

The Way to an Acceptable Fast

How will Allah accept our
fasting?

Saber Khalil

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In the Name of Allah Most Merciful and Gracious

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Chapter One

He was returning from the mosque after evening prayers with his friend, and said, “Ahmad, can’t you wait for Ramadan to come?”

Ahmad answered, “Ramadan is the best time of year.”

“What do you like most in Ramadan? Sitting around the dinner table with family and friends, or what?”

“Personally, I think fasting has so many benefits I can’t decide which one is best.”

“What benefits do you mean?”

The Benefits of Fasting

“Health, personal, mental, familial, social, and spiritual benefits.”

“What do you mean by health benefits?”

“Fasting helps to cleanse the intestinal tract and to heal digestive and other diseases.”

“Really? How about personal benefits?”

“Fasting helps reduce or stop bad or harmful habits, like smoking.”

“But some people smoke more during Ramadan than any other time.”

“True, but some people’s lack of self-control does not mean that Allah’s system is defective.”

“Of course.”

As they walked, they met a third friend, Kareem. He said, “Hakeem, Ahmad, how are you both?”

“Praise Allah, we are fine. How about you?”

“Praise Allah I am fine. What were you talking about?”

“About the benefits of fasting. What do you think about the subject?”

“The family benefits are the most important to me. Fasting strengthens the bonds in the family, since the whole family gathers together at the breaking of the fast and they are closer and more loving to each other and to friends as well.”

Hakeem added, “There are also benefits to the society.”

“To the society? Like what?”

“Fasting strengthens social bonds between neighbors, relatives and friends when they share the Iftar meal and it clearly shows social solidarity. That is besides helping the economy.”

Kareem said, “You know, I would never have known that fasting has all these benefits if you guys wouldn’t have told me.”

Hakeem said, “But there are more, like the mental benefits.”

“What do you mean?”

“Fasting helps a person think and concentrate better, because it increases the amount of blood available for the brain of the person fasting.”

“You also mentioned spiritual benefits. What are they?”

“Spiritually, he who abstains from food and drink, which are both lawful and allowed, will find that Allah helps him resist temptations and resist sinful, unlawful desires. In addition, he who fasts will feel Allah to be closer and see more answers to his prayers.”

Ahmad said, “Hakeem, you are well named ‘wise’. Where did you get all this information on the subject? Have you done formal studies on it?”

“Yes, it is important to me that Allah accept my fasting. That is why I have studied it from all angles.”

“It is important to us, too,” Ahmad and Kareem said. “We want Allah to accept our fasting, just like everyone else. People say, ‘May Allah accept your fast’ all the time. But how we know if Allah is going to accept our fast or not?”

What are Allah’s purposes for Fasting?

“First, Allah has purposes for fasting, and he will not accept our fasting unless his purposes are accomplished. We have talked about the benefits of fasting, but do you know what Allah's major purposes for fasting are?”

Ahmad said, “Certainly. Allah commanded us to fast so that we can empathize with the poor and their suffering and deprivation.”

“Unfortunately, no. This is a very common idea, but it is just not true. The rich actually do empathize with the poor, but this is not one of the purposes of Allah for fasting. Otherwise, why did Allah commanded fasting for the poor, who obviously have no need to empathize with their own poverty? It is a great thing to empathize with the poor, but this is not one of Allah’s purposes for fasting.

Kareem said, “Allah commanded us to fast so that he could forgive sins we have committed.”

Hakeem answered, “Let’s go a bit deeper on this idea. If Allah forgives a person’s sins based on his fasting or good deeds he has done, then forgiveness becomes something we earned and a payment that Allah owes us and not a result of Allah's mercy and kindness. The Koran says “*Allah is forgiving*” (Baqara 2:182), but it never calls Allah a payer of wages that he owes us. The Koran also says, “*We have given you an obvious victory, so that Allah may forgive your past and future sins.*” (Fath 48:1-2) These verses tell us clearly that Allah gave this victory in order to forgive sins, not because we deserve forgiveness. Allah took the initiative to forgive our sins, and he willed it and did it because he wanted to do it. Allah’s forgiveness springs from his mercy, as the Koran says: “*Allah is forgiving and merciful.*” (Baqara 2:182)”

Kareem was amazed and answered, “If not for you, I would never have thought in this way. It seems you are right.”

Ahmad said, “Praise be to Allah, who forgives our sins because of His mercy and not because of something we deserve because of our works. I know that I don’t *deserve* Allah’s mercy because of my good deeds.”

The Wise Hermit

Hakeem said, "Listen to this story. There once was a man who was always seeking, but could never find a way to get forgiveness for his sins. He was very religious, praying, fasting, and giving alms to the poor. He did good works whenever he could. But he was never sure that Allah would forgive him on the Day of Judgment. One day he heard of a wise hermit, who knew many secrets, so he decided to ask him for the answer so he could calm his soul. The journey was long and he was thirsty and tired when he arrived. The hermit welcomed him and he immediately blurted out, "How can I get forgiveness for my sins?" The hermit calmed him down and said, "Please sit down. I'll bring you something to drink." The hermit brought him a glass of cold water, but before offering it to him, took out his pen and added a drop of black ink. The man was shocked and said, "Why did you do that?" "I was just answering your question," said the hermit. "You were disgusted by one drop of ink and refused the whole glass of cold, refreshing water because of it. And yet you expect Allah, who is Holy and Righteous, to accept your good works, though you have ruined them with the sins of your heart and mind." The man thanked the hermit for teaching him that there is no connection between good works and forgiveness, for just as one drop of ink spoiled the whole glass of pure water, so one evil deed, word or thought ruins many good deeds."

