

Wisdom of Luqmanؑ – Part 2 & 3

Shukr

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Allahﷻ mentioned this tendency towards being ungrateful several times and said:

وَلَقَدْ مَكَّنَّاكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَجَعَلْنَا لَكُمْ فِيهَا مَعَايِشَ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ

A'araf 7: 10 And surely, We gave you authority on the earth and appointed for you therein provisions (for your life). Little thanks do you give.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنْشَأَ لَكُمْ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ

Mu'minoon 23: 78 It is He, Who has created for you (the sense of) hearing (ears), sight (eyes), and hearts (understanding). Little thanks you give.

ثُمَّ سَوَّاهُ وَنَفَخَ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِهِ وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ

Sajda 32: 9 Then He fashioned him in due proportion, and breathed into him the soul (created by Allah for that person), and He gave you hearing (ears), sight (eyes) and hearts. Little is the thanks you give!

قُلْ هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْشَأَكُمْ وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ

Mulk 67: 23 Say it is He Who has created you, and endowed you with hearing (ears), seeing (eyes), and hearts. Little thanks you give.

When it is so important to express thanks to Allahﷻ who already knows the state of our hearts, consider how important it is to express thanks to people who don't know if we are grateful or not. Rasoolullahﷺ mentioned this very clearly and said:

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ لَا يَشْكُرُ اللَّهَ مَنْ لَا يَشْكُرُ النَّاسَ

Abu Hurairaؓ reported: Rasoolullahﷺ said, "He has not thanked Allahﷻ who has not

thanked the people.” (Sunan Abī Daʿwūd 4811)

Usama bin Zaid ؓ reports: Rasoolullah ﷺ said: “Whoever says “Jazakallahu khayran (May Allah give you a good reward)” to anyone who has done him a favor, he has thanked in the best way.” [Tirmidhi, Birr 86, (2036).]

Jabir ؓ reports: Rasoolullah ﷺ said: “Whoever receives a favor should respond to it right away if he can find him (who has done the favor). If he cannot, he should praise him (who has done the favor). Actually, by praising him, he thanks him. Whoever does not respond to a favor is ungrateful.”

In a narration by Abu Said al Qudri ؓ: Rasoolullah ﷺ said: “One who does not thank people does not give thanks to Allah, either.” (Tirmidhi, Birr 35, 1955; Abu Dawud, Adab 12 4811).

Qadi Iyad explains the hadith in two aspects:

1- The reason of conclusion made by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is as follows: Humans can give thanks to Allah ﷻ by obeying Him and following His orders strictly. As one of Allah ﷻ’s orders is to thank people who are a means of delivering Allah ﷻ’s bounty to humans. One who disobeys this order is considered not to have paid his debt of giving thanks to Allah ﷻ for the boons endowed upon him.

2- One who is ungrateful to favors of people and does not value thanking grows the habit of not giving thanks to Allah ﷻ for the bounty He endows upon us and denies it. In this sense, Allah ﷻ will not accept “shukr” (giving thanks to Allah) on its own, which is closely related to tashakkur (thanking people).

What can be clearer than this about the importance of thanking people which in this case has been equated with thanking Allah ﷻ? Yet we see thanklessness around us among Muslims all the time. We have almost made being thankless our trademark. I have this experience many times where people email me questions, literally in language that demands an answer making me wonder if unknown to me I have been sold into slavery to them; and then when I send them the answer, they don’t bother to write a single line in thanks.

How many times have we seen while traveling in the West, how people thank everyone – waiters, doormen, bus conductors, strangers. And we comment on it. Yet we don't do it. I watch amazed how our people simply take things as if it is their birthright and the duty of others to do them favors. People want to see Islam. Not listen to the glory of Islam while watching Muslims do the opposite of what they say Islam teaches.

Anas bin Malik ؓ reports: When the Muhajiroon arrived in Madina and saw how Ansar helped them, they said: "Ya Rasoolullah ﷺ! We have never seen any other people like those of Madina, amongst whom we are now, who give so abundantly from their properties that are a lot and who help so beautifully with their properties that are little! They have helped with our works; they have helped us put our lives in order. We are afraid that they will take away all our Thawab (which we have earned by migrating and worshipping)!"

Rasoolullah ﷺ answered: "No! They will earn Thawab because of your dua (for them) and your thanks to them." (Tirmidhi, Qiyamah 45i (2489); Abu Dawud, Adab 12, (4812).)

(Source: <http://www.questionsonislam.com/question/would-you-please-explain-hadiths-related-thanking-people-favor-they-have-done>)

Ibn Kathir in his Tafsir narrated the story that Rasoolullah ﷺ informed us about the man who praised Allah ﷻ in these words:

Ya rabbi lakal hamdu kama yanbaghi lijalali wajhika wa'azeem sultanik.

O my Rabb! All praise and thanks is due to You, which is befitting Your glorious presence and befitting Your great sovereignty.

