

ALHAMDULILLAH

By Shariffa Carlo

What is the meaning of Alhamdulillah? It is usually translated as, 'All praise is due to Allah.' Which has led many of us to use the phrase, Alhamdulillah wa shukr Allah.' But this is very incorrect because alhamdulillah is actually a word of praise that includes within it a greater gratitude or shukr for what Allah has ordained, and as Muslims, we are supposed to use it when we are presented with that which appears good and with that which appears bad.

But, in the reality of our lives, what is Alhamdulillah? What does it truly mean? Is it just a word on our lips? Or is it a genuine feeling in our hearts?

- Someone once told me that Alhamdulillah means
- when you don't have something you need or want,
- you are content with your fate;
- when you have a limited quantity of that thing,
- you are content with it,
- and you try to share it,
- and when you have a lot,
- you are content,
- and you are searching for ways to share it more.

In other words, no matter what your condition, you are grateful to Allah for that condition. It is a recognition that all that Allah has given us or taken from us is the best for us.

In practical terms, what does this mean. There is an example that I like to use when I speak of Allah's Knowledge and Power over us that may help illustrate my meaning. When I was a new Muslimah, I had the most beautiful white cat. I loved this cat very much. It used to wake me up for fajr, and I considered it a great blessing in my life. The problem, however, was that my landlady did not allow pets in my apartment. This meant that the cat's presence had to remain a secret.

One day, the landlady called and told me that she was coming that day to do the periodic spraying for roaches. I knew I had to hide the cat, but in such a way that he did not come home again from where I put him, so I decided to take him to a friend's house for the day. So, I grabbed my cat, and took him to my car. As I was driving to her house, the cat went crazy. He was clawing at me and at one point attached himself to the back of my head. I guess he had never been in a car before, and was terrified. He thought this was the worst thing that could have possibly happened to him. Now, I had information that the cat did not. I knew that my actions were actually a salvation for him. If my landlady had found the cat, we would have both been homeless. But, of course, there was no way for the cat to know this. It was beyond his comprehension.

What is the point here? Well, Allah places us in many situations that are similar. He provides us with circumstances that in our limited understanding and perception we find to be disastrous. We can react to them as the cat did, with fear and pure animal instincts, or we can recognize Allah's Wisdom and Superior Knowledge, and be content with the situation because we have faith that it is somehow better for us to experience this. To be content with it, would be to live out Alhamdulillah. It would show our acceptance of Allah's Power over us, our recognition of His care for us, and our gratitude for His Mercy.

For Allah says,

"...This is of the grace of my Lord that He may try me whether I am grateful or ungrateful; and whoever is grateful, he is grateful only for his own soul, and whoever is ungrateful, then surely my Lord is Self-sufficient, Honored. (27:40)

Allah had given us so much, and our duty as Muslims is to be grateful for those many blessings. Dawud asked Allah, "What is the least of your blessings?" Allah revealed to him to take a breath. Dawud did so, and Allah told him, This is the least of my blessings on you."

Imagine that, taking a breath as a blessing from Allah. It is an involuntary action that basically sustains us. So much is involved, not only from the physiological perspective but also from the conditions that must exist on the earth to create the perfect combination of elements for us to breathe. One breath of a human involves the workings of all of his internal organs as well as the fact that we have plants that take our carbon dioxide and convert them back to oxygen which is essential for us to continue breathing. The processes involved are so many and so detailed that they can not be covered except by an entire science course which will just outline the basics. Allahu Akbar.

We must remember that all that we possess is from Allah. But we can not stop there. We must also recognize that that which we do not possess is also a blessing from Allah. We must recognize the Power and Knowledge of Allah by being grateful for His Blessings. Things are not always as they seem. We may consider something to be bad, horrible or disastrous, when in actuality it is purely Allah's blessing on us. Remember the story of Musa and Al Khidr:

'Moses got up to deliver a sermon before Bani Israel and he was asked, 'Who is the most learned person among the people?' Moses replied, 'I (am the most learned).' Allah then admonished Moses for he did not ascribe all knowledge to Allah; only (then) came the Divine Inspiration:-- 'Yes, one of Our slaves at the junction of the two seas is more learned than you.'

Moses said, 'O my Lord ! How can I meet him?' Allah said, 'Take a fish in a basket and wherever the fish is lost, follow it (you will find him at that place). So Moses set out along with his attendant Yusha' bin Nun, and they carried with them a fish till they reached a rock and rested there. Moses put his head down and slept.

'At the rock there was a water spring called 'Al-Hayat' and none came in touch with its water but became alive. So some of the water of that spring fell over that fish, so it moved and slipped out of the basket and entered the sea.