Kareem said, "What a beautiful story. I always felt that I was a sinner even though I do all my religious duties. Now I know why. Evil deeds remain despite many good deeds."

Ahmad said, "Okay, so we understand that forgiving our sins and empathizing with the poor are not among Allah's main purposes in commanding us to fast. What is Allah's purpose for our fasting?"

Allah's true purpose for fasting

Hakeem answered, "The Generous Koran mentions the month of Ramadan only once *"The month of Ramadan, in which the Koran was revealed as guidance for man, and clear verses of guidance, and criterion, so let him who sees the month, fast it."* (Baqara 2:185)"

Kareem interrupted, "But this verse doesn't specify Allah's purposes for fasting. If the Generous Koran doesn't say what Allah's purposes for fasting are, what does?"

Hakeem answered him, "Allah's teaching on fasting is explained in the following verses.

Allah commanded fasting for those who swear an oath and then don't fulfill it (Maida 5:89), for those who kill another believer by accident (Nisa 4:92), for those who disobey Allah by hunting while on pilgrimage (Maida 5:95), and for those who send their wives away and then decide they want them back (Mujadila 58:4)."

Ahmad said, "I don't understand at all what your point is. What are Allah's purposes for fasting according to these verses? What is the connection between all these kinds of people?"

"Slow down! The connection is that all four of these people sinned, and Allah commanded fasting because of their sins."

“No, no, no. We already talked about that – that Allah’s forgiveness comes from his mercy, and not from what we deserve. The meaning is this: Fasting is Allah's method to make sinners feel their sin, be sorry for it, repent from doing it.”

“Does that mean that everyone who has committed a sin must admit that he has sinned and must be sorry about it, and repent from doing it again, or else his fasting will be worthless?”

“Exactly right, Kareem.”

“Ahmad asked, “So sinners have to admit they have sinned and be sorry about it, and repent from doing it again so their fasting will be accepted?”

“Yes. And do you know who the Generous Koran tells us are sinners?”

Kareem asked, “Who?”

Hakeem answered, “All of us. You and I and the liar and the cheater and the thief and the upright and the just and the young and the old.”

“All of us?”

“Yes. All people. The Generous Koran says: “Allah is never unjust toward man, but men were unjust toward each other.” (Yunis 10:44) “If Allah were to punish men for their injustice, there would be no one left.” (Nahl 16:61)”

“This means we are all unjust.”

“And there are more verses: *"He is sinful and ignorant."* (Ahzab 33:72)”

“And ignorant as well!”

“Just wait. There are more:

"Mankind are sinners and unbelievers." (Ibrahim 14:34) "Man was killed; how ungrateful he is!" (Abasa 80:17) "Man is truly sinful." (Hajj 22:66) "Man is obviously truly sinful." (Zukhruf 43:15) "So man is truly sinful." (Shora 42:48) "And man was sinful." (Isra or Bani Israel 17:67)”

“Are you saying that we are all unbelieving sinners?”

“Not I but the Generous Koran. Do you know more than the Generous Koran? And there is one more verse: "The human soul truly incites toward evil." (Yusuf 12:53)

“Is this why we are sinners? Because our souls lead us to evil?” Ahmad asked.”

Fasting is Mandatory for All

“Correct,” Hakeem said. “We all need to admit our sins and be sorry for them and repent. Otherwise, our fasting will not be accepted. We are all unjust, sinful, and have souls that incite us to evil. Since every person has committed sins, as these verses have made clear to us, every person needs to admit his sins, injustice, unbelief and wrongdoing and be sorry for them. This is why Allah commanded fasting for everyone, as the Generous Koran says: *"Allah commanded fasting for you just as he commanded it for those who were before you so that you would be upright."* (Baqara 2:183)”

Kareem asked, “Hakeem, what does “those who were before you” mean? Are these the people in the days of ignorance before Islam?”

“Notice what the Generous Koran says: “just as he commanded it”; Were people in the days of ignorance before Islam given a book from Allah?”

“So it means the Christians and the Jews the people of the other holy books.”

“Exactly, Ahmad.”

Ahmad added, “So fasting is not something unique to Islam but for everyone, since all people are described as unjust and unbelieving and sinners.”

All are Sinners

“Yes. I know my heart, and I confess that I sin and my soul leads me to evil.” Ahmad objected, “No, Hakeem, I know you as an upright, religious person.”

“What are you saying? The Generous Koran describes us as we have talked about. Shall we reject what the Generous Koran says about us?”

“No, but ...”

“Before Allah we are all sinners. No one is totally upright.”

