

Collection of Translations, Writings, and Teaching Materials
prepared by two students of Islaam
Aboo Shaybah & Umm Ilyaa
(may Allaah pardon their shortcomings)

An English Presentation of the Book

فِقْهُ الْأَذْعِيَةِ وَالْأَذْكَارِ

Understanding Du‘aa’ (Supplicating Allaah) and Thikr (Mentioning Allaah)

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[Episode] 5: Mentioning Allaah is the Most Pure, Productive, and Virtuous of Deeds

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[1] Mentioning Allaah (the Most Majestic and Exalted) is the purest, best, and most virtuous of deeds to Allaah (the One who owns limitless blessings and is Most Exalted). There is a Hadeeth that was collected in the Musnad of al-Imaam Ahmad, the Jaami‘ of at-Tirmithi, the Sunan of ibn Maajah, the Mustadrak of al-Haakim, and other Hadeeth works as well. They collected that Abud-Dardaa’ (may Allaah be pleased with him) stated: Allaah’s Messenger (may Allaah mention him with commendation and grant him protection) said, “Should I not tell you which of your deeds is the best; is considered purest and most productive¹ by your One Supreme Lord, who owns and controls all things; is most effective in enabling you to attain the highest of ranks; is more rewarding for you than giving gold and silver in ways that please Allaah²; and is even better for you than facing in battle enemies who are hostile towards you, such that you strike their necks and they strike your necks³?” The Companions present replied, “Messenger of Allaah, please do inform us.” He said, “It is: mentioning Allaah (the Almighty and Most Majestic).”⁴

[2] This tremendous Hadeeth informs us about the virtuous rank held by Thikr (mentioning Allaah) and the fact that it can yield a reward equivalent to freeing slaves, spending in charity, preparing cavalry for legitimate struggle in the path of Allaah (the Almighty and Most Majestic), and even striking hostile enemies with swords while facing them during battle in the path of Allaah (the Almighty and Most Majestic).

[3] Ibn Rajab (may Allaah have mercy upon him) had commented that “there are many texts of Islaam showing that Thikr (mentioning Allaah) can hold a rank more virtuous than monetary forms of charity and other righteous deeds”⁵ [end of remark from ibn Rajab (may Allaah have mercy upon him)], and he then cited the foregoing Hadeeth narrated by Abud-Dardaa’ (may Allaah be pleased with him) along with several other Ahaadeeth that convey a similar idea.

[4] There is also a pertinent narration that was collected by ibn Abid-Dunyaa, as mentioned in at-Targheeb wat-Tarheeb⁶ by al-Munthiree who stated that its chain of transmission is authentic at the level of Hasan. The narration was collected through al-A‘mash, from Saalim ibn Abil-Ja‘d who stated: Abud-Dardaa’ (may Allaah be pleased with him) was told that a man had set one hundred slaves free. He replied, “What it takes to free one hundred slaves indeed constitutes a large portion of a person’s property; and even more virtuous than that are: constantly maintaining Eemaan (acceptance of the truth from Allaah and compliance with it) throughout the night and the day, as well as each of you ensuring that your tongue remains moist with mention of Allaah.”

[5] Here, Abud-Dardaa’ (may Allaah be pleased with him) clarified the virtuous rank held

¹ [See al-‘Alam al-Hayyib, p. 52; Mirqaatul-Mafaateeh, no. 2269; at-Tanweer 4/381].

² [See Mirqaatul-Mafaateeh, no. 2269].

³ [In other words, what he will inform them about is even more virtuous than struggling in Allaah’s path to uphold His religion, and even more virtuous than being martyred in Allaah’s path (i.e. losing one’s life in the line of duty while defending Allaah’s religion and its lands). See Mirqaatul-Mafaateeh, no. 2269].

⁴ [al-Musnad 5/195; Jaami‘ at-Tirmithi, no. 3377; Sunan ibn Maajah, no. 3790; al-Mustadrak 1/496. Graded authentic at the level of Saheeh by al-Albaanee in Saheeh al-Jaami‘, no. 2629].

