**The Trust Given to Man**

Verily God has purchased from the believers their persons and their property that Paradise might be theirs.

[Qur’an 9:111]

If you wish to understand how profitable a trade it is, and how honourable a rank, to sell one’s person and property to God, to be His slave and His soldier, then listen to the following parable.

Once a king entrusted each of two of his subjects with an estate, including all necessary workshops, machinery, horses, weapons and so forth. But since it was a tempestuous and war-ridden age, nothing enjoyed stability; it was destined either to disappear or to change. The king in his infinite mercy sent a most noble lieutenant to the two men and by means of a compassionate decree conveyed the following to them:

"Sell me the property you now hold in trust, so that I may keep it for you. Let it not be destroyed for no purpose. After the wars are over, I will return it to you in a better condition than before. I will regard the trust as your property, and pay you a high price for it. As for the machinery and the tools in the workshop, they will be used in my name and at my workbench. But the price and the fee for their use shall be increased a thousandfold. You will receive all the profit that accrues. You are indigent and resourceless, and unable to provide the most on these great tasks. So let me assume the provision of all expenses and equipment, and give you all the income and the profit. You shall keep it until the time of demobilisation. So see the manifold ways in which you shall profit! Now in you do not sell me the property, you can see that no one is able to preserve what he possesses, and you too will lose what you now hold. It will go for nothing, and you will lose the high price I offer. The delicate and precious tools and scales, the precious metals waiting to be used, will also lose all value. You will have the trouble and concern of administering and preserving, but at the same time be punished for betraying your trust. So see the manifold ways in which you may lose! Moreover, if you sell the property to me, you become my soldier and act in my name. Instead of a common recruit or irregular, you will be the honored and free lieutenant of an exalted monarch."

After they had listened to this gracious decree, the more intelligent of the two men said:

"By all means, I am proud and happy to sell. I offer thanks a thousandfold."

But the other was arrogant, selfish and dissipated; his soul had become as proud as the Pharaoh. As if he was to stay eternally on that estate, he ignored the earthquakes and tumults of this world. He said:

"No! Who is the king? I won't sell my property, nor spoil my enjoyment."

After a short time, the first man reached so high a rank that everyone envied his state. He received the favor of the king, and lived happily in the king’s own palace. The other by contrast fell into such a state that everyone pitied him, but also said he deserved it. For as a result of his error, his happiness and property departed, and he suffered punishment and torment.

O soul full of caprices! Look at the face of truth through the telescope of this parable. As for the king, he is the Monarch of Pre- and Post-Eternity, your Lord and Creator. The estates, machinery, tools and scales are your possessions while in life's fold; your body, spirit and heart within those possessions, and your outward and inward senses such as the eye and the tongue, intelligence and imagination. As for that most noble lieutenant, it is the Noble Messenger of God; and that most wise decree is the Wise Qur'an, which describes the trade we are discussing in this verse:

Verily God has purchased from the believers their persons and property that Paradise might be theirs.

The surging field of battle is the tempestuous surface of the world, which ceaselessly changes, dissolves and reforms and causes every man to think:

"Since everything will leave our hands, will perish and be lost, is there no way in which we can transform it into something eternal and preserve it?"

While engaged in these thoughts, he suddenly hears the heavenly voice of the Qur'an saying:

"Indeed there is, a beautiful and easy way which contains five profits within itself."

What is that way?

To sell the trust received back to its true owner. Such a sale yields profit fivefold.

***The First Profit:*** Transient property becomes everlasting. For this waning life, when given to the Eternal and Self-Subsistent Lord of Glory and spent for His sake, will be transmuted into eternity. It will yield eternal fruits. The moments of one's life will apparently vanish and rot like kernels and seeds. But then the flowers of blessedness and auspiciousness will open and bloom in the realm of eternity, and each will also present a luminous and reassuring aspect in the intermediate realm.

