

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH MOST GRACIOUS MOST COMPASSIONATE

TOWARDS A READING SOCIETY

Praise be to God, the Lord of the worlds who made from knowledge a basic element for the development of nations and the prosperity of cultures. He urged His people to pursue knowledge with all the energies and capacities they have. I bear witness that there is no God worthy of worship except Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad (Pbuh) is His servant and Messenger. He was sent by His God as guidance for people and to advocate them for knowledge and learning acquisition. May Allah grant peace and honor on him, his family and companions and whoever followed his teachings and adhered to his method to the Day of Judgment.

O Servants of Allah

Fear Allah , as to fear Him saves you from sedations and protects you from trial. [O you who have believed, if you fear Allah , He will grant you a criterion and will remove from you your misdeeds and forgive you. And Allah is the possessor of great bounty]¹. You should know, May Allah bestow success upon you, that the pursuit of knowledge is the best thing you can spend the hours of your day on, and the greatest activity with which you can fill your time. The texts of the Holy Quran and Sunnah commended the advantages of knowledge and the people of knowledge (educated) and urged for learning and acquiring knowledge. Almighty God honored this nation as He attributed it with both knowledge and work alike. Actually, it is with knowledge that glories are built and civilizations are settled. Even a Muslim can build his own personality, be a true slave to Allah, and provide his family, society and nation to which he belongs with whatever is good, only with knowledge. Yet, as long as ignorance prevails in a nation it destroys its pillars and breaks its structure. This is why; the first advocacy of Islam was

¹ Surat Al-'Anfāl-29

commending the importance of knowledge and making it the principal element in building individuals' identity and constructing their communities. Almighty God says in the first surat (chapter) of the Holy Quran [Recite in the name of your Lord who created – Created man from a clinging substance. Recite, and your Lord is the most Generous – Who taught by the pen – Taught man that which he knew not]². He, Glory be to Him, also highlighted the position of people of knowledge when His Almighty said [O you who have believed, when you are told, "Space yourselves" in assemblies, then make space; Allah will make space for you. And when you are told, "Arise," then arise; Allah will raise those who have believed among you and those who were given knowledge, by degrees. And Allah is acquainted with what you do]³.

O Believers

Whoever observes the life/ biography of the Prophet (Al-sīra al-Nabawiyya) , finds out that the Messenger of Allah (Pbuh) and his companions as well had responded to this divine command. Therefore, they devoted themselves to reading and writing for they were aware of the abundant effects of it on life in general. If we only know much the Prophet (Pbuh) was keen on that (reading and writing). In effect, after the battle of Badr, the Prophet (Pbuh) asked some prisoners to gain their freedom by teaching 10 Muslims to read and write. So that when he died, the Prophet (Pbuh) left many scribes of the revelation who shouldered the task of writing and compilation of the Holy Quran. Furthermore, during the life of the Messenger of Allah, May Allah grant him peace and honor, many messages and covenants were written. Thus, this was the way how Muslims turned out from ignorance to literacy and Islamic sciences spread all over the countries of the earth and illuminated them with knowledge and sciences.

O Muslims

The super powers in the world today do not acquire their power merely from their military might or their economic domination. Equally, knowledge and sciences they have fulfilled so far actively contribute in this power. This is why Muslims should rise up and contribute in the production of different sciences. Actually, there are many ways to do that, on top of which is by teaching our children how to write and encourage them to do so. This will enhance in them good values such as the values of courage, honesty, opting for righteousness, benevolence, love of knowledge, patience, etc.

² Surat Al-`Alaq/1-5

³ Surat Al-Mujādila/11

So let us guide our children to beneficial reading and let us start with making the book very endearing for them by dealing with it as a valuable gift that the child shall read. We should make competition for children in a way that makes the book valuable to them.

A good book is not the one whose advantages are limited to those who are alive. It rather should be beneficial for the Muslim even after his death. It is reported in the Hadith of the Prophet (Pbuh) (When a man dies, his deeds come to an end except for three things: Sadaqah Jariyah (ceaseless charity); a knowledge which is beneficial, or a virtuous descendant who prays for him (for the deceased). We should read to our children at least for a few minutes during the day (the best of all deeds is the most durable of all, though in quantity being small) the same way we play with them. We should devote time for reading so that it (reading) becomes big fun to them like playing. This is how children become aware of books and start to ask for it.

O you fathers, you should ask your children to love books and appreciate them, which is an integral part of the task of taking due care to them. The prophet (Pbuh) said (Every one of you is a guardian, and is responsible for what is in his custody).

O Brothers in faith

Including the most important ways for encouraging little children to read is to be a role model for them for children will not be motivated to read as long as parents abstain from doing so. Almighty God says [O you who have believed, why do you say what you do not do?]⁴

O fathers, you should then spend some of your time in reading and be mindful of selecting useful books for yourselves and for your children as well. Each one shall have a home library even a small one, as this way, you, along with your family members will be motivated to read the books provided in it. In effect, to buy books and grasp benefits from them is the first step towards learning. The prophet (Pbuh) said (Allah makes the way to Jannah (heaven) easy for him who treads the path in search of knowledge). Among the most important methods, Servants of Allah, to encourage reading is by making from books a ceaseless charity over time and grant them for God's sake and make them of incessant use for knowledge seekers and common people as well. This, in fact, can be achieved when philanthropic people collaborate together to establish small neighborhood libraries that can be frequented by people mainly those who cannot afford to buy books, therefore, they borrow books therefrom to practice reading. Little children also should have access to these libraries so that they become (libraries) together with books of much endearment to them.