Omar ibn Al Khattab ؓ once passed by a man who was making dua and asking Allah ﷻ to make him among the Khaleel – few. Sayyidina Omar ؓ asked him to explain this dua. The man quoted Ayaat (where Allah ﷻ said, 'Few are those who are thankful.' And said, 'Muqarraboon – many from the first generation and few from the later generations) and said, 'Allah ﷻ praised those who are

few. So I want to be among them.’ Omarؓ praised his wisdom and said, ‘Everyone has more wisdom than Omar.’

A man complained to Omar ibn Al-Khattabؓ about his situation in life. Omarؓ advised him to be grateful to Allahﷻ. The man got peeved and said, ‘What do I have to be grateful for? Look at me. I have nothing to be grateful for.’

Omarؓ asked him, ‘Can you urinate without pain?’ The man said, ‘Yes.’ Omarؓ said, ‘Thank Allahﷻ for that.’ If you don’t know what that means, thank Allahﷻ that you don’t have this knowledge. Ask someone who has UTI what it feels to have to urinate. People with UTI stop drinking water and create other problems because they fear urinating so much.

At a time when Rasoolullahﷺ and his companions were going through very difficult time with very little resources and poverty, Allahﷻ revealed:

ثُمَّ لَتُسْأَلُنَّ يَوْمَئِذٍ عَنِ النَّعِيمِ

Takathur 102: 8. *Then, on that Day, you shall be asked about the delight (you indulged in, in this world)!*

Zubair bin Awamؓ was a great Sahabi of Rasoolullahﷺ. When this Ayah was revealed with great hesitation he asked Rasoolullahﷺ, ‘We are living in great difficulty Ya Rasoolullahﷺ. Which Neymaat (blessings) does Allahﷻ mean that He says he will question us about? Rasoolullahﷺ said to him:

إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا

Isra 17: 36. *Verily! The hearing, and the sight, and the heart, of each of those you will be questioned (by Allah).*

The questioning will be about both what we did with these faculties as well as whether we thanked Allahﷻ for them or not. What is the value of sight and hearing and sanity? What is the value of intelligence? Today we use them like

animals use them. We listen to anything that we like and don't bother to see if Allah ﷻ permitted it or not. We look at anything we like to see and don't bother to see if Allah ﷻ permitted it or not. Instead of using our intelligence to recognize and submit to Allah ﷻ we nullify it and become rebellious.

We pronounce Fatawa about Halal and Haraam, when Allah ﷻ already declared what is Halal and what is Haraam. We declare the laws of Allah ﷻ to be unjust and unsuitable for today's world – a world and society steeped in ignorance, arrogance and the spirit of self-destruction. Naturally law and order would be considered unsuitable in the world of the pirate and bandit. So also the Shari'ah of Islam is considered unreasonable in today's world – a world where bandits wear suits. Like animals, we eat whatever we like. We drink whatever we like. We do wherever we like. Halal, Haraam are words without meaning for us.

We live in the moment and don't care about the consequences of our actions. And what is more, we get angry with those who try to warn us about those consequences. How different is our behavior from animals? This is what Allah ﷻ will question us about.

I ask myself and you, 'How much longer do we want to live like this?' Or do we want to be among those about whom Allah ﷻ said:

وَلَوْ تَرَىٰ إِذِ الْمُجْرِمُونَ نَاكِسُو رُءُوسِهِمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ رَبَّنَا أَبْصَرْنَا وَسَمِعْنَا فَارْجِعْنَا نَعْمَلْ
صَالِحًا إِنَّا مُوقِنُونَ

Sajda 32: 12. And if you only could see when the Mujrimun (criminals) shall hang their heads before their Rabb (saying): "Our Rabb! We have now seen and heard, so send us back (to the world), we will do righteous good deeds. Verily! We now believe with certainty."

How can we become grateful?

By reflecting on the blessing and on what life would have been without it. This is pretty easy to do if one takes a few minutes out each day. Just sit and reflect

on what it would be like to be blind, deaf, mute, lame or have a mental disorder. Reflect on how it would feel to be poor; simply too poor to afford the luxuries we take for granted like air conditioning for example. Then think of how it would feel to be so poor that you had to forage for food in trash heaps and garbage bins. Imagine what it would be like not to be able to travel where and when you wish, not to have good children, to have bad children.

Not to have a good spouse or what is far worse; to have a spouse who makes your life on earth a living hell. Not to have parents or to have parents who are a source of misguidance – too many like that nowadays unfortunately. Not to have the benefit of a good education. I don't think I need to list more. Make your own list. Reflect on what Allahﷻ gave you and ask what it would be like not to have it.

