

نزك الينفس

SPIRITUAL PURIFICATION RETREAT

ATTAINING WARA'

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Attaining Wara'

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



Wara' is a significant stage or level in the pursuit of achieving nearness to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. Attempting to attain the peak of Taqwā doesn't only mean to refrain from Harām, but there's an additional step above that within the meaning of Taqwā, which is abstaining from doubtful matters. Wara' is refraining from doubtful issues as well as permissible matters, to not only steer clear from Harām, but also to create a greater distance from it. Wara' is incorporating an additional level of caution to avoid engaging in Harām by abstaining from certain aspects of what's considered Halāl. It's steering clear of any type of doubt by creating a protective shield between you and the Harām by leaving doubtful matters. Wara' is also reflecting on your actions with every blink of an eye. Sufyān Ath-Thawri رحمه الله تعالى said, *"Wara' is very simple and easy. If something feels off to you, then avoid it."* When you're in doubt and something wavers in your soul and rankles in your heart and you feel uncomfortable about it, when you're uncertain about something and your heart is not at ease with it, when you dislike people finding out about something, Wara' means to leave it and to avoid it. And that's taken from the words of the Messenger ﷺ,

وَالْإِثْمُ مَا حَاكَ فِي صَدْرِكَ، وَكَرِهْتَ أَنْ يَطَّلَعَ عَلَيْهِ النَّاسُ

Sinful conduct is what makes your heart uncomfortable, and that which you dislike that it would be exposed to people.

Judging by whether the heart is at ease with something or not applies in some situations to some people — to certain people, not everyone. It's not a general rule for every matter nor for every person. It applies to those who strive for righteousness with hearts that are clean, pure, and sound. It applies to hearts and Fitrahs that haven't been polluted and tainted. It's directed to souls with proper Islamic upbringing, souls that are content and satisfied with Allāh سبحانه وتعالى and

His Orders, souls that aim to only please Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. There are those with corrupted hearts and Fitrahs who indulge in sins that they don't even hesitate to publicly commit. They flaunt their reprehensible major sins in public and call for them. Sins like the abhorrent sins of the Qawm Lūt or Zinā والعياذ بالله. Those individuals see major sins, Mūbiqāt, and even Shirk at times as something that doesn't discomfort them, they feel at ease with them. Their Fitrah is so corrupted that it's *your* belief in the sinful nature of the act of Qawm Lūt that causes them discomfort. You'll find them engaging in such sins with a sense of comfort and ease with no regard or concern والعياذ بالله. Those are people with tainted Fitrahs. That's not who the Hadīth مَا الْإِثْمُ مَا حَاكَ فِي صَدْرِكَ is referring to. They might prioritize — actually they *do* prioritize their heart feelings over the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. Tainted heart feelings, they give that priority over the Qur'ān and the Sunnah, and Allāh سبحانه وتعالى reprimanded some for that.

أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنْ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوَاهُ

Have you seen he who has taken as his god his [own] desire?

The Hadīth مَا الْإِثْمُ مَا حَاكَ فِي صَدْرِكَ applies only for certain matters. When there's clear proof in the Qur'ān and Sunnah on some matter, there's no room for feelings or for discomfort. You do what you're ordered and refrain from what you're supposed to refrain from and you accept it wholeheartedly. Some matters are clearly Harām.

إِنَّ الْحَلَالَ بَيِّنٌ، وَإِنَّ الْحَرَامَ بَيِّنٌ

That which is lawful is clear and that which is unlawful is clear...

The Hadīth that's in Bukhārī and Muslim that's been described by some Ulamā' as being one-third or one-fourth of knowledge, some Ulamā' said that it's considered central to the teachings of this Dīn.

إِنَّ الْحَلَالَ بَيِّنٌ، وَإِنَّ الْحَرَامَ بَيِّنٌ

That which is lawful is clear and that which is unlawful is clear...

There's Harām that's crisp clear. It's hard to miss this Harām, unless someone grew up in a remote area far from the Islāmic communities and was unable to reach out to anyone to ask them. Then there are matters of doubt.

وَبَيْنَهُمَا أُمُورٌ مُشْتَبِهَاتٌ لَا يَعْلَمُهُنَّ كَثِيرٌ مِنَ النَّاسِ

And between the two of them are doubtful matters about which many people do not know.

Leaving the Harām is Wājib, leaving the matters of doubt is Mustahhab, but a person doesn't reach the status of Wara' unless he leaves both. So Wara' is to leave what's clearly Harām, that's the Wājib level of Wara' every Muslim should have. The Hadīth takes you step by step. Then there's other matters that are not so clear.

وَبَيْنَهُمَا أُمُورٌ مُشْتَبِهَاتٌ لَا يَعْلَمُهُنَّ كَثِيرٌ مِنَ النَّاسِ

And between the two of them are doubtful matters about which many people do not know.

And those matters that are not clear, that not many know, one should guard his Dīn by leaving them.

فَمَنْ اتَّقَى الشُّبُهَاتِ فَقَدْ اسْتَبْرَأَ لِدِينِهِ وَعِزِّهِ

Thus he who avoids doubtful matters clears himself in regard to his religion and his honor...