***The Second Profit:*** The high price of Paradise is given in exchange.

***The Third Profit:*** The value of each limb and each sense is increased a thousandfold. The intelligence is, for example, like a tool. If you do not sell it to God Almighty, but rather employ it for the sake of the soul, it will become an ill-omened, noxious and debilitating tool that will burdens your weak person with all the sad sorrows of the past and the terrifying fears of the future; it will descend to the rank of an inauspicious and destructive tool. It is for this reason that a sinful man will frequently resort to drunkenness or frivolous pleasure in order to escape the vexations and injuries of his intelligence. But if you sell your intelligence to its True Owner and employ it on His behalf, then the intelligence will become like the key to a talisman, unlocking the infinite treasures of Compassion and the vaults full of wisdom that creation contains.

To take another example, the eye is one of the senses, a window through which the spirit looks out on this world. If you do not sell it to God Almighty, but rather employ it on behalf of the soul, by gazing upon a handful of transient, impermanent beauties and scenes, it will sink to the level of being a pander to lust and the concupiscent soul. But if you sell the eye to your All-Seeing Maker, and employ it on His behalf and within limits traced out by Him, then your eye will rise to the rank of a reader of the Great Book of Being, a witness to the miracles of the Lord's creation, a blessed bee sucking on the blossoms of Mercy in the garden of this globe.

Yet another example is that of the tongue and the sense of taste. If you do not sell it to your Wise Creator, but employ it instead on behalf of the soul and for the sake of the stomach, it sinks and declines to the level of a gatekeeper at the stable of the stomach, a watchman at its factory.

But if you sell it to the Noble Provider, then the sense of taste contained in the tongue will raise to the rank of a skilled overseer at the treasure of Divine compassion, a grateful inspector in the kitchens of God's eternal power.

So look well, O intelligence! See the difference between a tool of destruction and the key to all being! And look carefully, O eye! See the difference between an abominable pander and the learned overseer of the Divine Library! And taste well, O tongue! See the difference between a stable doorkeeper or a factory watchman and the trustee of the treasure of God's mercy!

Compare all other tools and limbs to these, and then you will understand that in truth the believer acquires a nature worthy of Paradise and the unbeliever a nature conforming to Hell. The reason for each of them attaining his respective value is that the believer, by virtue of his faith, uses the trust of his Creator on His behalf and within the limits traced out by Him, whereas the unbeliever betrays the trust and employs it for the sake of the concupiscent soul.

**The Fourth *Profit****:* Man is helpless and exposed to numerous misfortunes. He is indigent, and his needs are numerous. He is weak, and the burden of life is most heavy. If he does not rely on the Omnipotent Lord of Glory, place his trust in Him and confidently submit to Him, his conscience will always be troubled. Fruitless torments, pains and regrets will suffocate him and intoxicate him, or turn him into a beast.

**The Fifth *Profit****:* Those who have experienced sapiental knowledge and had unveiled to them the true nature of things, the elect who have witnessed the truth, are all agreed that the exalted reward for all the worship and glorification of God performed by your members and instruments will be given to you at the time of greatest need, in the form of the fruits of Paradise.

If you spurn this trade with its fivefold profit in addition to being deprived of its profit, you will suffer fivefold loss.

**The First Loss**: The property and offspring to which you are so attached, the soul and its caprice that you worship, the youth and life with which you are infatuated, all will vanish and be lost; your hands will be empty. But they will Leave behind them sin and pain, fastened on your neck like a yoke.

***The Second* Loss**: l you will suffer the penalty for betrayal of trust. For you will have wronged your own self by using the most precious tools on the most worthless objects.

***The Third* Loss**: By casting down all the precious faculties of man to a level much inferior to the animals, you will have insulted and transgressed against God's wisdom.

**The Fourth Loss**: In your weakness and poverty, you will have placed the heavy burden of life on your weak shoulders, and will constantly groan and lament beneath the blows of transience and separation.

You will have clothed in an ugly form, fit to open the gates of Hell in front of you, the fair gifts of the Compassionate One such as the intelligence, the heart, the eye and the tongue, given to you to make preparation for the foundations of life everlasting and blessedness in the hereafter.

Now is it so difficult to sell the trust? Is it so burdensome that many people shun the transaction? By no means! It is not in the least burdensome. For the limits of the permissible are broad, and are quite adequate for man's desire; there is no need to trespass on the forbidden. The duties imposed by God are light and few in number. To be the slave and soldier of God is an indescribably pleasurable honor. One's duty is simply to act and embark on all things in God's name, like a soldier; to take and to give on God's behalf; to move and be still in accordance with His permission and law. If one falls short, then one should seek His forgiveness, say:

"O Lord! Forgive our faults, and accept us as Thy slaves; entrust us with Thy trust until the time of restitution arrives, amen!" and make petition unto Him.