“But you and those like you are really good people.”

“However much we look good to other people, Allah knows the secrets of our hearts, and he knows our hidden sins – deeds, words, or thoughts.”

“Well, if that is what Allah has said in his book, we have to accept it and believe it.”

“Don’t you both sense the truth of this? Don’t you both know that you are guilty sinners?”

Kareem answered, “I have never done a big sin – not even once in my life.”

“So you deny the accuracy of the Generous Koran?”

“No, but how can I be a sinner if I have never committed adultery or murder or theft?”

“These are the obvious sins, but there are inner sins, too. Has an impure word ever come out of your mouth? Have you ever been angry with anyone? Or have you ever looked at a woman lustfully?”

“Of course. Everybody does those things. But ...”

“That is what sin and guilt is. Allah knows everyone’s heart and considers anyone who does one of those sins a sinner.”

“Am I a sinner if I sinned only once?”

“Let me ask you another question. If you murder only one person, would you consider yourself a murderer?”

“Hmmm. Yes, you’re right.”

“The same thing applies to all kinds of sins and disobedience.”

“You have cornered me. What can I say? Allah Almighty considers me a sinner, so I am one.”

Hakeem said, “Well, you have just accomplished the first purpose of Allah in fasting. But is acknowledging and being sorry for our sins enough?”

“Certainly. Allah is Compassionate and Forgiving and will forgive the sins of whoever admits his sins and is sorry for them.”

“Do you think that the Generous Koran would support your opinion?”

“I don’t know. You have shown me things in the Generous Koran I had never seen before.”

The Fate of the Unjust

Hakeem continued, “The Generous Koran tells us about our situation and our fate in the following verses: *“The unjust, however, are in permanent torture.”* (Shora 42:45) *“The unjust have painful torture as their future.”* (Ibrahim 14:22) *“They will both be punished in hell eternally. That is the reward of the unjust.”* (Hashar 59:17)”

“Does this mean that the fate of all the unjust is hell?”

“That is what these verses say. Do you remember who the unjust are?”

“All of us. Right?”

“Yes. Listen to these other verses:

Sinners

“*Sinners have shameful torture laid up for them.*” (Baqara 2:90) “*Sinners will have painful torture.*” (Baqara 2:104) “*We have prepared for sinners a shameful torture.*” (Nisa 4:37) “*We have prepared for sinners a shameful torture.*” (Nisa 4:151) “*Allah has prepared for sinners a shameful torture.*” (Nisa 4:102) “*Allah will gather the sinner and hypocrites together in hell.*” (Nisa 4:140) “*Sinners will have the tortures of hell.*” (Anfal 8:14) “*Allah has promised the hypocrites and sinners to remain eternally in the fires of hell. It is their just due. Allah has cursed them and they will have torture forever.*” (Bara’a or Tawbah 9:68) “*And the punishment of sinners is hellfire.*” (Ra’d 13:35) “*We have made hell for sinners to dwell in.*” (Isra or Bani Israil 17:8)

Ahmad asked, “Why is the same meaning repeated over and over in the Generous Koran? Isn’t once enough for us?”

“Of course once is enough for us. But Allah revealed many similar verses in order to show us how important it was. Certainly Allah was aware of the coming of a day like today, when people deny the truth and say that whoever is within the religion of Islam will go to heaven, and that is why he emphasized this idea and revealed so many verses about it. But there are more verses that expand on the meaning, too.”

“What are they?” said Kareem.

Hypocrites

Hakeem answered, “Like these: “*Allah will gather the sinner and hypocrites together in hell.*” (Nisa 4:140) “*Allah has promised the hypocrites and sinners to remain eternally in the fires of hell. It is their just due. Allah has cursed them and they will have torture forever.*” (Bara’a or Tawbah 9:68)

Kareem responded, “Those two verses are powerful. Does it mean that the fate of the hypocrites is the same as the fate of the sinners? What they told me was that the hypocrites are the worst kind of people, but what these two verses say is that they are like sinners.”

“Correct,” Hakeem replied. “Just like Allah promised the hypocrites hell, so he promises it to us. But there are more verses.”

Evildoers

Ahmad and Kareem said together, “Tell us these other verses.”

“Sure: “*We will surely make sinners taste severe torture, and punish them worse than their deeds.*” (Sajda 32:27) “*The punishment of those who did evil was evil.*” (Roum 30:10)

“*Truly those who do evil, and are caught in their sins, will be in hellfire eternally.*” (Baqara 2:81)”

Kareem asked, “Does this mean that those who are evildoers, those who have done evil deeds, have the same punishment as the unjust and the sinners and the hypocrites – the torture of the eternal fires of hell?”

“Of course.”

Ahmad was astounded and said, “Is this possible? Everyone in the whole world has at least one sin.”

“This is what we saw in the first verses I told you about. No one is a totally upright person, and Allah punishes every sinner in hellfire, according to these verses: *"Allah caught them in their sins and Allah is harsh in his punishment."* (Al Imran 11)

Ahmad asked, “If Allah punishes all sinners, and we are all sinners, then every one of us will be punished with the awful fate of hell. What then can we do to be saved from the painful punishment we deserve for our sins?”

