with their affairs. This is against Islam. And the parents or siblings or associates who are either neutral or actually promote such are evil parties to the marriage and family.

The implication of this is that children require to be EDUCATED and the parents must play the role of good reference. In a situation where the parents do not have the right knowledge and discipline and further fail to help their children to acquire the same, the misfortune and consequences will be immeasurable. Livelihood will become a gamble by orientation. This is why in Islam the husband has a superior responsibility of ensuring that the wife is put on the right course of Islam. If this is absent or weak, it will impact on the children if they become so blessed.

THE COVER OF SUPPORTING IN THE EDUCATION OF THE TRUSTS

Myself and Halima had been exposed to learning the right knowledge and discipline in the meaningful traditional way. To be entrusted to a Special Teacher.

This is the beginning of the difference. To send a child to a school is somehow different even though the children attending the two are attending schools. The one is personal and the other is formal. The possible relationship and attachment between the student and the teacher in one is most likely to be faster and genuinely developed for the total development of both parties. Who says a teacher cannot learn from his student? In the formal set up, the quality of relationship in learning is measured by record of performance in the curriculum.

We learned in the state of submission. Not on chairs, like the teacher. It was therefore a logical and sensible orientation, not to stand like a horse before the teacher when interacting. The difference of age, stature, knowledge, recognition and discipline did not need to be learnt differently, about the teacher. And he needed to strive to keep it by continuous discipline as against a cardboard certificate. Teaching and learning was a REAL living relationship between the Teacher and the student.

This was good and many went far in the process to learn the Qur'an in rote terms, then the translation and commentary, Hadith, *Sirah* of the Prophet (SAW), Jurisprudence, etc. I already knew that the full blown tradition is for the parents to begin the teaching. The children will then be entrusted to a teacher in a field and then in another field, etc. I recall that late Ambassador AbdulRahman Mora was still teaching his grandchildren when I met him in 1992 in Zaria. And he was not a regular teacher. I do not know how many emirs, imams, *Qadis*, etc. who do this. And they are the marrows of the Ummah. The Teachers still have the tradition of entrusting their children to other teachers for reasons of strong discipline.

We were therefore involved in teaching the early arrivals the very basics. But pure schooling was competing for time and relevance in the upbringing of children. Our luck was the availability of the then Islamic Education Trust School

and the means to pay. The drawbacks of what we could do and those that necessarily go along with schooling were not too badly worsened. The proprietor is a trained or professional teacher who transformed into a *Qadi*. He had gone through the type of traditional learning background we experienced. His supportive wife was a committed convert. I know him personally and was a good friend of my father. So, collapse was already on course. We simply gave up continuation and leaned on contracting those who followed to whatever Ahmed Lemu and Aisha designed. And those who were parents of their students will admit that they performed above board. The products remain the proofs.

But this collapse was the option to the failing ability or carelessness of the government, governance and leadership in responding to the educational needs of the young, as far as Muslims are concerned. The level of failure is appreciable, considering three related factors. The first is that knowledge must not be separated from truth and discipline as understood and upheld by a people. And in Islam, knowledge of compliance is absolutely necessary for every believer. What we were able to do was a middle way rescue. The formal schools that are primarily focused on seeming neutral knowledge and skills development inject some knowledge of religion into the process. And the standard of neutrality does not prohibit or restrain a Muslim from registering for Christian Religious Studies or a Christian registering for Islamic Studies. Such a student is not required to perform Salat. This arrangement has so much collapsed that, private schools are booming, with many not meeting the requirements of the government that owns and runs more bad ones. It has even become a challenge to ask leaders to send their own children to public schools as a sign of care. Many abandon their children to schools outside our country and beliefs. The bomb came in 2019. The president was helplessly saying that his heart bleeds when he sees an ALMAJIRI. The President. Today, it is as serious or as hopeless.

Both Muslims and Christians who are believers get easily scared by the size of those affected, those coming up and the negative consequences they impact. But the solution is not in the number per se. Reducing the number by tricks will definitely not give the desired results. The truth is that for believers who start a family to be virgins is fine. However, it is not sufficient. They require to be minimally educated or knowledgeable and disciplined. And they cannot do it without the society and government. But what are the Ruling characteristics of what we have today, with parents, children, society and government? The few that escape this bastardized setting are still vulnerable to being trapped in the evil values of the collapsing system. No one, a parent or leader, can give what he does not have. And you cannot build what you do not know. What we can never fail to do is to build fine structures and arrange for good feeding of people like farming animals. However even with food, scientists are coming to terms with Organic production as safer and humane. Americans who over produce foods and even destroy to control monetary value have failed to escape from fattening and the health consequences. No creature or tricks can run away from Allah or the truth.

To know and understand the problem is a good step requiring will or determination to solve. This is our challenge as believers. This is our challenge as parents. This is our challenge as leaders. The choice is ours.