⁴ Surat Aş-Şaf/2

So servants of Allah, fear Allah and try to inspire children with beneficial reading in all its aspects and forms. Try to be the example to be followed in reading and opting for good books. Actually this is how you pave the way for a bright and happy future for them.

I say this saying of mine, and I seek forgiveness from Allah for me and for you, and to the rest of the Muslims, so ask Him for forgiveness, He is the forgiver, the Merciful and call upon Him, He will respond to you, as Allah is the most generous.

Praise be to Allah, Who taught by the pen, taught man that which he knew not. We bear witness that there is no god but Allah, the One, having no partner. And I bear witness that Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) is His honorable slave and Messenger. He is the guide of all Mankind and the teacher of all human beings. May Allah grant peace and honor on him, his family and companions and whoever followed his teachings and adhered to his method to the Day of Judgment.

O Muslims

I send my sincere greetings from this pulpit (Minbar) to self-taught people who learned how to write and devoted themselves to extensive reading, those who tried to seize every opportunity of learning. Whenever they know of a book exhibition or a training session in whatever field of knowledge, they do not hesitate to join it whether as a visitor or as a participant. Actually this is the kind of person who sets a goal for himself and follows all the ways that lead him to achieve it. How kind this person is upon himself! [Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer – We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do]⁵.

By contrast, there are some people whose only concern is to look for means of physical perfection such as refreshing drinks, trendy clothes, comfortable house, luxurious car, etc. They, in return, spare themselves a pen to write some words, wise sayings, scientific or juristic issue. There is also the kind of person who is too mean to his own self as he deprives it from its spiritual nutrition. Therefore, he strictly abstains from reading even the Holy book [And the Messenger has said, "O my Lord, indeed my people have taken this Qur'an as [a thing] abandoned]⁶."

⁵ Surat An-Naĥl-97

⁶ Surat Al-Furqān-30

O you youths, what kind of care do you pay to your own selves and which way do you follow in strengthening your faith and developing your culture? Have you ever heard of these words of the chosen Prophet (Pbuh) (You should give to everyone his due)?

O servants of God, Fear Allah and choose for yourselves as well as your children useful books. Be their role models in reading and make from the book a ceaseless charity. Let us all utter the following supplication which Allah, the Exalted and the Majestic asked us to say “O Allah increase my knowledge, O Allah increase my knowledge, O Allah increase my knowledge”.

So, send your blessings upon the leader of Messengers, as Allah has ordered you in the Holy book by saying: [Indeed, Allah and His Angels send blessings upon the Prophet. O you who believe! Send blessings on him and greet him (with) greetings]⁷.

O Allah! Send your mercy on Muhammad and on the family of Muhammad, as You sent Your mercy on Abraham and on the family of Abraham. And send Your blessings on Muhammad and the family of Muhammad, as You sent your Blessings on Abraham and on the family of Abraham. Verily You are the Most Praise-worthy, the Most Glorious.

O Allah! Be content with his Righteous Caliphs, his wives mothers of believers, his companions all together and the believers, men and women to the Day of Judgment, and be content with us too by Your Mercy, O Most Merciful.

O Allah! Bless our gathering here today and make us disperse in peace and in protection from sin and not to make us deficient in our religion.

O Allah! We ask you guidance, piety, chastity and wealth.

O Allah! We ask you to grant each of us honest tongue, humbled penitent heart, righteous deeds, useful knowledge, firmly belief, pure faith and lawful and blesses sustenance. O Allah you are the most glorious and honourable.

O Allah! Grant glory to Islam and Muslims! And grant support and unity to Islam and Muslims, O Allah! Let down tyrants and infidels. O Allah! Grant peace and security to all your servants.

O Allah! Grant us security in our homelands! Grant us long-lasting safety and stability in our homeland! Grant glory to our Sultan and support him with the truth and make him a guide to truth.

⁷ Surate Al-Ahazab 56

O Allah! Send upon us rain from the sky in showers and make us among those who remember you during day and night and who seek your forgiveness during evening and dawn.

O Allah! Bestow us the blessings of the sky and the bounties of the earth and bless our fruits and crops and our entire livelihood. O Allah you are the most glorious and honourable.

O Allah! Give us in this world good and in the Hereafter good and protect us from the punishment of the Fire."

O Allah! Let not our hearts deviate after You have guided us and grant us from Yourself mercy. Indeed, You are the Bestower.

O Allah! We have wronged ourselves, and if You do not forgive us and have mercy upon us, we will surely be among the losers."

O Allah! Forgive all the believing men and women, those of them who were living and those of them who were dead, you are the most hearing and respondent.

Slaves of Allah! [Allah commands justice, the doing of good, and liberality to kith and kin, and He forbids all shameful deeds, and injustice and rebellion: He instructs you, that you may remember.]