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**Proofs of Resurrection**

· A chapter on God's bestowal of life and death, and on the manifestation of the Names of Eternally Living and Self-Subsistent, and Giver of Life and Giver of Death.

IS IT AT ALL POSSIBLE that the One Who gives life to this vast dead and dry earth; Who in so doing demonstrates His power by deploying more than three hundred thousand different forms of creation, each of them as remarkable as man; Who further demonstrates in this deployment His all-embracing knowledge by the infinite distinctions and differentiations He makes in the complex intermingling of all of those forms; Who directs the gaze of all His slaves to everlasting bliss by promising them resurrection in all of His heavenly decrees; Who demonstrates the splendor of His lordship by causing all parts of His creation to collaborate with one another, to revolve within the circle of His command and His will, to aid one another and be submitted to Him; Who shows the importance He has given to man by creating him as the most comprehensive, the most precious and delicate, the most valued and valuable fruit on the tree of creation by addressing him without intermediary and subjugating all things to him-is it at all possible that so compassionate and powerful a One, so wise and all-knowing a One, should not bring about resurrection; should not gather His creatures together or be unable to do so; should not restore man to life, or be unable to do so; should not be able to inaugurate His Supreme Court; should not be able to create Heaven and Hell? Nay, indeed, by no means is any of this possible.

Indeed, the Almighty Disposer of this world's affairs creates in every century, every year and every day, on the narrow and transient face of the globe, numerous signs, examples and indications of the Supreme Gathering and the Plain of Resurrection.

Thus in the gathering that takes place every spring we see that in the course of five or six days more than three hundred thousand different kinds of animal and plant are first gathered together and then dispersed. The roots of all the trees and plants, as well as some animals, are revived and restored exactly as they were. The other animals are recreated in a form so similar as to be almost identical. The seeds which appear, in their outward form, to be so close to each other, nonetheless, in the course of six days or six weeks, become distinct and differentiated from each other, and then with extreme speed, ease and facility, are brought to life in the utmost order and equilibrium. is it at all possible that for the One Who does all of this anything should be difficult; that He should be unable to create the heavens and the earth in six days; that He should be unable to resurrect men with a single blast? No, by no means is it possible!

Let us suppose there were to be some gifted writer who could write out in a single hour the confused and obliterated letters of three hundred thousand books on a single sheet without any error, omission or defect, complete and in the best form. If someone were then to say to you that that writer could write out again from memory in the course of a single minute a book written by him that had fallen into the water and become obliterated, would you then say than he is unable, and would you not believe in his ability? Or think of some talented king who, in order to demonstrate his power or for the sake of providing a warning example, removes whole mountains with a single command, turns his realm upside down, and transforms the sea into dry And. Then you see that a great rock rolls down into a valley, so that the path is blocked for guests travelling to attend the king s reception and they are unable to pass. If someone should say to you, "That exalted one will remove or dissolve the stone, however great it may be, with a single command; he will not leave his guests stranded," would you then say that he will not remove the stone, or be unable to do so Or if someone one day should gather together a great army, and you are then informed that he will summon its battalions together with a blast of the trumpet after they had dispersed to rest, and the battalions will form up in disciplined shape, would you respond by saying, "I don’t believe it" Were you to say any of these things, your behavior would truly be madness.

If you have understood these three parables, now look further and see how the Pre-eternal Designer turns over in front of our eyes the white page of winter and opens the green page of spring and summer. Then He inscribes on the page of the earth's surface, the pen of Fate and Destiny in the most beautiful form, more than three hundred thousand species of creation. Not one encroaches upon another. He writes them all together, but none blocks the path of another. In their formation and shape, each is kept separate from the other, without any confusion. There is no error in writing. That Wise and Protecting One, Who puffiness’ and inserts the spirit of a great tree in the smallest seed, no bigger than a dot-is it permissible even to ask how He preserves the spirit of those who die That Powerful One Who causes the globe to revolve like a pebble in a sling-is it permissible even to ask how He will remove this globe from the path of His guests who are travelling to meet Him in the hereafter?

