

Chapter Thirteen

ACHIEVING TRANQUILITY, PEACE AND CONTENTMENT (AS-SAKEENA)

Definition of Sakeena

When Allah relieves our fears and replaces this with hope and contentment; and when we bear our responsibilities with patience and are willing to accept Allah's judgment, then we have achieved peace of mind, tranquility and inner contentment. Such a characteristic requires strong faith and resolve that allows us to accept our fate with contentment and patiently persevere.

We will discuss the following concepts:

- There is nothing wrong in asking questions in order to understand and accept our fate and achieve contentment
- How can we achieve this feeling of contentment?
- What is it like to feel secure and content versus feeling hesitant, doubtful and insecure?

There is nothing wrong in asking questions in order to properly understand

We should ask questions in order to learn and understand. Islam encourages us to seek knowledge and search for the truth. The Qur'an relates to us the story of prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) God's prophet and intimate friend and

how he asked God to show him how God gives life to the dead. God did not rebuke or criticize Abraham for asking something that involves faith and conviction, because Abraham wanted to be sure and to be secure in his knowledge and for his heart to be content and have no doubts:

﴿وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ أَرِنِي كَيْفَ تُحْيِي الْمَوْتَىٰ قَالَ أَوَلَمْ تُؤْمِنْ ۖ قَالَ بَلَىٰ وَلَٰكِن لِّيُطَمِّئَنَّ قَلْبِي ۖ قَالَ فَخُذْ أَرْبَعَةً مِّنَ الطَّيْرِ فَصُرْهُنَّ إِلَيْكَ ثُمَّ أَجْعَلْ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ جَبَلٍ مِّنْهُنَّ جُزْءًا ثُمَّ ادْعُهُنَّ يَأْتِينَكَ سَعْيًا ۚ وَاعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٢٦٠﴾ [البقرة: ٢٦٠]

Behold! Abraham said: "My Lord! Show me how Thou givest life to the dead." He said: "Dost thou not then believe?" He said: "Yea! but to satisfy my own understanding." He said: "Take four birds; tame them to turn to thee; put a portion of them on every hill, and call to them; they will come to thee, (flying) with speed. Then know that Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise."

Al-Baqara 2 : 260

God showed Abraham that indeed He has the power to give life to the dead, but did not show him how. We learn from this story:

- There is nothing wrong in asking questions in religious matter. It is much better to clarify what we have doubts about and do not understand than to leave questions unanswered and doubts lingering
- There are certain areas that we may not be able to understand. It does not mean that we reject things that we cannot explain. At the same time, it does not mean that we give up. We can revisit that subject again and search for the truth in another way.

We should ask questions in order to learn our religion, as the prophet's companions asked God's messenger to explain to them what puzzled them. The Qur'an states:

﴿وَجَاهِدُوا فِي اللَّهِ حَقَّ جِهَادِهِ ۗ هُوَ اجْتَبَاكُمْ وَمَا جَعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ مِنْ حَرَجٍ ۗ﴾

[الحج: ٧٨]

And strive in His cause as ye ought to strive, (with sincerity and under discipline). He has chosen you, and has imposed no difficulties on you in religion;

Al-Hajj 22 : 78

The Qur'an further explains that faith based on proper knowledge and understanding is followed by submission to God, following His orders and the willingness to listen, obey and be guided:

﴿ وَلِيَعْلَمَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ فَيُؤْمِنُوا بِهِ فَتُخْبِتَ لَهُ قُلُوبُهُمْ ۗ ﴾

وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَهَادٍ لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٥٤﴾ [الحج: ٥٤]

And that those on whom knowledge has been bestowed may learn that the (Qur'an) is the Truth from thy Lord, and that they may believe therein, and their hearts may be made humbly (open) to it: for verily Allah is the Guide of those who believe, to the Straight Way.

Al-Hajj 22 : 54

How can we achieve tranquility and inner peace?

This feeling of security, peace of mind and tranquility is not achieved easily. It requires the following:

- 1- Strong faith
- 2- Remembering Allah often
- 3- Reciting the Qur'an
- 4- Prayer with devotion and humility
- 5- Du'a to Allah seeking His blessing and protection
- 6- Patience, perseverance and strong resolve

Remembering Allah often

When we remember Allah often we feel that He is with us, guiding us and protecting us, and we get a sense of security and tranquility. We realize that we are not alone, for Allah is with us guiding our steps and that He cares about us. The Qur'an states:

﴿ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ ﴿٢٨﴾ ﴾

[الرعد: ٢٨]

"Those who believe, and whose hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of Allah: for without doubt in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find satisfaction.

Ar-Ra'd 13 : 28

﴿ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ طُوبَىٰ لَهُمْ وَحُسْنُ مَآبٍ ﴾ [الرعد: ٢٩]

"For those who believe and work righteousness, is (every) blessedness, and a beautiful place of (final) return."

Ar-Ra'd 13 : 29

Reciting the Qur'an

The Qur'an gives us peace and contentment and it relieves our distress. It is a cure for the ills in our hearts:

﴿ وَنُنزِلُ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ مَا هُوَ شِفَاءٌ وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلَا يَزِيدُ الظَّالِمِينَ إِلَّا خَسَارًا ﴾ [الإسراء: ٨٢]

[الإسراء: ٨٢]

We send down (stage by stage) in the Qur-an that which is a healing and a mercy to those who believe: to the unjust it causes nothing but loss after loss.