THE COVER OF PERSONAL COMFORT

This is the common aspect that cannot be lost sight of even by fools, the ignorant, the wicked, the arrogant. I try as much as possible to provide halal products for our food and drink. I have never had a situation where Halima will ask if what I brought was halal. And I happen not to have been cultured with eating and drinking, of impressive varieties and levels. We are both from modest backgrounds.

Halima cooks well and knows my favourites. She is also not resistant to new dishes. For instance, while we are comfortable with swallows, amala is close for adoption but we also enjoy *edikan ikong* of the south-south with safe adjustments. The same with drinks. I therefore, along with my family members enjoyed safe feeding from her hands.

It is not uncommon for Halima to dress up and ask me: Have I changed from when you first saw me and when we got married? I often will say: you are more mature and just fitting to please me. We were not into distinctive makeups to fit. She is fine without any and was superb with a little.

With dressing, I am never fed up with seeing her in long gown. I normally do not shop clothes for her. But when she does, she takes care to consider having it sewn into a gown. And whenever I personally do, I will not forget to make the point that it must be a gown. When it comes to hijab, we prefer the overflowing type. I have heard people calling it: it is Islam calling, in Hausa (*musulunci ke kira*).

Halima is a fair house keeper. She will keep the house. We neither had house help nor grownup kids to do it. Rarely, I will give a helping hand. I never knew a dry cleaner or the service, with her. The fact that we had a few did not matter. It is a matter of discipline. Couples lower than us in status were into the service, in our neighbourhood.

It is not news that, beyond a handful of couples there are environments where feeding the family is such an issue that it has qualified for academics. Some argue that raw foods is sufficient responsibility of the husband. For others, it must be cooked food. This has generated the culture of house-help by those who can afford or providing daily sum for feeding – especially the lunch. Feeding the husband with cooked food has become a favour. These may not be illegal but are ordinarily uncalled for in our setting.

These are pure and simple. They also give fulfilment. But in their absence, the bad condition can be worsened at great expense. Those who consider it a duty and stick to celebrating birthdays and anniversaries cannot escape pains that cannot be shared. When what is human and therefore superior fails to be satisfied and what is inferior, because money can provide takes its place or is used to cover up or makeup, it can only be enjoyed in pretence. When truths are reversed, the consequence cannot be the same result. Minus honeymoon, birthdays and anniversaries, life can be very fulfilling.

Should I not be grateful to Allah who gave her to her parents? Should I not be grateful to Islam that permits our joining? Should I not be grateful to our parents for enabling our marriage? Should I not be grateful and remember Halima for her commitment? There is no room for failure because the chapter is closed and she has passed. I have heard of testimonies of her providing foods and clothing to deserving people. It is good and Allah will reward her. But mine is the most critical with Allah, her parents and me. And I have certified it.

THE COVER OF SINCERE BELIEF

In Islam, to believe is only the first stepping level of a member. It is like securing admission or an employment. However, the characteristics of a believer is a wide range of attributes that form a livelihood. Members compete in covering as much of the scope as possible. But there are ruling attributes that network all others. For instance, a believer should treat all humans as he will wish to be treated. He should be loyal to his superiors. He should pray in congregation. These are all required to be done sincerely. Sincerity is defined as **FOR THE SAKE OF ALLAH**. This means a genuine commitment irrespective of personal prejudices. It is therefore not abnormal or uncommon to have a believer who is not sincere. This may be out of ignorance. Islam makes the knowledge of Allah and religious practices compulsory in order to lay the foundation for possible sincerity. It may

be informed by hypocrisy. This is why in Islam, it is the believers who are hypocrites that will be admitted to the bottom of the hell fire, below unbelievers, disbelievers and misbelievers.

When I was to get married again, I had NO headache from Halima either by words or actions. She trusted my judgement in getting involved. She will await my submission and if she has any comments, she will make. And I always responded responsibly on the terms already decided by Allah and His Messenger, to which both of us belong.

This was one level of sincerity. Allah permits it for me. She comes from a polygyny family or background. I come from a similar background. I have at times heard and even read that in Islam, monogamy is the rule and polygyny is the exception. The explanation is that IF you fear that you will not be just, then marry one. But the definition of justice easily falls into crisis of either expecting to be as just as Allah or real avoidance of the challenge of justice. This has led to making polygyny illegal in some societies or by convention. Such societies that are either anti-Islam or genuinely striving to be as free as air, have even created polyamory as a new word. But in the science of society monogamy, polygyny and polyandry are the limits. Thus in real life situations, we are faced with little and dropping interest in justice. Justice is for the government or the powerful. The Qur'an begins with marriage of two, stops at four before the option of the fearful of justice – the back benchers. The question of the non-guarantee of justice in a monogamous marriage rarely crosses the minds of such argumentation.

