



Assalamu Alaykum

Dear Students,

I hope this letter reaches you with the best of health and Iman. Just sending a reflection.

We've had a few deaths in the MSA family recently. One student -- a recent graduate -- just suffered through the loss of her father. That blessed man, may God's mercy be upon him, is also the uncle of one of our current students.

Consider that a week ago, all was normal in his household. Now, a week later, he is buried and prayed over, awaiting his Judgment. Could our MSA sisters have imagined that their beloved father or uncle would go from healthy, to hospitalized, to comatose, to deceased, and for him to do so so quickly? That is the brutal nature of this life. When it happens, it is as though life just woke you to a new, cold reality.

We speak in our Tradition of Taqwa, taking God as a shield. Explicit in this concept is the notion that when the world hits you with challenges, if you turn your reliance to God, you will manage. Implicit is the notion that you will most definitely get hit. It is the nature of this illusory world to hit you and hit you. Those are some of the tests of this fleeting life.

Of the tests we face, there are three. We often comment that "this is a test" or "that is a test," but we never complete the conversation on how to pass such test. Consider the following; all that you experience in life will fall into one or more of the following tests:

1- Difficulty. We are guaranteed to be hit with periods of difficulty. Guaranteed. We are also guaranteed that we will never be hit with anything we cannot handle. Guaranteed. And, we are guaranteed that with difficulty, we will also be granted ease. The way to pass such a test is to persevere through it.


2- Ease. We may at times be granted with periods of ease. If you are able to read this letter, even while suffering through some great challenge, you have a moment of ease. The way to pass such a test is to be grateful.

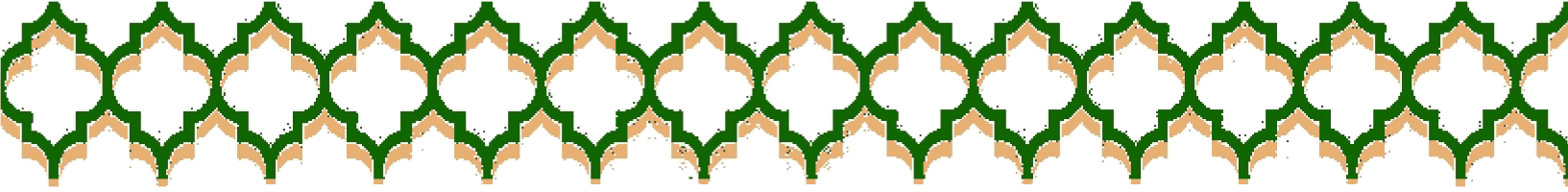
3- Obedience. There are those things that the Divine obliges us to do, and there are those things the Divine obliges us to stay away from. The way to pass this test is to obey.

If we falter in any of the tests, then we seek forgiveness, which I hope to discuss in a future letter, Insha Allah.

But, we also know that our time is limited. Not only is it limited, it is rapidly escaping. In the case of our MSA sister's father, his time is complete. But, now our MSA sister has this huge weight of struggle placed upon her. I've counseled many (perhaps too many) families through the deaths of loved ones. Frankly, I do not believe we truly ever recover from the death of a parent, especially if we were close to that parent, the way our MSA sister was. Rather, we come to terms with the "new reality" through the short term and long term processes of grieving.

Always remember that we have to grieve. When the Prophet Muhammad, may peace be upon him, stood at the newly buried grave of his newly deceased son Ibrahim, he had tears in his eyes. The Companions, may God be pleased with them, asked him why he would be sad, knowing that his son is going straight to paradise. The Prophet -p- responded that these tears are mercy from





the Divine. Consider it: when you are hit with the shock of loss, you need to go through a guided process of grieving, to relieve yourself.

Further, you and I also have a test placed upon us. We are witnessing her struggle; we need to assist her.

So, with this letter, I'm imposing two obligations on to you. First, especially for the MSA sisters, please keep in touch with our sister. Talk to her, at least when she is up for it. Conversation. Ahead for her and her family is a serious period involving all the phases of grief. And, such struggles sometimes feel painfully lonely. And for all of us, if/when you find out about a sister or brother who is struggling, reach out. And, I am always here, Insha Allah, to help.

Second, take a serious look at how you use your time. As the blessed Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, taught us, each of us is a set of days, and one by one those days get pulled away from us. In my own case, I've buried students, friends, family of all ages. Any one of us can be reclaimed by the Divine without a moment's notice.

Last, I have to express a compliment to the late father. A function of religion is to guide you and nurture you through the valleys and sharp edges of life. I must say that those who have a serious foundation in their beliefs seem to understand life when hit with life's struggles. It does not mean that their struggles are easy; rather they are often more difficult than the norm. But, I must say, in praise of the late father, that the daughter he raised definitely seems to understand. She is free to still wonder why, as sometimes we each do, but her father raised her with a strong foundation. So, as she continues to move through life, I do believe he will also be witnessing the benefits of her very good choices and deeds, Insha Allah.

And God knows best. Please pray for each of them and their families, along with all those who have lost loved ones.

May Allah bless you.

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