When they had passed on (some distance), Moses said to his attendant: "Bring us our early meal; truly we have suffered much fatigue at this (stage of) our journey." He replied: "Sawest thou (what happened) when we betook ourselves to the rock? I did indeed forget (about) the Fish: none but Satan made me forget to tell (you) about it: it took its course through the sea in a marvellous way!"

Moses said: "That was what we were seeking after:" So they went back on their footsteps, following (the path they had come).

So they found one of Our servants, on whom We had bestowed Mercy from Ourselves and whom We had taught knowledge from Our own Presence. Moses said to him: "May I follow thee, on the footing that thou teach me something of the (Higher) Truth which thou hast been taught?" (The other) said: "Verily thou wilt not be able to have patience with me!" "And how canst thou have patience about things about which thy understanding is not complete?" He said: If Allah pleases, you will find me patient and I shall not disobey you in any matter.

He said: If you would follow me, then do not question me about any thing until I myself speak to you about it. So they went (their way) until when they embarked in the boat he made a hole in it. (Musa) said: Have you made a hole in it to drown its inmates? Certainly you have done a grievous thing. He said: Did I not say that you will not be able to have patience with me? He said: Blame me not for what I forgot, and do not constrain me to a difficult thing in my affair.

So they went on until, when they met a boy, he slew him. (Musa) said: Have you slain an innocent person otherwise than for manslaughter? Certainly you have done an evil thing. He said: Did I not say to you that you will not be able to have patience with me? He said: If I ask you about anything after this, keep me not in your company; indeed you shall have (then) found an excuse in my case.

So they went on until when they came to the people of a town, they asked them for food, but they refused to entertain them as guests. Then they found in it a wall which was on the point of falling, so he put it into a right state. (Musa) said: If you had pleased, you might certainly have taken a recompense for it. He said: This shall be separation between me and you; now I will inform you of the significance of that with which you could not have patience.

- As for the boat, it belonged to (some) poor men who worked on the river and I wished that I should damage it, and there was behind them a king who seized every boat by force.

- And as for the boy, his parents were believers and we feared lest he should make disobedience and ingratitude to come upon them: So we desired that their Lord might give them in his place one better than him in purity and nearer to having compassion.
- And as for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys in the city, and there was beneath it a treasure belonging to them, and their father was a righteous man; so your Lord desired that they should attain their maturity and take out their treasure, a mercy from your Lord, and I did not do it of my own accord. This is the significance of that with which you could not have patience. (18:60-82).

Musa was not patient in learning the meanings of what he had seen. But he learned a very important lesson, one we should take to heart. Allah's Knowledge is so beyond ours, even when He gives one of us a bit more than the other, we can not see easily beyond the superficial meanings of the events of life, and we must trust Allah's judgement and be grateful for the favors He confers on us. We must say and feel Alhamdulillah. We must make it a true part of our lives. The foundation of our faith.

Such a simple word, but it carries so much in it. It tells of our faith in Allah. It shows how we must accept the qadr of Allah in times we consider good and times we consider bad, not turning our backs on Allah, like the people of the boat, when Allah gives us what we want, but being grateful for whatever occurs good or bad.

Allah says,

He it is Who makes you travel by land and sea; until when you are in the ships, and they sail on with them in a pleasant breeze, and they rejoice, a violent wind overtakes them and the billows surge in on them from all sides, and they become certain that they are encompassed about, they pray to Allah, being sincere to Him in obedience: If Thou dost deliver us from this, we will most certainly be of the grateful ones. But when He delivers them, lo! they are unjustly rebellious in the earth. O men! your rebellion is against your own souls-- provision (only) of this world's life-- then to Us shall be your return, so We will inform you of what you did. (10:22-23)

We can not only say Alhamdulillah, and be grateful slaves when we are blessed with what we want, we must also remain grateful when we are hit by the worst of disasters. In my humble opinion, the worst loss this nation ever had, was the death of our beloved prophet, Muhammad. We recognize his humanity, but it was when he departed us that the splits began in the ummah. The blessing of unity, one he was not granted by his Lord, is a terrible black mark on the ummah. Yet, we must have faith that in some way, this is beneficial to us. In some way there is a blessing, and for it we must say, Alhamdulillah.

Allah says,

And Muhammad is no more than a messenger; the messengers have already passed away before him; if then he dies or is killed will you turn back upon your heels? And whoever turns back upon his heels, he will by no means do harm to Allah in the least and Allah will reward the grateful. (3:144)

Our beloved prophet dies, and we are to be grateful? To the human mind and heart this is incomprehensible, but this is where our faith comes in. If we truly trust in Allah's Judgement, we must be grateful. Alhamdulillah rabil Aalamiin for all that He brings to us. We must accept the bitter with the sweet because we believe in Allah, we trust in Him and we know that He is the Best of Judges, the Most Wise, and His plan for us is the Fairest, Most Merciful and Best for us in this life and in the hereafter.