It is therefore hypocritical for any believer from a background like ours to fuse about what is properly legal. An ambitious Emir once mistook book knowledge and his fancy, to twist proper compliance. He proposed to have a law that will require approval of authority for the practice of polygyny. He was lucky to be ignored. It is a sign of the fear of poverty that Satan flashes. But it actually

amounts to recognizing and admitting all the rot standard we are on, to reduce the impact. As if Allah has no connection or ability for the goal we are seeking to establish.

Halima did not use her children or the wards entrusted to us, against the admission and comfort of the wife I bring in. Her siblings have no business in this. Her parents are nowhere near it. It is however not uncommon to have a sibling of the wife at home to conjure irresponsible stories about the woman he or she does not know, to negatively influence the sister. And the sister will be a fool to welcome or fall into such misguide. The parents will not be less hypocritical if they reserve or hesitate to give plain support.

Indeed Halima had on one occasion suggested that I marry a friend and colleague of hers because of her impressive attributes. I cannot exactly recall why I declined. I told her of an attraction I have for one goodly woman. She admitted that she knows her. She has no objection, except that, she may take me away from her completely. I dropped the idea. But she welcomed a woman I proposed to marry when she visited. I even got her to meet her parents. I got married to a woman and Halima visited her at their home. It is instructive that they always compete in the recitation of the Qur'an in the month of Ramadan.

Halima never nursed, suggested or attempted to change the rules or routines of our family livelihood for whatever reason or sense. Without words or actions, Halima recognizes, respects and submitted to the simple fact that every wife is an independent identity with me. There is neither the empty popular ambition of being the senior, administrator nor deputy husband nor do I understand it. And she EARNED the respect of any party who has respect. It is therefore not part of my recognition to have a boss by either appointment or volunteer. And I thank Allah for the benefits it has yielded. I cannot adjust to having a volunteer tin-god between individuals equally in my trust. I am the husband to everyone.

It is not uncommon to have a family set aflame because the husband is proposing to marry again, within limits. The wife in secure marriage may even go insane. And there will be many volunteer supporters to help loosen her knots. Indeed some husbands shock the wife with sudden marriage, for fear of the crisis. And a few have dissolved the marriage or made life impossible for the entire family. This is certainly not Islam. Why should a wife who is blessed with children transform her children into mercenaries against another wife or even the husband? If they are believers, they will be very lucky to have the mercy of Allah, to answer for the tall sins before their return to Him. And because with time, it can become a habit, since she will be rewarding them with approval, they may be returning to answer the sins again and again or for a long time. And eavesdrop in a day may attract a month's inconvenience or loss of rewards of quality worship. What of a frown or grudge against the father? This is how children born good, innocent, believers are turned into agents of Satan by the parents or one of them. While recovery is not unlikely, the life of the child has been wasted. It will be for the lucky child to part way. But an unfortunate one may hang on even when it is evident that the mother loses and loses, over and over, again and again. This may be a lesser evil to the one who uses or engages whatever means, physical, social, material, political or spiritual means to disrupt, disorganize or dis-enable what Allah enjoins. It is like resisting Allah and His Messenger. And the clue of the weight is that, although Allah permits divorce on strictly honourable terms, He hates it. And *Rasul* dissociates himself from whoever dishonours or abandons his tradition. Unfortunately, both evil practitioners engage in the same range of methods.

And for the woman seeking to join a man already married, some can be so desperate as to wish or work for the death of the wife misbelieved to be the obstacle. Ignorance or insincerity or both have veiled the captain or Satan. In truth, none taketh life except Allah. It can neither be extended nor delayed. And

whoever muddles himself or herself up with any seeming undue death, would have saved the victim a lot of sins. And what fool will accept to bear such burden, except a lost person, deaf and dumb to what is right, who will not return. May the curse of Allah and the angels be on the outright hypocrite who are at war with Allah and His Messenger.

Praise be to Allah who has protected me against such ignorance and hypocrisy with Halima.

THE COVER OF IDENTITY

Halima on her own, by expression or engagement, with me or with others, at home or outside, does not send a questionable or doubtful signal about being a Muslim, being a woman and being married. People further accept her for what she is because she respects others as they choose to be.

This is the basis for cautioning, advising or quarrelling with our trusts. Her response is therefore predictable by any child, over what is clearly wrong or of doubtful status. Of course after disallowing and advising, she distances herself from it.

She serves as a modest model that is pleasant to me, sincere members of the family and whoever cares. If you ask her about anything and she does not know, she will tell you exactly that, immediately. If she does, she will share with humility, especially when she is aware that there is a competing understanding. Her prayers and recitation of the Qur'an and voluntary fasting on Mondays and Thursdays are not concealable.

When she is out, it is either to her workplace, her school for learning, to the market or to my parents. If she has cause to travel to Bida, she will request me in good time. This is because I have the notorious inclination of declining consent, when the request is coming shortly after a visit had been granted. In such

circumstances she will prepare my mind for it, by informing me of the activity or what will warrant it. Although I had not declined any, it was centred around her immediate relatives or mine. And she managed the liberty of other choices, by the grace of Allah.