⁵ Jaami‘ al-‘Uloom wal-Hikam, p. 225.

⁶ 2/395.

by setting individuals free; and he further clarified that even though it is a very virtuous deed, it is still not equivalent to remaining constantly engaged in mentioning Allaah. This meaning can be found in many narrations from the Salaf (foremost generations of Islaam), may Allaah have mercy upon them.

[6] [It was narrated that] ibn Mas‘ood (may Allaah be pleased with him) had said, “Indeed, when I declare that Allaah (the Most Exalted) is flawless [i.e. I say سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ (I declare that Allaah is Absolutely Flawless)] a number of times, that is more beloved to me than if I were to spend that same number of gold coins in Allaah’s path.”

[7] [It was also narrated that] ‘Abdullaah ibn ‘Amr and ‘Abdullaah ibn Mas‘ood (may Allaah be pleased with them) had sat together, and ‘Abdullaah ibn Mas‘ood stated, “Indeed, when I walk along a path while saying سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ (I declare that Allaah is Absolutely Flawless), الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ (all praise belongs to Allaah), لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ (none has the right to be worshipped except Allaah), and اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ (Allaah is the Greatest) a number of times; that is more beloved to me than if I were to spend that same number of gold coins in the path of Allaah (the Almighty and Most Majestic).” ‘Abdullaah ibn ‘Amr then added, “Indeed, when I walk along a path and say them a number of times, that is more beloved to me than preparing that same number of cavalry for legitimate struggle in the path of Allaah (the Almighty and Most Majestic).”

[8] Similar was said by several among the Companions and the Taabi‘een (Successors of the Companions): Thikr (mentioning Allaah) a number of times can hold a rank more virtuous than giving that same number of units from one’s wealth in charity.⁷

[9] There are numerous reports from them that convey this meaning. However, they do not in any way whatsoever mean to detract from spending in Allaah’s path, preparing cavalry for legitimate struggle in His path, or freeing slaves in His path. Indeed, all that those reports aim to do is show the outstanding prominence of Thikr (mentioning Allaah), the tremendous rank it has, the elevated status it holds, and the fact that none of the deeds mentioned are equivalent to it. In fact, all deeds and acts of obedience prescribed by Islaam’s teachings are for the purpose of establishing the mention of Allaah, and the aim behind all of them is bringing about the mention of Allaah (the Most Exalted).

[10] This meaning can be understood from the statement of Allaah (the Most Exalted) [addressing the Prophet Moosaa], ((And you are to establish prayer for the purpose of mentioning Me)) [20:14]. In other words: you must establish prayer in order to mention Allaah (the Most Majestic and Exalted) [during it]⁸. This alerts us to the major significance that prayer has, since it consists of humility towards Allaah (the Most Exalted), standing before Allaah, asking of Allaah (the One who owns limitless blessings and is Most Exalted), and establishing mention of Allaah. In light of that all, prayer itself is Thikr (mentioning Allaah), and Allaah (the Most Exalted) actually called it that as can be found in His statement, ((People who have accepted and complied with the truth, when the call is proclaimed for the prayer on Friday, do what is required for proceeding⁹ towards mentioning Allaah)) [62:9]. Here, Allaah called prayer itself Thikr, and that is because Thikr (mentioning Allaah) is the soul, the core, and the true meaning of prayer. In addition, the people who attain the greatest rewards for prayer are the ones whose mention of Allaah (the Most Exalted) during prayer is strongest, most diligent,

⁷ See Jaami‘ al-‘Uloom wal-Hikam, pp. 225-226.

⁸ [See al-Muyassar 20:14; al-Mukhtasar 20:14].

⁹ [See Hadaa’iq 29/301].

and most plentiful. In fact, the same idea applies to every act of obedience and worship by which a worshipping servant draws nearer to Allaah.

