

CRISIS IN GAZA

WHAT TO MAKE OF IT?

Gaza is a land blessed by Allah SWT as He SWT said in the Qur'an:

Exalted is He who took His Servant by night from al-Masjid al-Haram to al-Masjid al-Aqsa, whose surroundings We have blessed, to show him of Our signs. Indeed, He is the Hearing, the Seeing. (Al-Isra 17:1)

Traditional Muslim scholars have always considered the blessed land of Palestine to be a 'thermometer' for the condition of the Muslim *ummah*. If we want to know how well the Muslims are doing spiritually, we can look at the land of Palestine and see what is going on there. Historically, whenever Muslims were living righteous lives upholding the rules of Allah SWT, and were involved in propagation of Islam and inviting others to the right path of guidance, the blessed land of Jerusalem and its surroundings belonged to them. Whereas, whenever we were weak as a nation in our obedience to Allah SWT, the land was captured by the enemies and Muslims were humiliated and tortured therein.

This is a critical moment of reflection for Muslims—individually and collectively. There are many lessons we can learn about ourselves from what is going on in Gaza today but first we have to transport ourselves from the *duniya* mindset to the *akhirah* mindset. Many people have questioned the wisdom of Allah SWT in allowing atrocities like this to happen.

OUR LORD IS MERCIFUL

So how can the Most Merciful Lord allow all this to happen?

The Messenger of Allah (SAW) told us that, "Allah has one hundred mercies, out of which He has sent down only one for jinn, mankind, animals and insects, through which they love one another and have compassion for one another; and through it, wild animals care for their young. Allah has retained ninety-nine mercies to deal kindly with His slaves on the Day of Resurrection." (Bukhari & Muslim)

Every living being has an appointed time at which they must die and go back to their Lord SWT. This time is decreed by Allah SWT and we have no control over it. We cannot dictate the age, time, and condition of the death of a person. All we can be sure of as Muslims, is that when our fellow Muslims die, they are going back to the Lord who has promised them immense mercy on the Day of Judgment. This mercy is even more extensive for *madhloomeen* or oppressed Muslims.

Prophet Muhammed (SAW) has said, "Fear the prayer of the oppressed, even if he is a disbeliever, for there is no barrier (between it and Allah)." (Ahmed)

What then about the prayer of a Muslim who is oppressed?

Allah SWT Himself has declared to the oppressed, "By My might, I shall surely aid you, even if it should be after a while." (Tirmidhi)

Rasul Allah SAW has said, "Verily, Allah gives respite to the oppressor. But when He seizes him, He does not let him escape." Then he (SAW) recited,

"Such is the Seizure of your Rabb when He seizes the (population of) towns while they are doing wrong. Verily, His Seizure is painful (and) severe." (Hud 11:102) (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Allah SWT can allow atrocities against innocent Muslims and they might die what we consider to be brutal deaths, but the reality of their afterlife might be completely different. Their deaths as oppressed believers while relying on Allah SWT and waiting for His support might earn them the highest levels in *jannah*. It is wholly because at the end of the day, this world is simply a testing ground. The tests differ for people; some might receive them in the form of oppression, injuries, pain, loss of health, wealth and family, while others might receive them in the form of comfort, luxury, wealth and family.

While keeping the success of akhirah in perspective, which trials are more severe, trials of ease or difficulty?

Trials of ease are certainly more dangerous for us!

How so?

When we are facing difficulties and realize that there is no one who can help us except Allah SWT, we get closer to Him and our faith in Him increases. This is a victory in itself. All a person has to do at this time is be patient and wait for Allah SWT to lift the calamity. If a person dies in this state, he is successful because He has truly recognized Allah SWT as his Lord and therefore has earned His SWT's pleasure.

However, when we are living in comfort and luxury, we tend to become pre-occupied with our material wealth and get distracted from our real purpose in life. Often this distraction results in us getting away from Allah SWT and our responsibility towards our religion. If a person dies in this state of negligence, though it might be on a clean hospital bed surrounded by his family, he is in a more precarious position in front of Allah SWT than an oppressed person who dies a brutal death at the hands of the enemy.

This is the condition of our *ummah* today! We are in two distinct groups today, oppressed and untroubled...yet.

UNTRoubLED...YET?