Halima is not crazy in receiving or adopting just any new or fanciful idea or thing. I recall a particular incidence. Someone who is well known to her brought a parcel for me and she asked of the paper to sign. The person said it was not a mail. She said I was not in, but can meet my Secretary in the office. The person was interested in why she could not collect an ordinary gift for me, even when she knows him. She said, she is my wife and was not asked to collect gifts for me. If he was not known to her, she would have just said that I am out and may return later. The security of such disposition, is the conscious protection of my identity with her. Moreover free gifts rarely come in special packages or conveyed by strangers or commonly with middle class workers. In respect of ideas, she had asked me, how Islamic can possessing a motorcycle for commercial purposes be? I admitted that I am not an economist or finance expert. However, the way I see it practiced is inhuman and can produce animals or dishonest and disgruntled people in the relationship. I do not see it impossible for one who buys the motorcycle to agree with the rider on mutually profitable terms. The bought motorcycle is an asset. The labour for making it generate money is an asset. The maintenance is a cost to be shared as well as whatever is over. And after the recovery of the full cost of the motorcycle, the rider could have it or the sharing of benefits be restructured. Specifically, the owner of the motorcycle should draw less. She said what if it continues to making additional fifty percent of the cost of the motorcycle before releasing it to him? I replied that it will not be evil. The implication of this lifestyle is that, she has a standard she is protecting and NOTHING should abuse it. It is an absolute truth that, those who have NOTHING TO PROTECT are most vulnerable or tempted to ACCEPT ANYTHING.

Conversely, those who have something to protect, goods or values often have the intelligence to be cautious. Only fools jump at new things with known or unknown risks of affecting what they always have.

We were therefore safe with the campaign or propaganda of Family Planning or Planned Parenthood or contraceptives or whatever. When we were exposed to seeming free gifts of condoms for men and for women, it did not take time for us to evaluate the implications to naive and ignorant believers. Positive discrimination is the basis for identification and intelligence measure.

All of the above covers were enabled by right knowledge and discipline in a supporting environment. Discipline requires doing the right thing at the RIGHT TIME. The Qur'an and Hadith define the superiority of believers by their QUICK commitment to what is right and disposal of what is wrong or doubtful. This was the superiority of praying believers who heard one that had prayed with *Rasul*, that the *Qibla* has changed. They turned from facing Jerusalem to Makkah. And one criteria for best deeds is praying at its early appointment time. Timeliness in doing what is right is the first trademark of a believer.

In family relationship, Halima gave me a comforting experience. She will not ask me questions about what to do, she will just do it. It is not prohibited to ask. But it reveals a level of uncertainty or immaturity. And it can be irritating when it becomes a habit. It can be fun if it is not a habit or on obvious serious matters. It can be fun to ask, if a film of Shakespeare is to be watched, between a comedy and a tragedy. But not when to go to bed, when you have no standing Doctor's instruction. Halima will consistently provide food and drink at the right time, most of the times. And it will be fresh product and not defreezed. This is discipline.

When an individual becomes careless about timeliness, he unknowingly drifts to irresponsiveness before irresponsibility. The reference in Islam is that a person

who gives service or has worked needs to be paid before his sweat dries up. This is a most natural definition of promptness. For that reason, one wonders when a believer is a leader, why will wages and pensions not be paid as at when due, when the funds are available. But some workers have remained unpaid for months and pensions for years. This is what personal indiscipline can transform into by such a leader.

Thus, who can say that the family is not critical for the making of an individual and to our national leadership? Who can separate Allah from the process, for believers? The greatest misfortune that can befall an individual is carelessness about time or its abuse. If we are to do as we please without respect for time, we will be worse than animals. The creature at maturity who rapes a child is not a human being and worse still, who cohabits with same gender. If the woman was old enough, it may be normal rape. If with pay, it may be prostitution. But not between husband and wife.

FROM HER LAST CHAPTER

Halima then took ill and went for medication. She was not fully recovered and was advised to see a doctor, especially because she is maintaining her blood pressure. Then she slipped. At the hospital, she was committed to bed rest because of the level of her blood pressure. This is the best mankind can start with.

She was given a bed. And that was it. But the hospital is a public one. The hospital is equipped to above average level. The hospital is sufficiently manned by competent health professionals and personnel. But her portion was their questionable discipline. There was no strike. And she was there till the following day. A personnel then indicated that a physician may become available before noon. Responsibility was taken for her and she was taken to Federal Medical Centre, Bida. She was admitted and a team attending to her. Within two hours she started responding and paralysis was ruled out. The next course, was

normalization of the level. She even asked that her phone be switched on to keep in touch. I objected.