[11] al-Imaam Ahmad and at-Tabaraanee collected that ‘Abdullaah ibn Lahee‘ah had said: Zabbaan ibn Faa‘id narrated to us, from Sahl ibn Mu‘aath ibn Anas al-Juhanee, from his father, that a man had asked Allaah’s Messenger (may Allaah mention him with commendation and grant him protection), “Messenger of Allaah, which of the people who struggle in Allaah’s path attain the greatest reward?” He responded, “Those among them who mention Allaah most.” The man further inquired, “Which of the people who fast are the ones who attain the most reward?” He responded, “Those among them who mention Allaah most.” The man then asked the same about prayer, obligatory charity, Hajj, and optional charity. Regarding each of them, Allaah’s Messenger (may Allaah mention him with commendation and grant him protection) responded by saying, “Those among them who mention Allaah most.” As a result, Aboo Bakr commented to ‘Umar (may Allaah be pleased with both of them), “Those who mention Allaah have made off with all the good!”, and Allaah’s Messenger (may Allaah mention him with commendation and grant him protection) said in response, “That is correct.”¹⁰

[12] al-Haythamee (may Allaah have mercy upon him) noted, “Its chain of transmission contains Zabbaan ibn Faa‘id who is a weak narrator, though some have graded him reliable. Similar is the case with ibn Lahee‘ah.”¹¹ End of remark from al-Haythamee [(may Allaah have mercy upon him)].

[13] However, that Hadeeth has a supporting narration that is Mursal (i.e. its chain of transmission is broken between its highest Taabi‘ee and the Prophet, may Allaah mention him with commendation and grant him protection), though its chain from the collector up until the highest Taabi‘ee is authentic at the level of Saheeh. That supporting narration was collected by ibn al-Mubaarak in az-Zuhd, where he said: Haywah reported to me. He said: Zuhrah ibn Ma‘bad narrated to me that he heard Aboo Sa‘eed al-Maqburee say: Someone had asked, “Messenger of Allaah, which of the people who perform Hajj attain the greatest reward?” He responded, “Those among them who mention Allaah most.” The questioner further inquired, “Which of the people who pray attain the greatest reward?” He responded, “Those among them who mention Allaah most.” The questioner further inquired, “Which of the people who fast attain the greatest reward?” He responded, “Those among them who mention Allaah most.” The questioner further inquired, “Which of the people who struggle in Allaah’s path attain the greatest reward?” He replied, “Those among them who mention Allaah most.” Zuhrah added: Aboo Sa‘eed al-Maqburee reported to me that ‘Umar ibn al-Khattaab had told Aboo Bakr, “Those who mention Allaah have made off with all the good!”¹²

[14] The aforementioned Hadeeth also has another supporting narration, which was cited by ibn al-Qayyim in his book al-Waabil as-Sayyib where he said that ibn Abid-Dunyaa cited, pertaining to this topic, a Hadeeth that is Mursal (i.e. its chain of transmission is broken between its highest Taabi‘ee and the Prophet, may Allaah mention him with commendation and grant him protection). The Hadeeth states that the Prophet (may Allaah mention him with commendation and grant him protection) was asked, “Which of the people who frequent the Masjid are best?” He responded, “Those among them who make the most mention of Allaah

¹⁰ al-Musnad 3/438; al-Mu‘jam al-Kabeer by at-Tabaraanee 20/[186], no. 407.

¹¹ Majma‘ az-Zawaa‘id 10/74.

¹² az-Zuhd, no. 1429.

(the Almighty and Most Majestic).” He was asked, “Which of the people who attend a funeral are best?” He responded, “Those among them who make the most mention of Allaah (the Almighty and Most Majestic).” He was further asked, “Which of those who struggle in Allaah’s path are best?” He responded, “Those among them who make the most mention of Allaah (the Almighty and Most Majestic).” He was further asked, “Which of those who perform Hajj are best?” He responded, “Those among them who make the most mention of Allaah (the Almighty and Most Majestic).” He was also asked, “Which of those who visit the ill are best?” He responded, “Those among them who make the most mention of Allaah (the Almighty and Most Majestic).” Aboo Bakr commented, “Those who mention Allaah have made off with good in its entirety!”¹³