To make it more real, try out some of these things and feel for yourself. Forage for food in a garbage bin – don't eat it; just compete with stray dogs to get it. May Allahﷻ save us from that – what differentiates us from those who do this daily except the Grace of Allahﷻ? Our problem is to lose weight. We are digging our graves with our teeth. But if Allahﷻ gave us hunger, it would solve our dieting issues. Is that what we want? Then why are don't we thank Allahﷻ for what He gave us?

Disraeli, the British Prime Minister who was an atheist is reported to have seen a beggar and say, 'There but for the Grace of God, goes Disraeli.' But we who claim to know Allahﷻ don't think like this. Please apply this standard to every blessing that Allahﷻ gave us. And thank Him.

Hasan Al-Basri (R) passed by a man who was complaining to another one about his situation in life. He stopped and said to him, 'What a strange man you are. You complain about Ar-Rahman to one who has no Rahma?'

Rasoolullah ﷺ used to make this dua of thanks:

'Ya Rabbi lakal hamdu hatta tarda, wa lakal hamdu idha radeet, wa lakal hamdu baa'dur

rida, wa lakal hamdu ala kulli haal'

O My Rabb, for you is praise until it pleases You, and for You is praise when You are pleased, and for You is praise after You have become pleased, and for You is praise in all conditions.

What is the benefit of being grateful; of thanking Allahﷻ and people?

Enhanced awareness of the blessing: This is the secret of enjoyment. To savor it. To feel, to slow down and reflect on what Allahﷻ gave us. Just be in it. Enjoy it.

By doing this we enhance our enjoyment of the blessing. And Allahﷻ promised to increase that blessing and to reward us in the Aakhira for thanking and praising Him. What more can one ask?

The benefit of thanking people is that it encourages them to be nice to you; to do more of what they were appreciated for. There is a very dear friend of mine in South Africa in Cape Town, Solly Noor, who always invites me to a meal when I am there. We always eat out at one of the excellent restaurants on the waterfront. What I enjoy the most in these meals is not the food but seeing how he deals with people. He speaks to everyone. He thanks everyone and he always has something nice to say to everyone. The result is that they fawn over him as if he owns the place. Allahﷻ has given him wealth but that is not what people appreciate. They appreciate how he treats them. That is why they say, 'People won't remember what you said, but they will remember how you made them feel.'

This is so important that Rasoolullahﷺ said that the one who has not thanked those through whom he received the blessings of Allahﷻ, has not thanked Allahﷻ. The one most deserving to be thanked before anyone else is Rasoolullahﷺ himself through whom we received this beautiful religion. The way to do that is to send Durood on him. Allahﷻ sends ten blessings on the person for every time he sends Durood on His Nabiﷺ.

Finally, let me remind myself and you that those who deserve our thanks the

most are those who serve us daily and get taken for granted. This includes our family and our servants. Let one of them not be there on any day and we immediately know the difference. Yet what do we do to appreciate what they do for us, day in and day out?

The final stage of thanks is not only to thank Allah ﷻ for His blessings but to understand that everything that comes from Him is a blessing, even if it doesn't seem to be that and to thank Him for it. Ali ؑ is reported to have said, 'I recognized my Rabb by the failure of my aspirations.' We see pain but we don't see the forgiveness that comes with it. We see difficulty but we don't see the fact that this difficulty drew us closer to Allah ﷻ. We see failure but we don't see the tests and problems that success would have brought us.

Allah ﷻ told us:

كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِتَالُ وَهُوَ كُرْهٌ لَّكُمْ وَعَسَى أَن تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ وَعَسَى أَن تُحِبُّوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ شَرٌّ لَّكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

Baqara 2: 216. *Jihad (fighting in Allah's Cause) is ordained for you (Muslims) though you dislike it, and it may be that you dislike a thing which is good for you and that you like a thing which is bad for you. Allah knows but you do not know.*

About our wives (applies to husbands also) Allah ﷻ told us:

وَعَاشِرُوهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ فَإِنْ كَرِهْتُمُوهُنَّ فَعَسَى أَن تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَيَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ فِيهِ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا

Nisa 4: 19 *And live with them honorably. If you dislike them, it may be that you dislike a thing and Allah brings through it a great deal of good.*

If you have lived as long as I have and live thoughtfully and reflect on the duas you made in your lifetime, I can guarantee you that you will thank Allah ﷻ for not granting some of them. There are so many things we asked for which if Allah ﷻ had given us, we would have lived to regret them. But in His Wisdom

and Mercy He gave us the reward of the Ibaadah of making dua but didn't grant the dua. That dua now remains with Him for us when on the Day of Judgment, He will say to us, 'My slave, you asked me for such-and-such but I didn't give it to you. Now ask me whatever you want and I will give it.' What is the value of this?

This is why Luqmanؑ gave his son this wonderful advice to be thankful in his life. Thankfulness, appreciation of others, an attitude of gratitude costs nothing but brings with it rewards and blessings we can't even imagine.

I ask Allahﷻ to make us among those who are always grateful to Him.