Hakeem said, “Let’s get into this more deeply later. It’s really late.”

So the three friends departed and each went home.

Chapter Two

How does Allah want us to fast?

The three friends happened to meet the following Friday, and Kareem said, "Hakeem, you started us on an interesting subject, and now you have to go deeper like you promised."

"What do you remember from what we talked about on Monday?"

Ahmad started, "We found out that we are sinners, wither in deed or word or thought, and that trusting in our souls that lead us to evil is useless, and that evil deeds ruin good ones."

Kareem added, "And also if we agree with these truths, we have taken the first step toward pleasing Allah in our fasting. But I remember that we hadn't answered the important question: How does Allah want us to fast?"

Hakeem said, "It is written in the Generous Koran: *"Allah commanded fasting for you just as he commanded it for those who were before you so that you would be upright."* (Baqara 2:183)

Kareem said, "Here is a clear purpose. Allah wants righteousness, but what kind of uprightness does He want?"

Hakeem said, "Allah, who hears and sees all, knows our hearts and no one can deceive him. But some people fast only so that others will see them."

Ahmad said, "Yes. These hypocrites call out loudly, "Praise Allah, I'm fasting," so that others will commend them."

"These people have truly gotten their reward already from the people that they fasted in front of. Allah will not reward them," said Hakeem.

Kareem added, "There is another group of people who boast, 'In Ramadan, I don't steal, cheat, tell lies, or look lustfully at girls.'

Ahmad said, "Yes. They think that by doing these things they are especially righteous."

Hakeem continued, "But they have no basis at all for thinking this because Allah prohibited evil deeds all year around and not just in the month of fasting. This kind of person doesn't understand Allah's purposes at all and will not get any reward."

Just then, a fourth friend, Raed, came up and asked, "What are you guys talking about?"

Kareem answered, "About different kinds of people who fast, but not for Allah."

Raed said, "There is a group of people who are meticulous to observe all the external regulations for fasting but their daily moral lives are not affected in any way. For example, shopkeepers cheat their customers during the days of the fast just as they cheat them on other days. They swear "By Allah!" as they tell lies in Ramadan just as they do on the rest of the days. They quarrel with their children on fasting days just as they do at other times, or maybe more. Children complain about their parents in Ramadan just like they do in other months. "

Ahmad added, "Drivers curse and honk their horns at other drivers in Ramadan just like they normally do, or worse. Everyone thinks about his own interests and not others' interests just like normal. Men look at women and girls lustfully as is their habit. Women gossip with each other on fasting days as is their habit."

Hakeem said, let me summarize:

The fast that pleases Allah

During your fast you're busy with your selfish life,
You don't stop mistreating your workers,
You are involved in unjust fighting and violence,
Will Allah accept this fasting, when you only humble yourselves and kneel?
Of course not! The fast Allah approves is freeing those unjustly imprisoned,
Treating the poor fairly, feeding the hungry,
Sheltering homeless strangers,
Clothing the naked, and doing good to your neighbors and relatives.

Ahmad commented, "What beautiful ideas. I personally have experienced that fasting does not change my moral life. Do you guys feel the same?"

The three friends agreed with Ahmad's experience, and Hakeem said, "The Generous Koran condemns us and condemns this kind of fasting, because it says, "*So that you would be upright.*" By this the Koran tells us what Allah wants from fasting: uprightness. If practical uprightness doesn't result from fasting, in spite of all our efforts, then this fast is not acceptable to Allah."

Kareem said, "We truly have admitted our sinfulness, and we know that we, who have souls inclined to evil, are unable to live a life pleasing to Allah or to fast acceptably. What is the solution? What then can we do to escape the awful punishment we deserve for our sins?"

Hakeem asked, "Can I tell you a story that illustrates the answer?"

They all said, "Sure!"

Saved from destruction

He said, "The newspapers reported that a fire broke out in an old apartment building in a large city. Most people escaped, but a young girl ran from her room up to the roof of the building. There she shouted with tears in her eyes to those on the street, 'Save me, save me!' The fire department saw her, but could find no way to save her because of the strength of the fire and the thick smoke. The onlookers watched sadly, unable to do anything and expecting to see her thin body engulfed in flames soon. However, her father happened to be returning home on the street and saw the awful sight and decided to save her. He broke through the spectators and the police barricades and entered the building next-door to the hotel and ran up to the roof. From there he motioned to his daughter to come to the edge of the roof. He told her, 'Jump to me.' She said, 'No, I can't. I am afraid.' The father saw only one way to save his daughter was make a bridge for her with his body, so she can cross to safety. So he flung himself across to reach the edge of the hotel, holding on to the burning building with his hands and with his feet still on the other building. After he had done this he said, 'Now you can cross.' But the girl was afraid. He said, 'Trust me and cross,' and convinced her that she could cross safely and escape and she did. But the man couldn't return to the roof because he was so tired, and he fell to the ground and died. The crowds saw the deeply moving scene and said, 'That was true love.'"