Al-Isra'a 17 : 82

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) explained the benefits of reading the Qur'an, discussing its verses and trying to understand and apply its guidelines in our life:

(Whenever a group of people gather in one of the houses of Allah reciting the Book of Allah, learning it and discussing it among themselves, tranquility descends on them, and Allah's mercy surrounds them, and the Angels come close, and Allah mentions them to those close to Him)

Narrated by Muslim.

We learn from this Hadeeth the following benefits of reciting and studying the Qur'an:

- Peace and tranquility descends
- Allah's mercy surround those studying the Qur'an
- The Angels come close praying on behalf of those reciting the Qur'an
- Allah mentions those reciting the Qur'an and remembers their good deeds, and is pleased with their effort

In another saying of the Prophet (PBUH) we learn that the Angels come close and listen to the Qur'an as it is being recited. The Prophet was told of a man who was reciting the Qur'an and a cloud came closer and closer. He said: (This is the tranquility that descended with the Qur'an)

Narrated by Bokhari & Muslim

Prayer with devotion and humility

When we hear the call that prayer is about to start, we should not run, but walk in a calm serene way, for we are going to be standing before Allah and we will recite His words. Prayer is a place of concentration, devotion and sincerity that leads to tranquility and peace. When we pray properly, our prayers should increase our faith and give us the resolve to carry on

﴿ قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ۝۱ ﴾ [المؤمنون: ١]

The Believers must (eventually) win through,

Al-Mumenoun 23: 1

﴿ الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ ۝۲ ﴾ [المؤمنون: ٢]

Those who humble themselves in their prayers;

Al-Mumenoun 23: 2

Du'a to Allah seeking His guidance and protection

We are assured that our Du'a (prayer or call) to Allah will be answered, as long as we are sincere, have faith and turn to Allah often. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

(Whoever is in the habit of seeking Allah's forgiveness often, Allah will relieve his distress, and get him out of trouble, and provide for him in ways he never expected)

Narrated by Ibn Majja & Ahmad.

This Hadeeth confirms the Qur'anic verse:

﴿ وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا ۝۲ ﴾ [الطلاق: ٢]

And for those who fear Allah, He (ever) prepares a way out,

At-Talaq 65 : 2

﴿ وَيَرْزُقُهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ وَمَنْ يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بَلِغُ أَمْرِهِ ۗ ﴾

قَدْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدْرًا ﴿٣﴾ [الطلاق: ٣]

And He provides for him from (sources) he never could imagine. And if anyone puts his trust in Allah, sufficient is (Allah) for him. For Allah will surely accomplish His purpose: verily, for all things has Allah appointed a due proportion.

At-Talaq 65 : 3

Do what is right and avoid doubtful areas

Sometimes we feel uneasy and hesitant about certain things because we are not sure whether they are right or wrong. We should avoid what looks doubtful and embark on courses of actions that are clear and we feel good about. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) explained this concept when he said: (Seek the truth in your heart. Righteousness is what you feel good about and what your soul accepts with no doubt or hesitation. And sin is what gives you an uneasy feeling in your heart, and your soul cannot accept even though other people tell you that it is ok)

Narrated by Ahmad & Tabarani

In another Hadeeth the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said:

(Avoid things that you have doubts about, and do things that you feel sure about; because the truth gives you a sense of safety, security and contentment, whereas falsehood leads you to doubts and insecurity)

Narrated by Termedhi, Ahmad, Hakim & Tabarani

What does it feel like to be content, secure and have peace of mind and tranquility?

When we do what is right and discharge our responsibility we feel good and are relieved. Our hearts are content and we are cheerful. When our faith is strong we can face difficulty and are able to sacrifice and patiently persevere. We do not complain that we have been treated unfairly, rather we know that God knows what we are experiencing and that He will reward us for our effort, patience and faith.

In contrast, someone whose faith is weak will crumble at the first sign of trouble. He is scared and bitterly complains and gives up easily. He gets

depressed and is not willing to be patient, sacrifice or struggle and cope with his difficulty.

The Qur'an explains man's nature in giving up easily, and not being able to face up to difficulty or patiently persevere. Faith confirmed with proper behavior and a proper understanding of our accountability to God gives us the ability to change our nature and to rise up to the challenge:

﴿ إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ خُلِقَ هَلُوعًا ﴾ [المعارج: ١٩]

Truly man was created very impatient;

Al-Ma'rej 70 : 19

﴿ إِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ جَزُوعًا ﴾ [المعارج: ٢٠]

Fretful when evil touches him;

Al-Ma'rej 70 : 20

﴿ وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الْخَيْرُ مَنُوعًا ﴾ [المعارج: ٢١]

And niggardly when good reaches him;

Al-Ma'rej 70 : 21

﴿ إِلَّا الْمُصَلِّينَ ﴾ [المعارج: ٢٢]

Not so those devoted to Prayer,

Al-Ma'rej 70 : 22

﴿ الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَى صَلَاتِهِمْ دَائِمُونَ ﴾ [المعارج: ٢٣]

Those who remain steadfast to their prayer;

Al-Ma'rej 70 : 23

﴿ وَالَّذِينَ فِي أَمْوَالِهِمْ حَقٌّ مَّعْلُومٌ ﴾ [المعارج: ٢٤]

And those in whose wealth is a recognised right

Al-Ma'rej 70 : 24

﴿ لِلسَّائِلِ وَالْمَحْرُومِ ﴾ [المعارج: ٢٥]

For the (needy) who asks and him who is prevented (for some reason from asking);

Al-Ma'rej 70 : 25

﴿ وَالَّذِينَ يُصَدِّقُونَ بِيَوْمِ الدِّينِ ﴾ [المعارج: ٢٦]

And those who hold to the truth of the Day of Judgment;

Al-Ma'rej 70 : 26