Muslims are an *ummah*! Allah SWT and His Prophet SAW have made us into one group whose members are responsible for each other's wellbeing. Rasul Allah SAW has said, "The

relationship of the believer with another believer is like (the bricks of) a building, each strengthens the other." He (SAW) illustrated this by interlacing the fingers of both his hands. (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Rasul Allah SAW also said, "A Muslim is a brother of (another) Muslim, he neither wrongs him nor does hand him over to one who does him wrong. If anyone fulfills his brother's needs, Allah will fulfill his needs; if one relieves a Muslim of his troubles, Allah will relieve his troubles on the Day of Resurrection; and if anyone covers up a Muslim (his sins), Allah will cover him up (his sins) on the Resurrection Day". (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Abu Bakr (RA) said, "O you people! You recite this Verse:

'O you who believe! Take care of your own selves. If you follow the (right) guidance [and enjoin what is right (Islamic Monotheism and all that Islam orders one to do) and forbid what is wrong (polytheism, disbelief and all that Islam has forbidden)] no hurt can come to you from those who are in error.' (Al Ma`ida 5:105)

But I have heard Messenger of Allah (SAW) saying: "When people see an oppressor but do not prevent him from (doing evil), it is likely that Allah will punish them all." (Abu Dawud and At-Tirmidhi)

We have been warned by the Prophet SAW against ignoring the responsibility placed on us towards our less fortunate brothers and sisters or those who are suffering at the hands of the oppressor. He SAW has said, "Whoever forsakes a Muslim, where his sanctity is profaned and his honor is assaulted, will be forsaken by Allah when he would like to triumph. And whoever stands by a Muslim where his sanctity is profaned and his honor is assaulted will be assisted by Allah when he needs His assistance" (Sahih al Jami)

This is why we say, untroubled...yet!

If we stay in this state of heedlessness and ignore the atrocities and oppression being carried out against our brothers and sisters all over the world, Allah SWT, the Just Lord, will soon afflict us with similar calamities and will not allow any help to reach us.

WHY ARE WE SO HELPLESS?

Even this question has been answered by our beloved Prophet SAW. He SAW said, ""The nations shall gather and team up against you (i.e., Muslims) as the predators gather and team up against their prey.

A questioner asked, "Is it because of us being low in numbers at that day?"

The Prophet SAW replied: "No, you that day shall be in great numbers, but you will be as powerless as the foam of the water on the surface of the river, and Allah shall remove any fear from your enemies toward you, and He shall put in your hearts *wahn*."

A questioner asked: "O Apostle of Allah, what is *wahn*?"

The Prophet SAW replied: "The love of life's amusements and the fear of death." (Abu Dawud)

If we read this hadeeth carefully and look at the condition of the *ummah* today, we will not need any further explanation about our situation. This is what has happened to us. We have become so materialistic that we have lost the very basic element of our deen...to prioritize *akhirah* over *duniya*.

CHANGE BEGINS WITH US

It is imperative for us to accept our responsibility towards our suffering brothers and sisters and do all what we can to alleviate their afflictions. At the same time we must accept ourselves as part of the problem. According to the hadeeth of the Prophet SAW mentioned above, Allah SWT is the One who has removed our fear and worth from the hearts of the enemy. We see during this current crisis in Gaza where enemy is lying through its teeth without any fear of repercussion or consequences. If this is not humiliation from Allah SWT for us, then what is?

If we want to change this state, we have to start with ourselves. Allah SWT has already told us,

Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves. (Ar-R'ad 13:11)

The problem lies within us and so does the solution! If we correct ourselves and take on the responsibility of carrying the message of Islam to others, Allah SWT will honor us just like He honored the companions of the Prophet SAW. These are the steps we all should take:

1. Begin our journey of faith. We have to learn about Islam, understand its message, and recognize what Allah SWT wants from us at this time and place.
2. Sacrifice time and money for our spiritual development, since sacrifice is the proof of sincerity and honesty.
3. Embody the teachings of Islam through our actions and be role models for our fellow human beings.
4. Aid the hungry, needy and oppressed with our money and our prayers.
5. Elevate Islam by propagating its pure message and removing the misunderstandings being spread against it.

Allah SWT will never allow His religion to be disgraced. We must understand that in spite of all this suffering and humiliation, the light of faith and guidance will spread throughout the earth. Allah SWT has said,

They want to extinguish the light of Allah with their mouths, but Allah refuses except to perfect His light, although the disbelievers dislike it.

It is He who has sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth to manifest it over all religion, although they who associate others with Allah dislike it. (At-Tawbah 9:32-33)

With all the chaos and upheaval, these are hopeful times. According to Islamic teachings, when we see the situation getting tougher and the *deen* of Allah SWT seems to hit all time low, we need to know for a fact that the victory and elevation of Allah SWT is just around the corner. Now, our efforts should be concentrated on trying to be among those lucky ones who are chosen by Allah SWT to spread this light.

Gaza, Syria, Burma, China, Iraq, Afghanistan, Central African Republic and many other Muslim lands are burning, and we are idly watching. If we do not take this suffering of our brothers and sisters seriously and rectify our relationship with Allah SWT, we will not be able to escape the anger of Allah SWT. The real cause of concern is not our oppressed brothers and sisters, in fact the real cause of concern are us who have accepted this humiliation and have become silent spectators to this brutality. Those who are dead, wounded, and oppressed have a Merciful Lord watching over them, generously recompensing them for their suffering *InshaAllah*.

This Merciful Lord is also Just and I am afraid we qualify for His retribution, more than His clemency.