Our need for someone to intercede for us

Raed asked, "What is the point of this story? I missed the connection between the story and our conversation."

Ahmad answered, "I understand. All of our situations are just like this girl's; we are sinners and evildoers and Allah wants righteousness from us, which we cannot give. Each one of us needs someone to save us and mediate with Allah for us. According to what we heard from the Generous Koran, we are all headed for hell eternally."

Raed asked Hakeem, "Is that so?"

He answered, "Yes. Our situation is dangerous and we are unable by ourselves to escape from the torment we deserve. We need someone to intercede for us with the Merciful Allah, or we are doomed."

Kareem asked, "Whom does Allah give permission to intercede?"

Hakeem answered, "You will be surprised."

Chapter 3

Who is our intercessor with Allah?

Hakeem asked, "First of all, let's review what we have concluded so far. What is our situation regarding righteousness?"

Kareem answered, "No one is righteous except Allah. All men are disobedient and unjust and unbelieving, according to what the Generous Koran has told us."

Hakeem asked them, "And what does the Merciful Allah want from us in order to accept our fasting?"

Raed answered him, "He wants righteousness from us."

Then Hakeem asked them, "So what is the solution? If we are all sinners and unable to please Allah, how can we be righteous toward him?"

Ahmad answered, "There is no solution except someone to intercede for us."

So Hakeem asked, "Why do we need a mediator?"

Ahmad responded, "Because we have a soul that leads us to evil, and we are unbelieving, unjust, evildoing, sinners, as the Generous Koran describes us."

Kareem added, "And because the fate of all who are thus described is hell."

Ahmad continued, "And despite our efforts in fasting and good deeds, Allah will not accept our fast."

Hakeem said, "Are there any righteous people among the sons of Adam?"

Kareem said, "According to what Allah said in the Generous Koran, all people are unbelievers, unjust, evildoers, and sinners. There is no escaping this truth according to what Allah says."

Hakeem answered, "Correct. Our fasting will not be acceptable unless we have an intercessor or mediator. Our question about who can be an intercessor is an important one. This question is in the Generous Koran: "*Who can intercede with him except with his permission?*" (Baqara 2:255)

Raed asked, "Do you mean there is no one able to intercede?"

"No. The Generous Koran does not deny the existence of an intercessor, but it denies the possibility of an intercessor to whom Allah does not give permission."

"So there is an intercessor?"

"Yes."

"Who?"

The Two Prerequisites for Being an Intercessor

Hakeem answered, "Being an intercessor between two parties requires two prerequisites. First, he must be on good terms with both parties."

Kareem said, "Understood. I would never accept a mediator that I hate."

Hakeem said, "The second prerequisite is that he must have favor with both parties due to the close relationship between them."

Ahmad said, "Of course. How could we be expected to put a stranger between us to mediate between us?"

Hakeem asked, "Who then is there who has no sin, evil deed or injustice?"

Raid answered, "The prophets. All the prophets are free from sin and error. They can intercede."

Hakeem said, "You weren't with us during our first discussion. We mentioned more than ten verses which say that all men are unjust, unbelieving, evil-doing sinners. Does the Generous Koran make an exception for the prophets?"

Kareem and Ahmad said, "No. Those verses don't make an exception for the prophets."

Raed wondered, "Does this mean that all people are unjust, unbelieving, evildoers and sinners – even the prophets?"

Kareem said, "All men – every normal person, every sheikh, every religious person, every prophet, every messenger and imam.

Raed asked them to mention an example of the verses, and Kareem said, "*Mankind are sinners and unbelievers.*" (Ibrahim 14:34) "*Man is obviously truly sinful.*" (Zukhruf 43:15)."

Raed said, "These verses are clear. All people are sinners – we as well as the prophets, and we all need an intercessor. But, ... aren't there any other verses that tell us that the prophets are sinless?"

Are the Prophets Sinless?

Hakeem answered, "Unfortunately not. This belief, that the prophets, messengers, or imams are free from sin, is a common one, but it has no basis or proof in Allah's Book. But let us look deeper to be sure about what the Generous Koran says about some of the prophets (May Allah's peace be upon them all) in this regard.

Raed said, "Great idea. Give us the verses which tell us about them."

Adam and Eve

Hakeem answered, "I agree. For example, the following verses tell about our master Adam and our lady Eve: "*We have wronged ourselves and if you don't forgive us and have mercy on us we will surely be lost.*" (Aaraf 7:23), "*Adam disobeyed his Lord and went astray.*" (Taha 20:121)

Kareem said, "These two verses are clear. Of course our master Adam was disobedient. That is why Allah threw him and our lady Eve out of the garden. At a minimum, we can't claim that our master Adam was free from injustice and disobedience."

Noah

Raed asked for verses about other prophets, and Hakeem said, "Allah revealed these verses about our master Noah: "*If you don't forgive me and have mercy on me, I will be lost.*" (Houd 11:47), "*Lord, forgive me and my parents and whoever enters my house believing.*" (Nouh 71:28)."

Ahmad said, "If our master Noah asked Allah to forgive him, then he must have committed sins, and if he asked for mercy, then he had evil deeds. Are there other verses?"

