**Intention**



**3:29**. Say (to the believers): "Whether you keep secret what is in your bosoms or reveal it, God knows it. He knows whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. God has full power over everything." (1)



**17:84**. Say: "Every one acts according to his own character (made up of his creed, worldview and disposition), and your Lord knows best who is better guided in his way." (2)

1. Umar ibn al-Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him, said, “I heard the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, say, ‘Indeed, actions only go by intentions. Everyone gets what they intend. Anyone, therefore, who emigrates to Allah and His Messenger, his emigration is indeed to Allah and His Messenger. But anyone who emigrates to gain something of this world or to marry a woman, his emigration is to that to which he emigrated.’” (Sahih al-Bukhari, Iman, 41; Sahih Muslim, Imara, 155). (3)

#  DEEDS ARE TO BE JUDGED ACCORDING TO INTENTIONS

“Deeds are judged by their intentions and every man shall have only that which he intended. The migration of those who migrated for the sake of God and His Messenger was for God and his Messenger, while the migration of one whose migration was to achieve some worldly benefit or to take someone in marriage was for that which he migrated.”
(Muslim, Imara, 155; Abu Dawud, Talaq, 10)
The prime topic of this hadith is the migration, and it was uttered in connection with the following incident: During the period when everyone began migrating from Mecca to Medina in the hope of obtaining the pleasure of the Creator, one of the Companions, migrated to be with a woman he loved dearly called Umm Qays. This Companion without doubt was a devoted and faithful man, but the motive of his migration was his intention for marriage.
He had also migrated, but for the sake of the woman he loved, he bore great difficulties and hardships that should only be endued for the sake of God and this is reflected in the hadith. The hadith is not just a comment aimed at a particular subject; rather it is a ruling that is concerned with every aspect of a person’s life.
Everybody is rewarded according to the intention of their act; if they immigrate for the sake of God and his Messenger, then they will be rewarded accordingly. This is also the case with praying, fasting and giving charitable alms. Those who seek merit and grace from the Creator will be constantly rewarded with the compassion, kindness, and beneficence of the Almighty.
When a human being reaches this level of compassion they will persist in increasing their affection and relationship by prostrating before their Creator, totally overwhelmed with joy, excitement and aspiration. As they become closer to their Lord, this enthusiasm and emotion will prevail over every action. When one surpasses the universe they will stand before the Creator wherever they go, be it in the grave, in the abode of torment, on the Day of Judgment or on the bridge that stretches over hellfire. If a person’s actions are successful in reaching the Liva al-Hamd they will encounter the Prophet of the Universe, an event that is beyond anything they could ever imagine.
If the sole intention of a person is not the the quest for Divine pleasure, any difficulty they endure will be in vain; if their intention to migrate was to be with the woman they loved then they suffer hardship and adversity for the material pleasures of this life. A person who ignores the voice that emerges deep from their soul, the emotions of their conscience, a person who lives for the pleasures of the world and wastes their life seeking enjoyment wherever possible will never prosper or obtain the pleasures of those whose every action is carefully calculated to please their Creator.
In another hadith the Prophet says that the intention of a believer is more important than his deed. However great an effort one exerts it is nearly impossible to have one’s actions match the sincerity of their intentions, but the Creator of great compassion rewards a person according to the sincere intention of their soul, not their actions. Thus, it is quite clear that a believer’s intentions are a greater advantage than their physical actions.
I would like to focus on another hadith that is related to the same subject: “Indeed, there is in the body a piece of flesh which if it is sound then the whole body is sound and if it is corrupt then the whole body is corrupt. Indeed it is the heart” (Bukhari, Iman, 39). If a believer is sincere in their soul, then every seed of prosperity they sow in life will mature and then flourish into branches of benevolence. These branches will be their shade on the Day of Judgment. The seeds sown with sincerity of heart will grow in prosperity and appear before us on the Day of Questioning in the form of the benevolent fruits of Paradise.
The ordinary chores of a Muslim’s daily life are transformed into acts of worship through good intentions; every single breath of the believer who sleeps with the intention of waking for prayer during the night will be considered as a part of their worship. If we consider our lifespan on this earth, how could we possibly attain Paradise in such a short span of time? Because of our intention of eternal servitude to God, believers are blessed with admittance into the gardens of Paradise, whereas disbelievers are doomed by their intention of eternal ungratefulness.
