

RAJA – HOPE

QUR'AN - (The Qur'an with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English by Ali Ünal)

قُلْ يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِن رَّحْمَةِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ
الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ

Say: "(God gives you hope): "O My servants who have been wasteful (of their God-given opportunities and faculties) against (the good of) their own souls! Do not despair of God's Mercy. Surely God forgives all sins. He is indeed the All-Forgiving, the All-Compassionate. " (Surah Az-Zumar, 53)¹

يَا بَنِيَّ اذْهَبُوا فَتَحَسَّسُوا مِن يُوْسُفَ وَآخِيهِ وَلَا تَأْيِسُوا مِن رَّوْحِ اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ لَا
يَأْيِسُ مِن رَّوْحِ اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الْكَافِرُونَ

He said (when once more seeing off his sons): "O my sons! Go forth and seek earnestly for Joseph and his brother; and do not despair of God's Mercy, for none ever despairs of God's Mercy, except people who disbelieve in Him. " (Surah Yusuf, 87)²

قَالَ وَمَنْ يَقْنَطُ مِن رَّحْمَةِ رَبِّهِ إِلَّا الضَّالُّونَ

He said: "Who would despair of his Lord's mercy, other than those who are astray?" (Surah Al-Hijr, 56)³

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ يَبْتَغُونَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمُ الْوَسِيلَةَ أَيُّهُمْ أَقْرَبُ وَيَرْجُونَ رَحْمَتَهُ
وَيَخَافُونَ عَذَابَهُ إِنَّ عَذَابَ رَبِّكَ كَانَ مَحْذُورًا

Those whom they invoke themselves seek a means to approach their Lord, each trying to be nearer to Him, hoping for His mercy and fearing His punishment. The punishment of your Lord is surely to be feared and avoided. (Surah Al-Isra', 57)⁴

¹ http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=39&min=50&show=10

² http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=12&min=80&show=10

³ http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=15&min=50&show=10

⁴ http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=17&min=50&show=10

وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا وَادْعُوهُ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا إِنَّ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ
مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

(Keep within the bounds He has decreed:) Do not cause disorder and corruption on the earth seeing that it has been so well ordered, and call upon Him with fear (of His punishment) and longing (for His forgiveness and mercy). God's mercy is indeed near to those devoted to doing good, aware that God is seeing them. (Surah Al-A'raf, 56)⁵

HADITH

It was narrated from Anas that the Prophet (ﷺ) entered upon a young man who was dying and said:

"How do you feel?" He said: "I have hope in Allah, O Messenger of Allah, but I fear my sins." The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: "These two things (hope and fear) do not coexist in the heart of a person in a situation like this, but Allah will give him that which he hopes for and keep him safe from that which he fears."⁶

Al-Bara' bin 'Azib (May Allah be pleased with them) said:

Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) asked me to recite whenever I go to bed: "Allahumma aslamtu nafsī ilaika, wa wajjahtu wajhi ilaika, wa fawwadtu amri ilaika, wal-ja'tu zahri ilaika, raghbatan wa rahbatan ilaika, la malja wa la manja minka illa ilaika. Amantu bikitabikal-ladhi anzalta, wa nabiyikal-ladhi arsalta (O Allah! I have submitted myself to You, I have turned my face to You, entrusted my affairs to You; and committed my back to You out of desire for You and fear of You; expecting Your reward and fearing Your punishment). There is no refuge and no place of safety from You but with You. I believe in the Book You have revealed and in the Prophet You have sent." Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said that if anyone recited these words and died that night, he would die in the true religion. In case he remains alive till morning, he will obtain good.

[Al-Bukhari and Muslim].

In another narration: He reported Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) as saying: "If you go to bed, perform the Salat Wudu', lie down on your right side and say [the above Du'a (supplication)] and let these words be your last".⁷

It was narrated that Mu'adh bin Jabal said:

⁵ http://mquran.org/index.php?option=com_quran&action=viewayat&surano=7&min=50&show=10

⁶ <http://sunnah.com/urn/1293640>

⁷ <http://sunnah.com/riyadussaliheen/1/80>

“The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) prayed one day, and made the prayer lengthy. When he finished we said (or they said): ‘O Messenger of Allah, you made the prayer lengthy today.’ He said: ‘I offered a prayer of hope and fear. I asked Allah for three things for my nation, and He granted me two and refused one. I asked Him not to let my nation be destroyed by enemies from without, and He granted me that. And I asked Him not to let them be destroyed by drowning, and He granted me that. And I asked Him not to let them be destroyed by fighting among themselves, but He refused that.’”⁸