Abraham

Hakeem answered, "There are still lots of verses. Listen about our master Abraham. "*I sincerely hope that Allah will forgive my sins on the Day of Judgment.*"

(Shuaraa 26:82), "Lord, forgive me and my parents and the believers on the Day of Judgment." (Ibrahim 14:41).

Raed was amazed. "Why didn't they teach me these truths before?"

Kareem asked for more verses.

Moses and Aaron

Hakeem said, "Here are some verses about our masters Moses and Aaron: *"He struck him and killed him and said, 'This is a work of Satan.'" (Qasas 28:15) "Don't follow me, for you disobeyed my command." (Taha 20:93) "He said, 'Lord, forgive me and my brother.'" (Aaraf 7:151)*

Raed said, "True. How do people claim that our master Moses was sinless if he murdered a man?"

Ahmad added, "Our master Aaron too. He made an idol for the people of Israel. Are there others?"

David and Solomon

"Of course. Listen to these verses about our masters David and Solomon: *"He asked forgiveness from his Lord." (Sad 38:24) "I have loved things more than mentioning my Lord... Lord, forgive me." (Sad 38:32,35)*

Kareem commented, "Then our masters David and Solomon are also sinners like us and need to ask forgiveness from their Lord."

Jonah

Hakeem said, "Yes, and you know about our master Jonah, too, don't you?"

They say they did, so Hakeem continued: *"I have sinned."* (Anbiya 21:87), and *"And the whale swallowed him because he had done wrong."* (Safaat 37:142)

All three said, "Aren't you done yet?"

Mohamed

"There is one left. Listen to these verses about our master Mohamed (pbh): *"That Allah may forgive your past and future sins." (Fatah 48:2), "Ask forgiveness for your sin" (Mohamed 47:19), "Ask forgiveness for your sin and sing the praises of your Lord." (Mumin or Ghafir 40:55), "Ask forgiveness from Allah" (Nisa 4:106), "He frowned and turned away when the blind man came to him." (Abasa 80:1-2), "Sing the praises of your Lord and ask forgiveness from Him" (Nasr 110:3), "We have taken your burden (sin) away" (Inshirah 94:2), "And say, 'Lord, forgive me have mercy.'" (Muminin 23:118)*

Is there an Intercessor or not?

All three were shocked and remained silent for a while. Finally, Ahmad spoke up, "Then there is no hope from any of those prophets or any imam or other person. If those major messengers and prophets are sinners, then they cannot intercede at all, so how much more other people who are lower than they are. They are all unable to intercede for us with Allah. Each one of them has sins and disobedience. Our situation is awful –our fate is hell with no one to intercede for us."

Kareem said, "Hakeem, didn't you say there was an intercessor? Who is he?"

Hakeem answered, “None of those prophets or messengers, nor any other lower person, is able to intercede, because there is a breach in their relationship with Allah. Even the first prerequisite is lacking, much less the second. The prophets and messengers are not free from sin, as some mistakenly think, but they need forgiveness from Allah for their sins like we do. Those who still refuse to believe this truth, despite all these proofs in the verses mentioned above, are like the farmer in the following story:

The Farmer and the Tax

During the Ottoman Empire, there was a poor farmer, who owned nothing but one coin and a tiny farm barely big enough to feed his family. He had inherited both from his father, who had gotten them from his grandfather. Many times, the farmer would take out his coin and look at its golden shine, imagining how much it was worth and how much selling it could relieve him of his poverty. But he refused to sell it, because it was his inheritance from his father and grandfather. One day, a decree was issued from the Ottoman government requiring every resident in the Empire to pay a gold Ottoman dinar, or its equivalent in gold. Any poor person who was too poor to pay had to swear an affidavit and request an exemption. The punishment for those who falsely claimed poverty, as well as those who failed to declare before the day of payment and then did not pay, was the same: they would be arrested and thrown in prison, to be tortured until they paid the debt. The news of the decree reached the poor farmer, who immediately decided to make his declaration, since he had no more than three dirhams.

Before he made a declaration, though, he remembered his coin that he had hidden. Before the day of payment, he was talking with his fellow farmers about the tax and their declarations, and they asked him why he had not declared. He said, “I have a coin I inherited from my father and grandfather, and I will pay the tax with it.” They all were amazed and asked to see the coin. He took it out and showed it to them, and a neighboring farmer asked, “Is this real? It’s ring is strange.” He answered, “I inherited it from my father and grandfather, and you think it is not real? Impossible.” Another said, “It doesn’t shine like gold; maybe it is counterfeit.” But the farmer insisted, “This is my inheritance from my father and grandfather. How could it be counterfeit?” Yet another said, “It is lighter than gold. Are you sure?” The farmer answered, “100%.”

