

Abu Barzah al-Aslamī narrated that God's Messenger (peace be upon him) said:

- 1 On the Day of Judgement, no one's feet will move until one has been asked
- 2 about his life: how he lived through it?
- 3 About his knowledge: what did he do with it?
- 4 About his wealth: how he earned it and how he spent it?
- 5 About his body: how he used it?<sup>(1)</sup>

1 Related by al-Tirmidhī, 2417.

#### From the Qur'an

- ﴿How can you bid others to be righteous and forget yourselves, even when you read the Scriptures? Do you not understand?﴾ (2: 44)
- ﴿'Have We not given you lives long enough for anyone who would be warned to take warning?﴾ (35: 37)
- ﴿Halt them a while, for they shall be asked.﴾ (37: 24)
- ﴿Their testimony will be put on record and they will be questioned about it.﴾ (43: 19)
- ﴿Believers! Why do you say what you do not do?﴾ (61: 2)

#### The Narrator

Abu Barzah al-Aslamī was a companion of the Prophet who was better known by his appellation, Abu Barzah. His name is given differently as Naḍlah ibn 'Ubayd ibn al-Ḥārith or Naḍlah ibn 'Abdullāh ibn al-Ḥārith. He embraced Islam early and took part in the Battle of Khaybar, the takeover of Makkah and the Battle of Ḥunayn. He settled in Basrah and took part in the Muslim army that conquered Khurāsān. He was the Prophet's companion who killed 'Abdullāh ibn Khaṭal when he was holding on to the coverings of the Ka'bah, on the day of the takeover of Makkah. It was the Prophet who ordered his killing. He died in Year 65 AH 685 CE.

#### Summary

The Prophet (peace be upon him) tells us that every human being will be questioned about four matters: their life, knowledge, wealth and body. Everyone needs to be ready with answers to these questions, by using these in ways with which God is pleased.



# Message and Meaning



1 The Prophet (peace be upon him) alerts his community to the fact that every human being will be questioned about four matters when they stand before God on the Day of Judgement. They must be ready preparing their answers. By an act of His grace, God has not left these questions vague, unknown to anyone. The Prophet mentions them in detail.



2 The first of these questions is that everyone is asked about their life on earth: how they spent it, and what use they made of it. Did they obey God or spend their time disobeying Him? Hence, the Prophet (peace be upon him) was keen to advise his community to make the best use of their time in life. He said to Ibn 'Abbās: 'Make the best use of five things before you are overtaken by five different ones: your youth before you get to old age; your health before you fall ill; your means before you find yourself in poverty; your time before you are too busy; and your life before you are overtaken by death'.<sup>(1)</sup>



3 God will then ask a person about his knowledge: did he learn it to be able to sincerely serve God's cause, or to seek reputation and status? If it is the latter, then he will be one of the first people on whom judgement is passed. The Prophet says: 'The first of mankind to be judged on the Day of Judgement is... And a man who has learnt much and taught and recited the Qur'an. He is brought forward, and [God] reminds him of His favours. He acknowledges these. God says: 'What have you done with these?' The man says: 'I studied hard and taught and recited the Qur'an, and all this to please You'. God says: 'You lie. You learnt so that it would be said of you that you are a scholar, and you recited the Qur'an so that people would say that you are a reciter. It was said'. He gives His command, and the man is dragged on his face until he is thrown in the Fire'.<sup>(2)</sup>

Such a person will be asked whether he spread what he learnt with sincerity, or suppressed or manipulated it, or lied to people in the hope that some of them would be pleased with him. He will be further asked whether his own actions were consistent with his knowledge, or at variance with it, in which case he would be among those addressed by the Qur'anic verses that say: 'How can you bid others to be righteous and forget yourselves, even when you read the Scriptures? Do you not understand?' (2: 44)

'Believers! Why do you say what you do not do? Most loathsome is it in the sight of God that you say what you do not do!' (61: 2-3)



4 The third of these questions is about one's wealth: whether it was earned lawfully or through unlawful ways? Did the person use what God gave him in ways of obedience to God and to serve Islam, or to satisfy his desires in sinful ways?