Good intentions, ranging from the most insignificant to the greatest of actions, are the only aspect that enhances the true value and worthiness of human life in this world and the rewards in the Hereafter. The intention of kindness is a great benefit in this life. If a person has the intention of evil in their soul, but refrains from performing this evil action, they will be rewarded accordingly; however, if the intention of evil remains this is not classed as a sin. Only when this evil action is actually put into practice will it be recorded as one sin. Still, we should not underestimate any sins.
We should not ignore the significance of migration in this hadith. Every believer who leaves his homeland, family, wife and children to convey the truth to others is in a perpetual circle of compassion and, without a doubt, will be rewarded in the Hereafter for their sincere intentions. No specific reward for such great actions has been mentioned; this can be owing to a surprise reward to be granted in the Hereafter.
The definite article in Arabic (al-) at the beginning of the word “deeds” denotes that deeds gain a true value only through intention. No form of worship can be accepted without sincere intention, and therefore if a person continuously prays, fasts, spends of their wealth, performs the rituals of Hajj without the intention to do so in their heart, then their actions are in vain. Prayer, fasting, charity and Hajj are only acceptable forms of worship if a person has a sincere intention in their soul, thus making it the actual intention that transforms actions into worship.
If we take another look at the topic of the hadith, we can see that the Prophet first defined the vast subject of “intention” in three short words, and then with a few sentences he expressed the gist of an important matter like hijra—whose meaning covers a wide scope of acts, from abandoning sins to all of the migrations to be realized for the sake of God until the end of the world.
It may be of use to elaborate on this with another hadith: “The greatest muhajir (emigrant) is he who abandons sin” (Nasai, Iman, 9) One day Ibrahim ibn Adham prayed to his Lord: “O Lord! With Your love in my heart, I have forsaken everything and come to You. After finding You, I do not see anything else wherever I look.” At a time when his soul was so full of spiritual emotion Ibrahim ibn Adham saw his son next to the Ka‘ba. When the young man recognized his father they ran to each other in a state of elation and embraced one another. Just then Ibrahim heard a voice saying: “O Ibrahim, there cannot be two objects of love in one heart” and Ibrahim started praying: “O God, take from me what prevents Your love,” and his son instantly dropped dead.
Avoiding the sins and evil in this world and turning to the Creator in a state of repentance, asking forgiveness until one’s prayers are accepted by the Almighty is a form of hijra which has been beautifully expressed in the following prayer:
“O God, Your sinful servant stands before You. Seeking Your forgiveness, professing his sins and begging to be forgiven.
If You grant forgiveness, this is out of Your glory.
And if You dismiss him, there is no one else to show mercy.”
A person who abandons their past sins and acknowledges that the repetition of these sins deserves a punishment that is greater than the fire of hell is on the true path of hijra. Those who avoid the forbidden boundaries of Islam, perceiving it to be like a field of hidden mines waiting to explode, those who refrain from the prohibited aspects of religion with their actions and speech, continuing to perform a holy migration throughout their lives, whether they are among others or in seclusion, maintain the emotion of hijra in their souls.
Nevertheless, seclusion is another distinct aspect of hijra, for this is where devoted believers reach a true understanding of divinity.
We can examine the main subjects and explanations of this hadith as follows:
a- Intention is the spirit of any action; actions with no intention have no significance.
b- Intention is the light of spirituality which turns evil into good and good into evil.
c- A person’s actions are transformed into good deeds with intentions, thus hijra with no sincere intention would be a migration of no importance, Hajj a deceptive journey, prayer a routine of physical action and fasting nothing more than abstinence. Pure intention of the soul is the only possible way to convert these actions into good deeds and forms of worship that will lead us to the gates of Paradise.
d- Eternal Paradise is the result of the sincere intention of eternal servitude, whereas the eternal flames of hell are the consequence of eternal denial and blasphemy.
e- A minimal degree of effort opens the doors of opportunity. A believer can achieve rewards of great value both for this world and the Hereafter simply with the sincere intention of the soul.
f- Those who know the value of sincere intention in the sight of God will be in a position to aspire great achievements.