Allah says,

Therefore remember Me, I will remember you, and be thankful to Me, and do not be ungrateful to Me. (2:152)

And,

And hold fast, all together, by the rope which Allah (stretches out for you), and be not divided among yourselves; and remember with gratitude Allah's favour on you; for ye were enemies and He joined your hearts in love, so that by His Grace, ye became brethren; and ye were on the brink of the pit of Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus doth Allah make His Signs clear to you: That ye may be guided. (3:103)

And,

O ye who believe! Eat of the good things that We have provided for you, and be grateful to Allah, if it is Him ye worship. (2:172)

Also, let us remember to be extra grateful, for , " When anything came to the Prophet (S) which caused pleasure (or, by which he was made glad), he prostrated himself in gratitude to Allah."

What ever is for us is for us. We can not avoid our Qadr. Our control comes in how we handle it when it comes. Ali Ibin Abi Talib saw Adiyy Ibin Hatim looking sorrowful, and so he asked him, "Why are you so sad, O Adiyy?" Adiyy replied, "How can I not be in such a state when both of my sons have been killed and my eye gouged out?" So Ali said to him, "O Adiyy, whoever is content with the decree of Allah will surely experience it and be rewarded for it; and whoever is not content with the decree of Allah will surely experience it, and Allah will make his actions worthless."

We will experience what Allah has ordained for us. But will it bring us blessings or only misery. We must accept the decree of Allah, be content with it and be grateful for it, because we know what Allah has decreed is the best for us. This is the implementation of alhamdulillah.

Now, the blessings of Alhamdulillah in itself are many. Below I will show a few of these many blessings:

Narrated Ali: Fatima went to the Prophet complaining about the bad effect of the stone hand-mill on her hand. She heard that the Prophet had received a few slave girls. But (when she came there) she did not find him, so she mentioned her problem to 'Aisha. When the Prophet came, 'Aisha informed him about that.

'Ali added, "So the Prophet came to us when we had gone to bed. We wanted to get up (on his arrival) but he said, 'Stay where you are.'" Then he came and sat between me and her and I felt the coldness of his feet on my abdomen. He said, "Shall I direct you to something better than what you have requested? When you go to bed say 'Subhan Allah' thirty-three times, 'Alhamdulillah' thirty three times, and Allahu Akbar' thirty four times, for that is better for you than a servant."

The Messenger of Allah (S) said: *Cleanliness is half of faith and Alhamdulillah (Praise be to Allah) fills the scale, and SubhanAllah (Glory be to Allah) and Alhamdulillah (Praise be to Allah) fill up what is between the heavens and the earth, and prayer is a light, and charity is proof (of one's faith) and endurance is a brightness and the Qur'an is a proof on your behalf or against you. All men go out early in the morning and sell themselves, thereby setting themselves free or destroying themselves.*

Narrated AbuDharr: Some of the people from among the companions of the Apostle of Allah (S) said to him: Messenger of Allah, the rich have taken away (all the) reward. They observe prayer as we do, they keep the fasts as we keep them, and they give sadaqah from their surplus riches. Upon this he (the Holy Prophet) said: Has Allah not prescribed for you (a course) by following which you can (also) do sadaqah?

In every declaration of the glorification of Allah (i.e. saying SubhanAllah) there is a sadaqah, every Takbir (i.e. saying AllahuAkbar) is a sadaqah, every praise of Him (saying Alhamdulillah) is a sadaqah, every declaration that He is One (La ilaha illallah) is sadaqah, enjoining of good is a sadaqah, forbidding of that which is evil is a Sadaqah, and in man's sexual intercourse (with his wife) there is a Sadaqah. They (the companions) said: Messenger of Allah, is there reward for him who satisfies his sexual passion among us? He said: Tell me, if he were to devote it to something forbidden, would it not be a sin on his part? Similarly, if he were to devote it to something lawful, he should have a reward.

The dearest words to Allah are four: Subhanallah (Hallowed be Allah), Alhamdulillah (Praise be to Allah), La ilaha illallah (There is no god but Allah), and AllahuAkbar (God is the Greatest). Allah's Apostle (SS) said: *Allah is pleased with His servant who says: Alhamdulillah while taking a morsel of food and while drinking.*

I pray that Allah give us the faith, poatience and gratitude to impliment Alhamdulillah into ours lives as true pious slaves of Allah. May He forgive us guide us and provide us with the best in this life and the next. Ameen