[15] In light of those two supporting narrations, the initial Hadeeth is acceptable to be used as evidence—if Allaah wills—and the meaning that it conveys is undoubtedly correct. Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allaah have mercy upon him) had commented, “The most virtuous of the people who perform any deed are the ones who make the most mention of Allaah (the Almighty and Most Majestic) while performing it. Thus, the most virtuous of the people who fast are the ones among them who make the most mention of Allaah (the Almighty and Most Majestic) during their fasting; the most virtuous of the people who give charity are the ones among them who make the most mention of Allaah (the Almighty and Most Majestic); the most virtuous of the people who perform Hajj are the ones among them who make the most mention of Allaah (the Almighty and Most Majestic); and the same applies to all other deeds.”¹⁴ After that comment, ibn al-Qayyim cited the previously mentioned Hadeeth, and then cited after it a narration in which ‘Ubayd ibn ‘Umayr (may Allaah have mercy upon him) had said, “If worshipping Allaah during the night is too difficult for you to bear, if you are too miserly to spend, and if you are too cowardly to face the enemy in battle, then make much mention of Allaah (the Almighty and Most Majestic).”¹⁵

[16] Thus, the mention of Allaah (the Most Exalted) is the most virtuous of deeds, and it is greater than everything else. Allaah (the Most Majestic and Exalted) said, ((Messenger of Allaah¹⁶, continue¹⁷ to read and follow¹⁸ what has been sent to you of this Book as revelation, and continue¹⁹ to establish prayer. Indeed, the prayer that is established properly restrains people from all that is obscene and all that is unacceptable.²⁰ And surely, the mention of Allaah

¹³ al-Waabil as-Sayyib, p. 152. I did not find it in any of ibn Abid-Dunyaa’s books that are published. [What I did find is that] it was collected by Abul-Qaasim al-Asbahaanee in his book at-Targheeb wat-Tarheeb, no. 1366; as well as by al-Bayhaqee in Shu‘ab al-Eemaan, no. 554. Both of them collected it through ibn Abid-Dunyaa, who said: Muḥammad ibn al-Faraj al-Farraa’ narrated to us. He said: Muḥammad ibn az-Zibriqaan narrated to us, from Thawr ibn [Yazeed], from Aboo Bakr and ad-Dahhaak—both of whom are among the people of ash-Shaam. The two of them said: Allaah’s Messenger (may Allaah mention him with commendation and grant him protection) was asked, “Which of the people who frequent the Masjid are best?...” and so on until the end of the Hadeeth.

¹⁴ al-Waabil as-Sayyib, p. 152.

¹⁵ This meaning can also be found in a Hadeeth that was narrated from the Prophet (may Allaah mention him with commendation and grant him protection). See as-Silsilah as-Saḥeeḥah by al-Albaanee, no. 2714.

¹⁶ [See at-Tabaree 29:45; Hadaa’iq 21/420].

¹⁷ [See Hadaa’iq 21/421].

¹⁸ [See as-Sa‘dee 29:45; al-Muyassar 29:45].

¹⁹ [See Hadaa’iq 21/421].

²⁰ [See Hadaa’iq 21/422].

is the greatest)) [29:45]. In other words, Allaah's mention of you is greater than your mention of Him in your worship and your prayers, and He makes mention of those who make mention of Him. A similar explanation was mentioned by ibn Mas'ood, ibn 'Abbaas, Abud-Dardaa', Aboo Qurrah, Salmaan [al-Faarisee], and al-Hasan [al-Basree]; and it was the explanation preferred by ibn Jareer at-Tabaree.

[17] Another explanation is that your mention of Allaah while you pray and while reading the Qur'aan is more virtuous than everything else. ['Abdur-Rahmaan] ibn Zayd [ibn Aslam]²¹ and Qataadah had explained that [the ending of the portion of the Aayah that was cited] means: and surely, the mention of Allaah is greater than everything else. In other words, it is more virtuous than all acts of worship when performed without Thikr (mentioning Allaah).