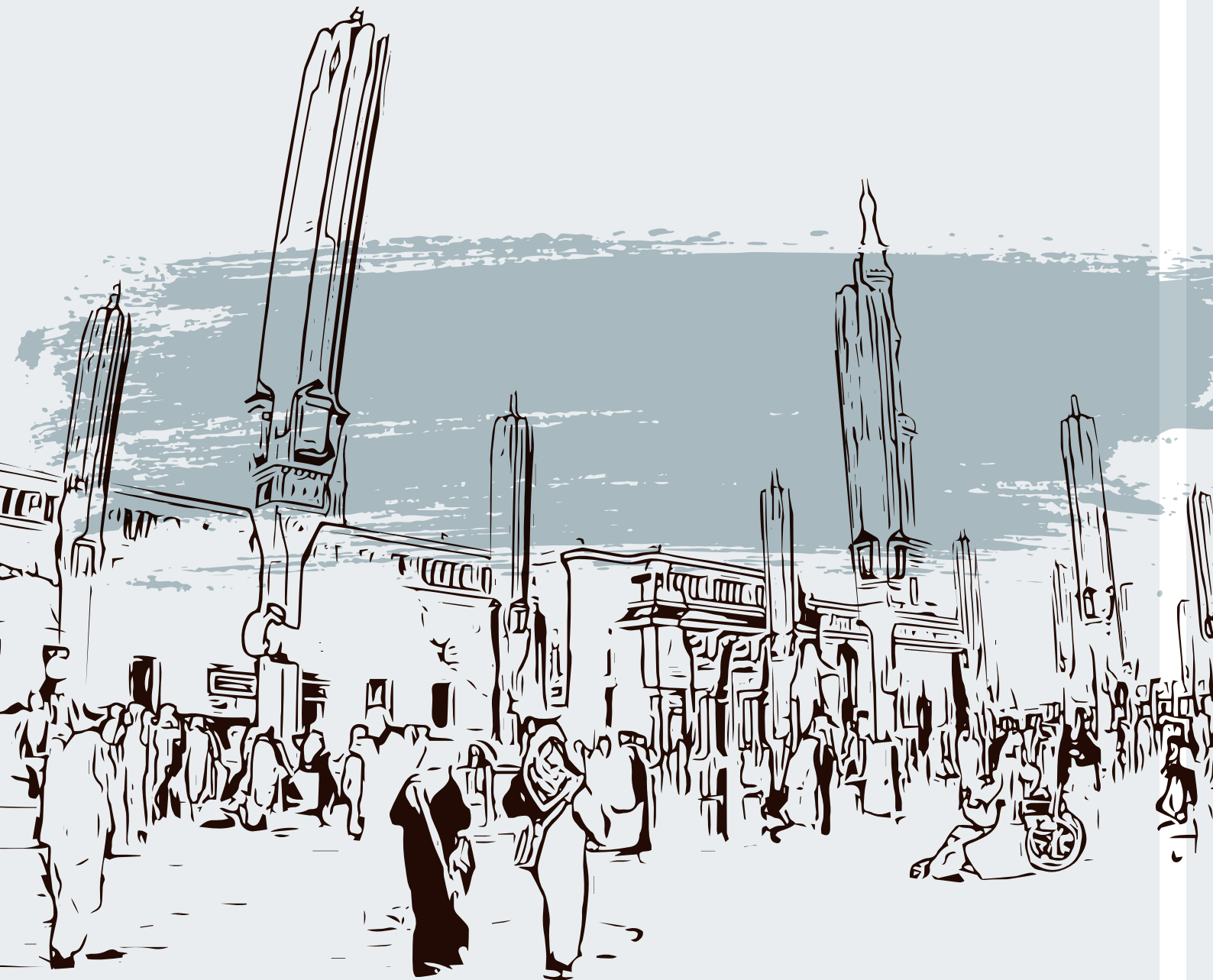
1 Related by al-Ḥākim in *al-Mustadrak*, 7846.

2 Related by Muslim, 1905.



The last of the four questions is about one's body, strength and health: how he used it and for what ends.

The hadith does not mean that people are asked only these questions. For certain, God will hold everyone to account for all what they say and do in this life. However, those four questions are the most important which will be put to everyone. All other questions are covered under these four headings.