The farmer awakened on payment day, opened his box, carried the coin in his hand, and went to the local government office to pay. When his turn came, he gave his name, where he lived, and handed the official the coin. The tax collector frowned and said, “What is this?” The farmer said, “It is a gold coin I inherited from my father and grandfather, and I brought it to pay the tax.” The official said, “But it is not gold.” The farmer answered, “Of course it is, for I inherited it from my father and grandfather.” The official answered, “I don’t care who you inherited it from, but I do care that it be gold, and this is not gold. Go and bring another one.” So he went to the market to sell it to the traders, but they answered, “We won’t buy it, because it isn’t real. He went to every trader in the whole market to find someone to buy it, but no one would. So he went back to the tax collector to ask him again. The collector said, “I am sorry, but I have no choice. I have to send you to jail. This is what people are like who believe a thing is true because it came from a loved source, but neglect to check out its truthfulness.”

Don't believe it unless you make sure

Raed said, "What I learned when I was young does not agree with the verses in the Generous Koran that you have quoted, Hakeem. From now on, I am going to check out what people say to see if it agrees with the Generous Koran or not."

Kareem said, "Me, too. I don't want to be one of the losers. Just because someone dear to me tells me something doesn't make it correct.:

Ahmad then asked, "So is there an intercessor or not?"

Who is the Intercessor?

Hakeem answered, "Yes. Which of the prophets and messengers have we not spoken about yet?"

They thought a bit and then said, "Our master Al-Masih Issa son of Mariam."

The First Prerequisite

Hakeem said, "The Generous Koran never mentions in connection with our master Issa any sin or reason to ask forgiveness at all, in contrast to all the other prophets we spoke about before."

Ahmad asked him, "Is that because of the small number of verses in the Generous Koran that talk about Issa?"

He answered, "No. They are more than 50 verses about him in the Generous Koran. Not a single verse of these mentions any sin or injustice. On the contrary, it also affirms our Master Al-Masih's freedom from sin: "*That I may give you a sinless (zakiyan) boy.*" (Mariam 19)"

Raed asked, "And so what if he was smart (dhakiyan)?"

Ahmad answered him, "The word is zakiyan, not dhakiyan. Zakiyan means pure and free from sins."

Hakeem said, "If our master Al-Masih is sinless, then he is on good terms with Allah. Thus, he is the only one to have the first prerequisite for being a mediator."

The Second Prerequisite

Raed asked, "Okay. What about the second prerequisite?"

Hakeem responded, "For an intercessor to have favor with both parties, he must have a close relationship with them. Who enjoys that kind of a relationship with Allah and man? Only those who share something of Allah's divine nature as well as a human nature. The Koran mentions only two, our masters Adam and Issa, into whom Allah breathed his spirit."

A Divine Nature

Raed asked, "Is it reasonable to think of a human being having a nature from Allah?"

He answered, "Yes. The Generous Koran mentions only two – our master Adam and our master Issa Al-Masih son of Mariam – into whom Allah breathed of his spirit, and therefore who have something of Allah's spirit and nature and who therefore are the only humans to meet the second prerequisite of being a mediator/intercessor."

"So there are two intercessors?" asked Raed.

Adam

He answered, "No. There are two who have the second prerequisite for interceding. But only our master Issa Al-Masih son of Mariam has both prerequisites. Do you know what the Generous Koran says about Adam?"

Kareem answered, "*Then he made him and breathed into him of his spirit.*" (Sajda 32:9)"

"Correct. But do you remember what happened with our master Adam after that? What is the verse we talked about?"

Ahmad said, we read before, "*Adam disobeyed his Lord and went astray.*" (Taha 20:121)"

Kareem continued, "If it were not for our master Adam's disobedience, he would have been able to be an intercessor, because then he would have had both prerequisites. But because of his disobedience, Adam lost that privilege and was expelled from the garden.

Our Master Issa Al-Masih son of Mariam

Hakeem said, "You understand the matter completely. But about Issa, the Generous Koran affirms the sinlessness of our master Issa Al-Masih as well as his nature in these verses: "*That I may give you a sinless boy.*" (Mariam 19:19) "*She protected her virginity and we breathed into her of our spirit and made her and her son a miracle to all mankind.*" and (Anbia 21:91) "*Mariam daughter of Amran who protected her chastity, and we breathed into her womb of our Spirit, and she believed the words of her Lord.*" (Tahrim 66:12)

Ahmad asked, "Are you saying that Al-Masih Issa is sinless and that he is from the Spirit of Allah?"

Kareem answered for him. "Those were the words of the Generous Koran, not his words."

Ahmad answered, "Yes, I know that those were the words of the Generous Koran, but I meant that since our master Issa Al-Masih son of Mariam is from the Spirit of Allah and without sin, then he alone has both prerequisites to be an intercessor for mankind. I understood the meaning but I wanted to make sure.

Singular or Plural?

Hakeem said, "You understood the meaning completely. These verses say clearly that Al-Masih was formed from a breath of Allah's spirit into his mother Mariam. Thus, he has a nature that came from Allah's spirit in addition to his human nature, which he got from his mother. As a result, he is the only one who has both conditions for being an intercessor between Allah and man. And truly the Generous Koran clearly talks about there being only one intercessor who can intercede between Allah and man. For it says in the famous throne verse, "*Who is he who intercedes with Him except by his permission?*" (Baqara 2:255)"

Raed asked, "Doesn't this verse tell us that no one can intercede with Allah?"