Again, the One of Glorious Essence Who from nonbeing recruits anew and inscribes into His battalions, with the command of:

"Be," and behold, it is,

and with utmost discipline, the troops of all living things, the very particles of all their bodies, and thus creates highly disciplined armies-is it permissible even to ask how He can make bodies submit to His discipline like a battalion, how He can gather together their mutually acquainted fundamental particles, their component members?

You can, moreover, behold with your own eye the numerous designs made by God as signs, similes and indications of resurrection, designs placed by Him in every age and epoch of the world, in the alternation of day and night, even in the appearance and disappearance of clouds in the sky. If you imagine yourself to have been living a thousand years ago, and then compare with each other the two wings of time that are the past and the future, then you will behold similes of the gathering and indications of resurrection as numerous as the centuries and days. If, then, after witnessing so many similes and indications, you regard corporeal resurrection as improbable and rationally unacceptable, know your behavior to be pure lunacy.

See what the Supreme Decree says concerning the truth we are discussing:

Look upon the signs of God's mercy, and see how He restores life to the earth after its death. Verily He it is Who shall bring to life the dead, and He is powerful over all things.

In short, there is nothing that makes impossible the gathering of resurrection and much that necessitates it. The glorious and eternal Lordship, the almighty and all-embracing Sovereignty of the he Who gives life and death to this vast and wondrous earth as if it were a mere animal; Who has made of this earth a pleasing cradle, a fine ship, for man and the animals; Who has made of the sun a lamp furnishing light and heat to. the hostelry of the world; Who has made of the planets vehicles for the conveyance of His angels-the Lordship and Sovereignty of such a One cannot rest upon and be restricted to the transitory, impermanent, unstable, insignificant, changeable, unlasting, deficient and imperfect affairs of this world. In other words, He has another realm, one worthy of Him, permanent, stable, immutable and glorious. He has another kingdom, and it is for the sake a: this that He causes us the labor, and to this :hat He summons is. All those of illumined spirit who have penetrated from outer appearances to truth, and have been ennobled with proximity to the Divine Presence, all the spiritual poles endowed with luminous hearts, all the possessors of lucent intelligence, all bear witness that He will transfer us to that other kingdom. They inform us unanimously that He has prepared for us there reward and requital, and relate that He is repeatedly giving us firm promises and stern warnings.

As for the breaking of a promise, it is baseness and utter humiliation. It cannot in any way be reconciled with the Glory of His Sanctity. Similarly, failure to fulfil a threat arises either from forgiveness or powerlessness. Now unbelief is extreme crime, and cannot be forgiven.\* The Absolutely Omnipotent One is exempt from and exalted above all powerlessness. Those who bring us their testimony and report, despite all the differences in their methods, temperaments and paths, are totally unanimous and agreed on this basic matter. By their number, they have the authority of unanimity. By their quality, they have the authority of learned consensus. By their rank, each one is a guiding star of mankind, the cherished eye of a people, the object of a nation's veneration. By their importance, each one is an expert and an authority in the matter. In any art or science, two experts are preferred to thousands of non-experts, and two positive affirmers are preferred to thousands of negators in the transmission of a report. For example, the testimony of two men affirming the sighting of the crescent moon at the beginning of Ramadan totally nullifies the negation of thousands of deniers.

[\* Unbelief denounces retain for alleged worthlessness and meaninglessness. lt is an insult to all of creation, a denial of the manifestation of the Divine Names in the mirror of bearings. It is disrespect to all the Divine Names, and rejection of the witness borne to the Divine Unity by al! beings. It is a denial of all of creation. It corrupts man's potentialities in such a way that they are incapable of reform and unreceptive to good. Unbelief is also an act of utter injustice, a transgression against all of creation and the rights of God's Names. The preservation of those rights, as well as the unredeemable nature of the unbeliever's soul, make it necessary that unbelief should he unpardonable. The words, 'To assign partners to God is verily a great transgression" (Qur’an 31:13) express this meaning.]

In short, in the whole world there is no truer report, no firmer claim, no more apparent truth than this. The world is without doubt a field, and resurrection a threshing floor, a harvest. Paradise and Hell are each storehouses for the grain.