It was narrated that Habbah and Sawa’, the two daughters of Khalid, said:

“We entered upon the Prophet (ﷺ) when he was doing something, so we helped him with it. Then he said: ‘Do not despair of provision so long as your heads are still moving, for a person’s mother bears him red with raw skin, then Allah provides for him.’”⁹

Anas bin Malik narrated that :

the Prophet said: "Seek out the hour that is hoped for on Friday after Asr until the sun has set."¹⁰

COMMENTARIES

Tafseer by Al-Jalalyn – a verse by verse tafseer

وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا وَادْعُوهُ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا إِنَّ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ
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(Keep within the bounds He has decreed:) Do not cause disorder and corruption on the earth seeing that it has been so well ordered, and call upon Him with fear (of His punishment) and longing (for His forgiveness and mercy). God's mercy is indeed near to those devoted to doing good, aware that God is seeing them. (Surah Al-A'raf, 56)

And work not corruption in the land, through idolatry and acts of disobedience, after it has been set right, as a result of the sending forth of messengers [to it], and call upon Him in fear, of His punishment, and in hope, of His mercy — surely the mercy of God is near to the virtuous, the obedient

⁸ <http://sunnah.com/ibnmajah/36/26>

⁹ <http://sunnah.com/urn/1292670>

¹⁰ <http://sunnah.com/tirmidhi/4/2>

(qarīb, 'near', as the predicate of [the feminine noun] rahma, 'mercy', is in the masculine because it [rahma] is annexed to Allāh, 'God').¹¹

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O my sons, go and enquire about Joseph and his brother, seek news of them, and do not despair of God's [gracious] Spirit, His mercy. Indeed none despairs of the [gracious] Spirit of God save the disbelieving folk': and so they departed to Egypt [to look] for Joseph.¹²

From the Risale-I Nur Collection by Beduizzam Said Nursi – a thematic tafseer

Mathnawi Al Nuri, The Fourth Treatise, Conclusion: About four diseases, First disease: Despair

KNOW, O FRIEND, that those who fear the punishment of Hell and cannot perform their duty of servanthood to God desire the non-existence of punishment and an argument against it. When they see signs that seem to con-firm such an argument, they begin to be recruited by devils into their legions. [If you are in such a state,] give a sincere and attentive ear to the following Qur'anic verse Report [to them what I say]: "O My servants who have transgressed against their own selves! Do not despair of God's Mercy. Surely God forgives all sins; for He is the All-Forgiving, the Most Compassionate."(39:53)¹³

Fethullah Gulen - Sufism 1 – a thematic tafseer

Raja – Hope or Expectation

For a Sufi, hope means waiting for that which he or she wholeheartedly desires to come into existence, acceptance of good deeds, and forgiveness of sins. Hope or expectation, both based on the fact that the individual is solely responsible for his or her errors and sins and that all good is and originates from God's Mercy, is seen in this way: To avoid being caught in vices and faults and ruined

¹¹<http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=1&tTafsirNo=74&tSoraNo=7&tAyahNo=56&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=2>

¹²<http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=1&tTafsirNo=74&tSoraNo=12&tAyahNo=87&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=2>

¹³ https://a43ba27b67228edb1e4215c627315cc07ccd3013.googleusercontent.com/host/0B4gGR-cTc4VobVdiYTIZNFRpOGs/RN/_PDF/Sahdamar/BSN%20-%20Mesnevi%20Nuriye.pdf

by self-conceit over good deeds and virtues, an initiate must advance toward God through the constant seeking of forgiveness, prayer, avoidance of evil, and pious acts.

One's life must be lived in constant awareness of God's supervision, and one must knock tirelessly on His door with supplication and contrition. If an initiate successfully establishes such a balance between fear and hope, he or she will neither despair (of being a perfect, beloved servant of God) nor become proud of any personal virtues and thereby neglect his or her responsibilities.