[18] Yet another explanation is that remaining constant in Thikr (mentioning Allaah) brings about an even greater degree of restraint from all that is obscene and all that is unacceptable than the degree of restraint brought about by establishing prayers.

[19] Shaykh al-Islaam ibn Taymiyyah (may Allaah have mercy upon him) had said, "What is correct is that the Aayah means that there are two momentous aims behind prayer, and one of them of is even more momentous than the other: [1] prayer restrains people from all that is obscene and all that is unacceptable, and [2] prayer also brings about the mention of Allaah (the Most Exalted); and, without any doubt, prayer bringing about the mention of Allaah is greater than it restraining people from the obscene and unacceptable."²² End of remark from ibn Taymiyyah (may Allaah have mercy upon him).

[20] Salmaan al-Faarisee (may Allaah be pleased with him) was asked, "Among deeds, which is the most virtuous?" He responded, "Do you not read that the Qur'aan says ((And surely, the mention of Allaah is the greatest)) [29:45]?"

[21] Additionally, ibn Abid-Dunyaa had also collected that ibn 'Abbaas (may Allaah be pleased with both of them) was asked, "Which deed is most virtuous?" He responded, "The mention of Allaah is the greatest."²³

[22] With the preceding in mind, we conclude by mentioning that Allaah is greater than absolutely everything. In addition, Allaah deserves abundant praise, and Allaah deserves that His flawlessness be declared in the earlier and later parts of the day. Allaah deserves those to an extent that fills the heavens that He created, fills the Earth that He created, fills all that is between them, and fills everything that He wills beyond that. He deserves those to an extent that does not cease or perish. He deserves to be mentioned in the preceding ways as often as the number of times that all who praise Him offer Him praise, as often as the number of times that all who are heedless of mentioning Him fail to mention Him, as plentifully as the number of His creatures, as abundantly as pleases Him, as much as the weight of His Throne, and as limitlessly as His inexhaustible words.

²¹ [See Mawsoo'ah at-Tafseer al-Ma'thoor 17/345].

²² Cited by ibn al-Qayyim in al-Waabil as-Sayyib, p. 152.

²³ See al-Waabil as-Sayyib by ibn al-Qayyim, pp. 149-153.

Discussion and Review

Q1 A Hadeeth was cited as evidence that mentioning Allaah is the most pure, productive, and virtuous of deeds to Allaah. In that Hadeeth, the Prophet (may Allaah mention him with commendation and grant him protection) said, “Should I not tell you which of your deeds is the best; is considered purest and most productive by your One Supreme Lord, who owns and controls all things; is most effective in enabling you to attain the highest of ranks; is more rewarding for you than giving gold and silver in ways that please Allaah; and is even better for you than facing in battle enemies who are hostile towards you, such that you strike their necks and they strike your necks?” Which Companion narrated that Hadeeth?

Q2 In a statement that was narrated from that same Companion, what two deeds did he say are more virtuous than setting one hundred slaves free?

Q3 What words were beloved to ‘Abdullaah ibn ‘Amr and ‘Abdullaah ibn Mas‘ood, and how did we render their meanings in English?

Q4 Thikr (mentioning Allaah) a number of times can hold a rank more virtuous than giving that same number of units from one’s wealth in charity. What do such narrations aim to show?

Q5 What Aayah—along with its meaning in English—was cited in relation to establishing prayer for the purpose of mentioning Allaah during it?

Q6 What rationale was given for saying that prayer itself is Thikr, and what Aayah—along with its meaning in English—was cited in that regard?

Q7 What basic idea was reiterated about the most virtuous of people who perform any deed?

Q8 What Aayah—along with its meaning in English—was cited in relation to the mention of Allaah being greater than all else?

Q9 What was the first meaning presented for ((the mention of Allaah is the greatest))?

Q10 What was the main idea in the second meaning presented?

Q11 What was the third meaning presented?

Q12 What was the main idea in the fourth meaning presented?