Between these, Prayer is the only instrument available. She is here but we are not close enough. Allah is closer than the jugular vein. I asked Allah to grant her physical body and spirit goodly recovery and strength. To free her from the grip of whatever is it that is the problem that we know or do not know. I was on this with the best formula for pleading with Allah that I know. Then I realized that while nothing is wrong with my plea by the meaning of words, there is still room for Allah to rightly do as He pleases without failing to answer my pleas. If He relieves her and she returns to my arms, it is consistent. If He relieves her and admits her to His Forgiveness, Compassion, Mercy and Light, it is consistent. Since this realization, I ended my prayer with, IN WHATEVER WAY IS BEST. This is true and sincere love unfolding, even though with tears. Halima and I have committed ourselves to Him to the best of what He has enabled. This was not a time to turn away. I submitted before it happened. So, when I was informed that she could get help with oxygen, I expected that Allah, the Subtle chose her for Himself before me.

Before then I was grateful to Allah for the goodwill visits. And there were many of them, beyond what was healthy for her. May Allah reward them. Of particular note was those who had the choice not to bother, but came to see her.

Then she was prepared for prayer. Before then I encouraged those around to come and pray for her soul. They obliged me and I took the courage to express my personal satisfaction with her. And I prayed with the plea that He grants her His Forgiveness, Compassion, Mercy and Light. This was at middle prayer time, a goodly time. She had been made ready after Maghrib. The Imam of my ward was given the honour to lead the prayer. The standard is to ask for the acceptance of the believer and close with permitting Allah to decide because He knows His

slave best. After *taslim*, I said: O Allah, I am her husband, under whose feet You have placed her salvation and paradise. I grant it to her, with Your permission and Will.

It was peaceful. Prayers and positive testimonies and commendations were being whispered. This was by the menfolk and the women. She was escorted by hundreds of men between Maghrib and Isha to her resting grave, where I also held her to lay her body down. Then a *Nasiha* speech. And prayers. A brother tapped my shoulder to pray again. I stood down and asked for the same things. On getting to the entrance I turned back to pray again for all the inhabitants.

I did not announce her death or invited anybody. At their house they prayed for her. The same at my ward. It happened at my father's compound. Hadiza and Ummi Amina were engrossed in praying for her. Hadiza specifically responded by the wish of having a daughter to name after Halima. It is a response to genuine positive impact. Did I not name one of my children after her father? In the case of Ummi Amina, she submitted that the case of Halima is clearly satisfactory. It is a challenge to meet up like her, to be with me in *Jannah*. It cannot be better because, for her I am already set for *Jannah* with Halima. The Prophet (SAW) had indicated that one will be with whom or those he or she loves most. Different parties did it at my residence. GogoFati commissioned it at Kaduna and Zaria even though she was just through with surgery. In Zaria several compounds held the prayer, including those of my guardian and their successors. In Kano two close friends and their families did it. The parents of Ummi Amina did it twice. It was done at different mosques. Should I not be grateful to Allah? Why should I not trust in Allah for the Peace, Blessings and Safety of Halima? Praise be to Allah for recognizing and accepting before now, that Allah is the Absolute Truth and submission to Him is the wisest thing to do.

Of course, every believer who dies does not completely lack those to pray for him. But there are levels or differences AFTER WHICH ALLAH DOES AS HE PLEASES. One bottom line is that certainty rests as the reserve of Allah. But most people will want their dead one to meet with the Peace and Blessings of Allah. Interestingly, the relatives are not enough because no one lives in isolation. This is why a modest number of forty is recommended for praying over a believer and escorting him. It is hoped that one or more of the people will be sincere believers that Allah accepts their witness. This rules out a believer who dies and testimonies of his life are negative or his passing on is a relief to the people. In this case, it is not comforting, regardless of the thousands that may be present.

I was therefore very curious and not just taken away by the number, positions or spread of those who expressed sympathy and condolences and prayed. I felt comfortable by those who volunteered to do so, especially if in my evaluation, they had the option not to do so. These are distinct from those who have no choice but to do so. Genuine ones among them may not be easily discernible. And in both cases, those who are known to be reasonably and sensibly knowledgeable and disciplined will come first. This is why in charity giving, it must be permissible and the best is characterized by two things. The right hand gives without the left knowing. The second is giving to the needy who does not ask or before he asks. *Alhamdu liLahi* there were a good number of this.

Another standard, is the amount or weight of commitment or contribution. There is no rule that says, for a prayer to be accepted, it requires to be expressed more than once. It is hence not insufficient for those who will respond or greet, along with the simple and popular prayer of: may Allah forgive her; may her soul rest in peace, etc. But the tradition of Muhammad (SAW) is that you never tire of asking. It is like, you can ask till you get it. Those who therefore committed more time, more prayers, on their own or along with others are logically and sensibly more inviting.