True expectation, possessed by those who are sincerely loyal to the Almighty, means seeking God's favor by avoiding sins. Such people undertake as many good deeds as possible, and then turn to God in expectation of His mercy. Others, however, have a false expectation. They spend their lives in sin, all the while expecting God's favor and reward, even though they perform none of the obligatory duties. They seem to believe that God is obligated to admit everyone to Paradise. Not only is this a false expectation, it is a mark of disrespect for the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate, for such an expectation reflects their (misplaced) hope that God would violate His very nature to protect them from the consequences of their sins.

For Sufis, hope or expectation are not the same as a wish. A wish is a desire that may or may not be fulfilled, whereas hope or expectation is an initiate's active quest, through all lawful means, for the desired destination. So that God, in His Mercy, will help him or her, the initiate does everything possible, with an almost Prophetic insight and consciousness, to cause all the doors of Divine shelter to swing open. In other words, hope is the belief that like His Attributes of Knowledge, Will, and Power, God's Mercy also encompasses all creation, and the expectation that he or she may be included in His special mercy: My Mercy embraces all things (7:156); and in a hadith qudsi, a Prophetic saying whose meaning was directly revealed by God, which reads: God's Mercy exceeds His Wrath. Indifference to such Mercy, from which even devils hope to benefit in the Hereafter, and despairing of being enveloped by it, which amounts to denying it, is an unforgivable sin.

Hope means that an initiate seeks the ways to reach the Almighty in utmost reliance on His being the All-Munificent and the All-Loving. M. Lutfi Effendi expresses his hope as follows:

**Be kind to me, O my Sovereign, do not abandon favoring the needy and destitute!
Does it befit the All-Kind and Munificent to stop favoring His slaves?**

Those who are honored by such Divine kindness can be considered as having found a limitless treasure especially at a time when a person has lost whatever he or she has, is exposed to misfortune, or feels in his or her conscience the pain of being unable to do anything good or to be saved from evil. In short, when there are no means left that can be resorted to, and all of the ways out end in the Producer of all causes and means, hope illumines the way, like a heavenly mount that carries one to peaks that normally are impossible to reach.

Here I cannot help but recall the hope expressed in the last words of Imam Shafi'i in Gaza:

**When my heart was hardened and my ways were blocked,
I made my hope a ladder to Your forgiveness;
My sins are too great in my sight, but**

**When I weigh them against Your forgiveness,
Your forgiveness is much greater than them.¹⁴**

It is advisable for one to feel fear in order to abandon sin and turn to God. One should cherish hope when falling into the pit of despair and the signs of death appear. Fear removes any feeling of security against God's punishment, and hope saves the believer from being overwhelmed by despair. For this reason, one may be fearful even when all obligatory duties have been performed perfectly; one may be hopeful although he or she has been less than successful in doing good deeds. This is what is stated in the following supplication of Yahya ibn Mu'adh:

O God! The hope I feel in my heart when I indulge in sin is usually greater than the hope I feel after performing the most perfect deeds. This is because I am "impaired" with flaws and imperfections, and never sinless and infallible. When I am stained with sin, I rely on no deeds or actions but Your forgiveness. How should I not rely on Your forgiveness, seeing that You are the Generous One?¹⁵

According to many, hope is synonymous with cherishing a good opinion of the Divine Being. This is related in the following hadith qudsi: I treat My servant in the way he thinks of Me treating him.¹⁶ A man once dreamed that Abu Sahl was enjoying indescribable bounties and blessings, and asked him how he had attained such degree of reward. Abu Sahl answered: By means of my good opinion of my Lord.¹⁷ That is why we can say that if hope is a means for God's manifestation of His infinitely profound Mercy, a believer should never relinquish it. Even if one always performs good deeds and preserves his or her sincerity and altruism, since these are the accomplishments of a finite being with limited capacities, they have little importance when compared with God's forgiveness.

Fear and hope are two of the greatest gifts of God that He may implant in a believer's heart. If there is a gift greater than these, it is that one should preserve the balance between fear and hope and then use them as two wings of light to reach God.¹⁸

¹⁴ Dhahabi, *Siyar' Alam al-Nubula'*, 1.150.

¹⁵ Qushayri, *al-Risala*, 133.

¹⁶ Bukhari, *Tawhid*, 15; Muslim, *Tawba*, 1; Tirmidhi, *Dawa'at*, 132.

¹⁷ Qushayri, *al-Risala*, 134.

¹⁸ <http://fgulen.com/en/fethullah-gulens-works/1352-key-concepts-in-the-practice-of-sufism-1/24732-raja-hope-or-expectation>