Hakeem answered, "I want you to pay very close attention to the words of the Generous Koran and not to what people say about the Generous Koran. These words are in the singular. Notice that the Generous Koran does not say (Who are those who

intercede with Him except with his permission?) in the plural, but "Who is he who intercedes with Him except by his permission?" (Baqara 2:255)"

Raed was astonished. "You're right!! If the meaning were that there are no intercessors at all, wouldn't Allah have made the verse clear?"

Kareem asked, "So our master Issa Al-Masih son of Mariam is the only intercessor between Allah and man?"

"Correct."

Allah's Permission

Ahmad asked, "What is the meaning of "by his permission?""

Hakeem commended him. "You are very perceptive, Ahmad. You noticed a key prerequisite for being an intercessor – that he must work according to Allah's permission."

Ahmad said, "That was my question. Did our master Al-Masih work according to Allah's permission or not?"

Hakeem said, "The Generous Koran says about Al-Masih Issa: "I will create a bird out of clay, breathe into it and it will be a real bird by Allah's permission and I will heal those born blind and lepers and give life to the dead by Allah's permission." (Al-Imran 3:49), "You create a bird out of clay by my permission, and breathe into it and it will be a real bird by my permission, and you heal those born blind and lepers by my permission, and raise the dead by my permission." (Maida 5:110)

Kareem was shocked. "The Koran assures us six times that our master Issa Al-Masih did everything that he did by Allah's permission."

Ahmad said, "We understand, then, that the Koran is referring to our master Issa when it says: "Who is he who intercedes with Him except by His permission?" (Baqara 2:255)

Hakeem said, "This intercessor is none other than "Al-Masih Issa, son of Mariam, Allah's messenger, and his word which he sent to Mariam and a spirit from him." (Nisa 4:171) He is the only one who can intercede with Allah.

Kareem asked, "Does the Generous Koran honor our master Al-Masih more than the Honored Injeel?"

"In this matter, what we have concluded from the Generous Koran confirms what the Honored Injeel's confession of faith says: "There is only one God, and only one intercessor between God and man: Christ Jesus son of Mary." (1 Timothy 2:5)

Raed said, "So now that we know who the intercessor is, our fasting can be acceptable through him."

Ahmad added, "And we know that no one's fast will be acceptable unless they put their trust in Issa Al-Masih son of Mariam to intercede for them."

Hakeem said, "This is Allah's way to an acceptable fast."

Raed said, "Praise be to Allah that he gave us our master Issa Al-Masih son of Mariam as an intercessor. Otherwise, we would be fasting in vain!"

Ahmad declared, "I am not ready to become a Christian."

Hakeem asked him, "Who said anything about Christians or Muslims? Religions are one thing and trust in Al-Masih as the only intercessor is another thing altogether. Al-Masih is the intercessor of the Christians and the Muslims both."

Ahmad said, "Thanks, Hakeem. That was worrying me. I have been uncomfortable talking about Al-Masih Issa son of Mariam for a long time."

Kareem asked, "And now?"

He said, "Now I know that our master Al-Masih Issa son of Mariam is not just a prophet and a messenger of ours, but an intercessor for us as well, and talking about him is normal."

Trust

Hakeem asked them, "Where is your trust, my friends? Are you trusting in the deeds of your souls that lead you to evil? Or in people or things that cannot help intercede with Allah? Or are you trusting in *"Al-Masih Issa, son of Mariam, Allah's messenger, and his word which he sent to Mariam and a spirit from him."* (Nisa 4:171), who alone can intercede with Allah the Merciful? Will your fasting be acceptable, my friends?"

Raed and Ahmad said together, "In our master Al-Masih Issa son of Mariam. He is the only intercessor."

Hakeem asked Kareem, "How about you, Kareem? Do you really want your fasting to be acceptable to Allah?"

"Yes."

"Do you acknowledge and admit your sins, your unrighteousness, and your soul that leads you to do evil?"

"Yes."

"Are you sorry for having disobeyed Allah? Do you repent from these sins?"

"Yes."

"Do you know that were it not for the mercy of Allah, that your sins, injustice, unbelief, and soul that leads you to sin will lead you to the eternal fires of hell?"

"Yes."

"Do you want to escape from this painful torture?"

"Yes."

"Do you see your need for someone to save you from this fate?"

"Yes," said Kareem. "I need someone like that."

"And do you want an intercessor who can intercede with Allah?"

"Of course."

"And do you see that no person other than our master Issa Al-Masih son of Mariam can intercede with Allah Most High?"

"It seems he is the only one."

"Then since you answered these questions "Yes," don't wait any longer. Pray the following prayer to show your trust in him:

Prayer

Allah, I want you to accept my fast.

I admit my sins and my unbelief.

I'm sorry for all the times I disobeyed you.

Please accept my repentance.

I have nothing with which I can justify myself.

I need someone to save me from hell.
Thank you that you have appointed Issa as the only intercessor because he is sinless.
I now take Issa Al-Masih son of Mariam as my intercessor.
I trust in his intercession with you on my behalf
From now until the Day of Judgment. Amen."