At the end of the day, our goal, is having the prayers accepted. And since, the discretion is entirely that of Allah, who is best informed about the individual He has called and we wish Peace and Blessings for, we can safely rest on hope after optimally meeting certain conditions. The first is avoiding to trade evil for good. A known evil person may contract prayers for himself to some people after his death. That is not normal for analysis or comments. What is normal is to support a missed goodly person. This means that good should support good. This state of consistent sincerity is required for prayer. In *Salat* it is known as *khushoo*. In *iman* it is known as *ikhlas*. And it applies to only those who are clean in their forms and pure in the spirit of their activities. This is rarely achievable by humans in a haste. May Allah reward those that fall into this category who prayed for Halima, abundantly without measure.

This is why I specifically asked a few people to support me with prayers for her. It is not conceivable that I will invite an ignorant or careless brother or sister or teacher or friend or associate to do so.

After these, why should I not trust that I can hope for the Compassion and Mercy of Allah? Indeed after her death, like in many other cases, it is not impossible to dream with her or about her. But Islam has not left us helpless. Only Prophet Muhammad (SAW) cannot be impersonated by Satan. After this, every good dream by a sincere believer is from Allah. Every evil one is from Satan. Should I then get confused by narrations? And who can be closer than me and children from her loins? One of my late guardians even appeared in a dream to recommend prayer for her. Should I not be grateful to Allah?

But in our times, not even death is a sign for fear and humility. The knowledge we acquire fails to match with the ordinary discipline that should be our orientation. I have heard of cases where a believer will die and camps of believers will be about fighting over who will pray for the dead. This is neither funny nor

responsible. I wondered if any of the camps Imam that will pray over the dead, will create a format varied from the standard. I also wonder if the prayer by the Imam of a particular Camp has the guarantee for the forgiveness of Allah. I wonder if the dead had specifically expressed that a particular believer should pray over him. I wonder if the best among believers has adjusted from the most fearing of Allah. When the dead is incapable of physical relationship, why will fellow believers politicize his covering for Allah? What if the person had died at Makkah? Praise be to Allah that Halima did not have to go through this ignorance, hypocrisy, politics or rascality.

At burial, other than *Nasiha*, praying for the dead can be resisted. The tolerant ones walk away. I wonder if the prayer was canonical. This is distinct from visiting graves and pleading with them. Is visiting graveyard not a good tradition? Is praying for the inhabitants not what gives value to the visits? Is praying for the inhabitants as one passes by not commendable? Does praying for the dead anywhere save the dead from the discretion of Allah? Is praying in the premises of a graveyard the same as praying in a toilet? If Arabs greet by embrace, does that make shaking hands abominable? Why should one who stands or prostrates to an elder be out of the fold of Islam? I have heard that prayer at home is even questionable. Did *Rasul* not return home to pray for his uncle who declined declaring for Islam? Was the definition of the limit by Allah not that, it is not befitting for *Rasul* and the believers not to pray for unbelievers? Does that help to dissuade believers from praying for fellow believers at home?

It does not stop there. When believers choose to attend a prayer session for the dead who is also a believer, sending peace and blessings upon the Prophet (SAW) generates another problem. Except it is a familiar format, it is not supported. But this is laughable to common sense. Are the words defaming? Is there an instruction that these must be done in a particular format otherwise it will be unacceptable? Is there any one framed by other believers that are known as

persons who indulge in major sins? But we will quote enemies of Allah and Muhammad (SAW) to drive a point home.

Is it impossible for believers to find out the truth, the middle course and to follow it? What kind of culture and orientation are we building with these patterns? Where are our Scholars? Where are our Leaders? Where are our Parents? Where are our Teachers? We are heading for self-created and imposed doom, with this trend. We all have the individual responsibility to find out the truth. I have for instance not heard or learned about anyone having used *istikhara* to dismiss a format of sending peace and blessings on the Prophet.

The death of Halima is a close eye opener to things that complicate simple Islam. I thank Allah for escaping the scratches.

May Allah keep me on His course that is straight along with His Sincere slaves. The most perfect Peace and Blessings be upon Muhammad (SAW), his household, his Companions and all who stick to the Path, without prejudices.

Amen and amen.

LESSONS FROM THE DEPARTURE OF HALIMA

It is not new to have a woman, a wife, a mother and a believer dying. This has been happening to many families and continues to happen. To complete the identity, she is also, in the family she comes from, a daughter and a sister. And other hang-ons are as a cousin, niece or aunt. Of course, she was a student and a teacher. She was a customer and an employee, etc.

But for death, her identity as a believer remains the most critical. I recall a Christian colleague of hers at Hilltop Model School, Minna testifying that whenever Halima was on her own, she will be reading the Qur'an. Mustapha, named after her father had wondered: in her last two years, her relationship with the Qur'an and fasting now appears as if she was preparing to leave. When she was in the hospital, she asked: if it was time for prayer. Those who visited prayed to Allah to heal her. An Imam prayed over her corpse. Those who gathered for her prayed for her soul.