# Implementation

1

Everyone should start preparing how to answer these questions that they will be asked in front of God. The one who knows the question but prepares no answer is indeed wretched.

2

Some believers are admitted into Heaven without facing the reckoning. They are not questioned; nor are they stopped in front of God to be asked. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'Seventy thousand of my community shall enter Heaven without being held to account'. People asked: "Who are these, Messenger of God?" He said: 'These are the ones who seek neither cauterisation nor supplication as a cure, but they place their trust in their Lord'. Admittance into Heaven is indeed great, but what is greater is to be admitted without being held to account. Everyone should endeavour to be among these.

3

Al-Fuḍayl ibn 'Iyāḍ said to someone: 'How old are you?' He said: 'I am sixty'. Al-Fuḍayl said: 'You have been walking towards your Lord for sixty years and you are about to reach your destination'. The man said: 'We all belong to God and to Him we shall all return'. Al-Fuḍayl said: 'Do you know what this means? You say that you are a servant of God and that you are returning to Him. A person who knows this should also know that he will be stood there, and that he will be questioned. He should prepare his answers'. The man asked: 'What is to be done?' Al-Fuḍayl said: 'Easy. Do well in what remains for you in this life, so that you will be forgiven what has passed. If you do badly in what remains for you in this life, you will incur the punishment for what has passed and what remains'.<sup>(1)</sup>

4

Man's life is the most precious thing he owns. It is merely a number of days and counted hours. It is important for everyone to know the value of their time, and to make the best use of every hour, spending his time in obedience of God. Indeed, God shall ask everyone about their entire lives. If one fulfils his duties, one will be safe, but if not, he will have ruined himself.

5

Be keen to make the best use of your time, doing what pleases God so that you attain the highest grades. 'Alī ibn Abi Ṭālib said: 'This life is marching, going away, but the life to come is marching, coming closer. Each has its own children. Be among the children of the life to come, not the children of this life. Today is an opportunity to work but it involves no reckoning, while tomorrow is a time for reckoning, with nothing to be done'.<sup>(2)</sup>

1 Ibn Rajab, *Jāmi' al-'Ulūm wal-Hikam*, Vol. 2, p. 383.

2 Ibn al-Qayyim, *Ighāthat al-Lahfān*, Vol. 1, p. 71.



Knowledge will serve as evidence against the one who has it. An ignorant person may cite his ignorance as an excuse, but a man of knowledge who knows God's ruling, yet disobeys Him has no excuse.



The zakat to be paid for knowledge is to spread it and teach it to others. Suppressing knowledge is a major sin for which God enforces severe punishment. He says: 'Those who conceal the clear proofs and guidance We bestowed from on high, after We have expounded it clearly for mankind in the Book, shall be cursed by God and by others who curse'. (159) The Prophet says: 'Whoever is asked about an aspect of knowledge but he suppresses it shall be fitted with a rein of fire on the Day of Judgement'.<sup>(1)</sup>



Wealth is very important in God's view. Therefore, He will ask one question each about one's life, knowledge and body, but He will ask two questions about wealth: how it was earned or obtained? And how it was spent? It is everyone's responsibility to ensure that he takes only what is lawful to him and spends it only in lawful ways.



The Prophet's companions were very keen to ensure that their food was bought with lawfully earned money. They abandoned what was unlawful and what was doubtful. Abu Bakr had a servant who brought him every day what he earned for him, and Abu Bakr used to eat of what that servant brought him. One day he brought him something and Abu Bakr started eating. The servant said to him: 'Do you know what you are eating?' He said: 'No, what is it?' He said: 'In pre-Islamic days, I told the fortune of a certain person. I did not know how to tell the fortune, but I deceived the man. It chanced that it came true. The man later met me and gave me something. This is what I have served you now. Abu Bakr put his fingers in his mouth and threw up all that was in his belly'.<sup>(2)</sup>



Your body is given to you in trust. God has placed it with you. Protect it by your obedience of God and trying to draw closer to Him. Never place it in a position of ruin through disobedience of God.

1 Related by Abu Dāwūd, 3658; al-Tirmidhī, 2649; Ibn Mājah, 264.

2 Related by al-Bukhari, 3842.