[**Can Our Intention Save Us?**](http://www.neicc.net/can-our-intention-save-us/)

An intention that leads to the appropriate intended action being taken may save a person. An intention that does not result in any determination to bring about the intended result cannot save a person. To have an intention means to have an aim and a purpose. It is also a state of mind and a commitment. To have a clear intention means realizing clearly what one desires and which path to follow, attaining the appropriate state of mind, and then seeking the means to achieve the envisaged purpose.

Intention is the spring of all action. Whether conscious or not, intention gives a person the right to claim responsibility for particular actions. It is also the firm ground of will and power to bring about particular results. Everything related to humanity and to the world, both in its inception and continuance, depends upon someone’s intention.

Everything first comes into the mind as an idea and, depending upon whether or not one plans to bring it into reality, may later become a reality via perseverance. If Without the initial idea is not transformed into an intention, a project cannot bear any useful fruit. Without perseverance, defined as intent sustained through determination and resolve, no project can succeed.

Intention has a decisive role with regard to good and bad deeds. Its quality can act like a cure for any disease or disadvantage, or be the hidden catastrophe that destroys all accomplishments in a single moment. Deeds that appear very small and insignificant can engender huge positive or negative consequences, based solely on the underlying intention.

All actions undertaken in the consciousness of serving God, such as praying or temporarily refraining from some permitted pleasures, increase our rewards and raise us to a higher spiritual level. Of course, the reverse is also true. We please God by performing or renouncing certain actions according to His law, and thereby attain the best stature.

And yet at other times we may do exactly the same thing and have it mean nothing to God, for we do it without the proper intention. For example, martyrdom on the battlefield is one of the highest achievements in Islam. Those who hope for it but fight only out of their own whim and desire are not considered martyrs, and so do not receive that reward. On the other hand, those who consistently and sincerely ask for martyrdom but die in their own beds are considered martyrs, for they sincerely intended to defend Islam and provide a better future for Muslims. They have the right to hope for the reward of martyrdom and Paradise.

Intention is a key that opens the door of the infinite. When used properly, it opens the door to eternal happiness, for all duties performed properly and sincerely are rewarded not according to the amount of time spent on them, but according to the degree they involve and affect one’s life. If this key is not used properly, it leads to eternal misery and wretchedness.

Thus a believer may attain Paradise after a short life, while an unbeliever who has lived just as long will attain eternal punishment and misery. Otherwise, according to external justice, people must be rewarded according to the amount of their good and bad deeds, as well as their virtues or vices. This would mean that they would stay in Paradise as long as they had lived righteously, and in Hell as long as they lived evilly. But as eternity is the ultimate end for both good and bad people, eternal happiness or punishment lies in one’s intention. An intention to live faithfully and righteously forever will result in eternal happiness, just as an intention to live in denial, rejection, and corruption forever will result in eternal misfortune.

If, in their last minutes of life, conscious and devoted servants of God were given the chance to live another 1,000 years, they would lead lives of the same caliber. Based on this sincere intention, it would be accepted and rewarded accordingly, for believers’ intentions are more benevolent than their deeds. [4] The same would be true of unbelievers, who would continue to live their evil lives if given the same choice. So, people are rewarded or punished according to their intention. The intention to acquire true faith and to preserve it results in eternal bliss; the opposite results in eternal torment.

Satan will pay most dearly for the everlasting unbelief he encourages or nurtures. Satan has undeniable effects on people, some of which are good. As a result of his activities, some people improve their innate capacities, discover and refine their hidden values and virtues, and become more alert and conscious.

Satan attacks individuals and peoples. By sowing poisonous seeds in our hearts, he seeks to trap us in vice and evil. Our spiritual faculties warn us against his temptations and corruption, and call us to battle, just as particular bodily cells raise the alarm and resist infection.

Just as resistance to disease improves the body’s immunity, our spiritual state is strengthened by seeking refuge in the All-Mighty. Given this, we stand to gain much more benefit than harm from Satan’s attacks. Any testing of the spirit increases its alertness, consciousness, and power to resist. All of these make the spirit even more determined to do what is right, and more prudent when it encounters danger. Such testing transforms warriors into veterans in the way of God, martyrs and saints, and distinguishes believers from unbelievers.

Yet Satan has no share in the reward of those who attain high virtue by struggling against him, for he intends to lead people astray and corrupt them out of spite and rancor. He is punished eternally for his evil intention and bad deeds:

God asked: “What prevented you from bowing down when I commanded you?” Satan replied: “I am better than he. You created me from fire, and him from clay.” God said: Get out. It is not for you to be arrogant here. Get out, for you are of the meanest.” He said: “Give me respite till the day they are raised up.” God replied: “Be among those who have respite.” Satan said: “Because you have thrown me out of the Path, I will lie in wait for them on Your Straight Path.” (7:12–16)

After his jealous and arrogant disobedience, Satan willfully chose the way of rebellion and unbelief. His oath to lead people astray is the beginning of our never-ending tragedy.

In sum, intention is almost everything for believers, for it can elevate our most routine acts and produce much fruit. Its quality and content opens the door to the eternal and blissful life, as well as the door to eternal punishment and misery. As we say: “Actions are judged only by intentions, and a person will have only what was intended.” [5] (6)

**References**

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**(2) 17:84. The Quran with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English by Ali Unal**

**(3) Nawawi, Imam. Riyad As-Salihin; The Gardens of the Righteous: A collection of authentic hadiths. Tughra Books Press, Inc. 2014**

**[4] Majma’ al-Zawa’id, 1:69 and 1:109.
[5] Bukhari, Bad’ al-Wahy, 1; Muslim, Imara, 155; Abu Dawud, Talaq, 11.**

**(6)Gulen, Muhammed Fethullah. Questions and Answers about Islam. The Light, Inc. 2005**