Arising from this is the question: If belief stands out critical at the time of death, why is it so? The simple answer is that we cannot be Muslims without the belief in life after death; accounting for our deeds in this life; and ending up in *Jannah* directly or after a cleansing passage in *Jahannam*. In other words, every person who has up to an atom weight of belief in Allah and His Messenger will undoubtedly end up in paradise according to the status granted him by Allah. This informs the popular prayer that, may one die with the declaration of faith as one's last words. It is also recommended to be repeated as a reminder and invitation to declare it by associates in the presence of the sick or dying. And a volunteer to support the Prophet in Jihad asked, if he was to proceed or declare faith first. He was guided to declare first. He did, proceeded and attained martyrdom.

But who will not mind 'resting' in Hell Fire before being admitted into paradise? It is only intelligent to mind. It is neither in conception nor in experience inviting

to serve as a bellow for the Fire that is sixty-nine times superior to the quality of the furnace we can generate or witness in this life.

Therefore, the first lesson is to recognize the critical value of having faith and keeping it or sticking to it, to the end of one's life. This falls in line with the guidance of the Prophet (SAW) that, the end or last status of faith is what matters. In the history of Islam, there was a credible jihadist who unfortunately ended up in unbelief because he committed suicide. The challenge here is WHO HAS AN IDEA OF WHEN, HOW and WHERE one will die? If one cannot establish, then we should not be foolish. This is because, the grades of *Jannah* are numerous. For that reason, it is unreasonable to just care for the last or least grade. Indeed the requirements for the last grade is known only to Allah, Who will admit His slaves out of Mercy. All we know is that a believer will be the last to be admitted, beginning with crawling out of the Fire. What we also know is that those favoured with long life will not have any excuse entertained by Allah – for not submitting to Him.

The logical deduction from this is that, striving for the best for eternity is the most rational and intelligent pursuit for a believer, as long as he remains alive. And attaining this by the grace of Allah WITHOUT VISITING HELL FIRE. Between death and crossing the bridge to paradise, there are already more than enough concerns to overcome FOR MANY OF THOSE WHO WILL NOT VISIT HELL FIRE. The Questioning in the grave is the starting point, upon rising, the movement to the Judgement space is another, before the total cleansing of remnants of filths not sufficient for visiting Hell. Those who will fall into the Hell Fire that will be lying below in waiting will be those who will not gain direct admission into *Jannah*.

The second lesson from this is that, no one will bear the burden of another and no one holds the right or authority to ADJUST what one has earned. This is most

instructive from two related submissions by the Messenger of Allah for guidance. The first is that, not even him can save anyone from the wrath or punishment of Allah. The second is that he is not in a position to ascertain the safety of anyone from the anger or wrath of Allah. He made this pronouncement when a companion was buried and a close associate of the dead expressed the belief that the dead had succeeded because of what they knew of him. This does not invalidate the fact that good testimony for the dead by a generality of believers is a false indicator. It only means that real safety is in grades. And these range from being a believer to being granted *Jannah* which are also in grades. The stages that one will pass from death to *Jannah* are the reserve of Allah. For example, some will answer the questioning Angels with ease, be flown to the Judgement space, rest under the shade of Allah, will not be questioned and will cross the bridge of *Sirat* as swiftly and safely as lightning. This is against some who will pass the questioning, ride to the space and will have either greater weight of good against evil deeds or the precarious situation of losing good records to pay off evil committed or being narrowly saved by one who has lost hope of safety and offering his only good record to enable a deficient one attain safety.

A third lesson from this is that, the arrangement for attending to a believer that dies and is available, is the best. The Imam prays over the corpse, asks for the mercies of Allah and surrenders the final decision to Allah who knows the believer better. And forty number of believers is recommended for the congregation. It is hoped that one or more of them may attract or enhance the mercies of Allah for the dead because of his genuine status of godliness. Fellow believers who will join have rewards to be granted and even doubled for those who accompany the corpse to the grave. Over and above this, there is no harm in praying for the dead. Indeed, it is enjoined. This is why every believer who prays for the good of another who is living or dead, the angels ask Allah to grant the person the very same. And children can be a bonus source for continuous benefits

of the dead. In the circumstance where the believer dies in the land of unbelievers and he is unlikely to enjoy this, the prayer can be conducted for him in absentia. This was why the prayer was conducted in the Ka'aba for late Maulana Madudi.

The fourth deduction from this is that, as goodly as after-death arrangements are or can be, the submission of a believer and living on the terms of Shari'ah is the first and best standard for safety. Whatever follows after death SHOULD BE A BONUS. Even if one is to have fellow believers paid or forced to enable the best after-death arrangements and protocols, it is NOT the foundation for safety. No believer must then get fooled by the mere number of after-death participants that can be gotten or is actually witnessed. The quality of the members by the criteria of purity and fear of Allah – witnessed by fellow believers and before Allah are what matter.

A fifth lesson is that, belief and the company of believers is the assured foundation for these possible bonuses. Having physical or biological children CAN ONLY BE. After all, they are a trust. If they qualify and pray for the parents it will be wonderful. But not even an instruction before death will be an insurance for such benefit. The very same applies to relatives and associates. Do we not see mosques named after Umar 1, in Nigeria? This is Iman. Do we not name our children after Prophet Muhammad or members of his household? This is Iman. Those who had no children are not assuredly at any disadvantage because those who had require that the children are fitting for the attention of Allah. Accordingly, the tradition in Islam is that, other than children, spreading right knowledge and discipline of what is right and *Sadaqatu Jariya* are additional windows for investment, while alive.

A sixth lesson from the death of a sincere believer is that, while alive, one should do his utmost in KNOWING his religion and COMMITTING oneself to the utmost to it. The challenge here is separating what is right from what is wrong.

For example, the Prophet (SAW) has guided that the STRAIGHT PATH will become divided into Seventy Three BUT only ONE will be right. A believer must not be fooled or engage in fooling others by WHAT IS NOT CERTAINLY KNOWN. And the first error will be by referencing anyone before Muhammad (SAW), who lived the Qur'an. It will further amount to irresponsibility to quarrel or fight over what is not fundamental. Accordingly, it will be hypocritical to downplay or ignore or abuse what is fundamental.

The seventh deduction from the above is that, the first step to Right Knowledge and Discipline of what is right IS NOT WHAT IS WRONG, BY ALLEGATIONS. Rather it must be WHAT IS RIGHT BY FIRST ORDER. This is what the Qur'an has provided, how the Prophet (SAW) practiced, instructed it or noticed it and did not object to it AND the consistency of this with the four guided Caliphs. And these have been satisfactorily recorded and transmitted from the generation of Muhammad (SAW) to two generations after him. It will be too ambitious to start otherwise as those who admit or sense differing will be inclined to do. It will amount to self-deceit to follow such without satisfying oneself that such claim is consistent with the first necessary step.

The eighth lesson is that every believer has his or her family members as a priority burden or interest to guide. And who will be lost and be qualified to guide to safety or destination? Neither ignorance nor confusion is suitable for guidance. This is why parents are enjoined to save their families from the Fire. It is literally impossible to do so without right knowledge and discipline of what is right. No fundamental misfortune can befall a child greater than having and being misled by an ignorant or confused parent. This informs the ruling of Allah in the Qur'an that, parents are entitled to obedience. However, if they cross beyond the provisions of Allah, they deserve no obedience. Both the parents and the children will return to Him for Judgement.

The ninth instruction is that, the Scholars have the superior responsibility and burden of education in the Ummah. Education here connects knowledge and living it and using it for decisions and guidance. This is what will qualify a scholar for envy and attraction to be like him or her. The Prophet identified such a person as a beloved of Allah. And everybody can strive for this, to the utmost of one's abilities. Accordingly, those who are in the wrong course even by living abuse of the right knowledge by indiscipline are warned. For instance, those who flaunt it for show will be in the forefront to meet the anger of Allah. What more of those who call to good and save it for themselves? This will be two-faced.

The tenth is that all resources, riches, wealth or endowment available to any believer is indeed only a temporary trust. This is why in Islam a very elaborate terms and conditions of managing them are provided. The ones that are halal are distinct from those that are haram. The approved methods that are halal are made distinct from those that are haram. As with the acquisition so it is with use for self and others or investments. It is a tradition of Islam that a believer constantly updates his Will. Indeed, upon death, the terms and conditions are so defined that the more are left behind, the greater the burden of compliance. Thus, debts are preferred to be settled even before the burial of the person. The Prophet (SAW) had asked his companions, who will prefer to amass goodly resources for his heirs? They expressed wonder and the foolishness to do so. He then affirmed that, what is yours is what you use up. And the Messenger of Allah died in that best state. He left behind only the Qur'an and his Sunnah, for the Ummah. His successors are the Scholars on his Path. This is why those who were most generous, very sharing but outside the right discipline like humility, will equally be in the first class of hosting in the Hell Fire.

The eleventh instruction is for political leaders who are believers. Any of these will get lost if he believes or acts outside right knowledge and discipline of what is right. It must be appreciated that because, with authority, what is right can be

easily spread by understanding and force, mislead or nonchalant or selfish or mischievous leadership is FULLY ANSWERABLE. Ignorance will not be an excuse. Arrogance will be worse. Pretensive timidity is not acceptable. A leader cannot know what he needs to do, avoids it and asks that Allah enables him to do it. A leader cannot claim to care, in tears and blocks the paths for getting guidance. This is the key qualification for the very same first class for damnation by Allah. It is the worst because it connects with the rights of fellow men, his oaths, his promises etc.

In summary, verily, everyone of believers MUST SEEK FOR THE RIGHT PATH and is a Shepherd. If he does not know the path, how can he attain safety and lead others to it? Blessed be those who care and are careful.