That's similar to the Hadīth,

دَعْ مَا يَرِيكَ إِلَى مَا لَا يَرِيكَ

Leave that which makes you doubt for that which does not make you doubt.

What type of doubts are we talking about? The doubts could be due to disputes among the righteous Ulamā' and their understanding of certain proofs. Some, based on their Ijtihād and their understanding of certain proofs, they may adopt a matter as a Makrūh while others may adopt it as a Harām. We're talking about genuine Ulamā' who fear Allāh سبحانه وتعالى and who are not focused on pleasing the Kuffār or making their main purpose in life about simplifying things for others or for their audience, even when it's in contrast to the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. The matters of doubts may also arise from disagreements between righteous Ulamā' regarding the application of some proofs to present, current, ongoing

events. In situations of this nature or their like, if a sincere individual whose Fitrah is uncorrupted, if he consults a Shaykh and receives confirmation that some action is permissible, but he feels some inner discomfort regarding that action, Wara' means that it's advisable for that individual to refrain from proceeding with the matter. Ibn Al-Qayyim said, *"A person shouldn't solely base their religious rulings on asking an 'Ālim or scholar, if they don't completely feel at ease with the matter and they have doubts in their hearts about accepting it."* Some matters of doubt may be about like ingredients in food products. Everyone believes pork is Harām. That falls under *وإن الحرام بين*, it's clear. When you're out grocery shopping, you might come across ingredients in some products that raise questions about the potential presence of pork in them. Wara' means one should steer clear of buying that or eating it. Everyone agrees Ribā is Harām. Let's assume there was an inheritance left by someone whose money or a portion of it came from Ribā. In such a scenario, some Ulamā' believe that money gained through Ribā means is considered Harām on the one who earned it because of his act alone, and it doesn't stick with the actual money itself. Based on that opinion, the Harām is on the person who acquired the money, who acquired the Ribā, and it doesn't affect the inheritors so they can inherit from that money. Other Ulamā' said that the money itself that derived from Ribā is tainted, it should be donated and the inheritors can't inherit Harām Ribā. They must donate it and not take it. The Wara' in such a doubtful matter with a legitimate dispute among righteous Ulamā' would be to leave that portion of Ribā.

Keep in mind, one should not let Wara' get so extensive and extreme that it causes him Waswasa. An individual shouldn't go to the extreme of saying, for example, *"I'm not going hunting for fear the game might have been caught by someone else and then it escaped from that person, and now if I hunt I might catch that animal."* That's all based on assumptions, it has no reality to it. That's Waswasa, that's not Wara'. In the continuation of the Hadīth, that some Ulamā' considered it one-fourth of knowledge, the Messenger ﷺ said

وَمَنْ وَقَعَ فِي الشُّبُهَاتِ وَقَعَ فِي الْحَرَامِ

He who falls into doubtful matters eventually falls into what's unlawful.

كَالرَّاعِي يَرْعَى حَوْلَ الْحِمَى يُوشِكُ أَنْ يَرْتَعَ فِيهِ

Like the shepherd who pastures around a sanctuary, all but grazing therein.

This is what Wara' is to our Deen. Long ago, there were pastures owned by kings and they were strictly off limits to the general public. If a shepherd was found letting his animals graze in those areas, he would face harsh, severe consequences from the king. The shepherds took great care to keep their livestock away from these forbidden pastures, because they understood if they got too close there was a chance that their animals might wander into the prohibited pastures, and that would mean facing a harsh punishment from the king. That's a king's sanctuary and that's how shepherds took precaution in avoiding going into those pastures. The Messenger ﷺ said,

أَلَا وَإِنَّ لِكُلِّ مَلِكٍ حِمًى، أَلَا وَإِنَّ حِمَى اللَّهِ مُحَارِمُهُ

Every king has a sanctuary. Allāh's sanctuary is His prohibitions.

The shepherd not only steers clear of the area that the king declared off limits, but he's also very cautious and keeps his distance in order to be safe. Keeping your distance away from Harām in the same way is the definition of Wara'. Wara' serves as a safeguard and a means of protection for your Dīn.

وَمَنْ وَقَعَ فِي الشُّبُهَاتِ وَقَعَ فِي الْحَرَامِ

He who falls into doubtful matters eventually falls into what's unlawful.

Focus on this rule. Mubāh means matters that are permissible. Matters of Mubāh are a barrier for a servant when it comes to Makrūh. If someone excessively engages in too much Mubāh, it might, or most likely *will* drag him towards committing the Makrūh. The level of Wara' should be to leave some of the Mubāh for fear of reaching the Makrūh. To reach the high status of Taqwā in Wara', one needs to refrain from doing something in which there's no sin of doing them for fear of falling into something in which there is a dislike or sin in doing them. Again, Mubāh serves as a protective barrier for an individual against what's Makrūh. Excessive engagement in what's Mubāh can compromise or diminish this barrier. That will increase the likelihood of the individual being drawn towards what's Makrūh. Makrūh acts as an obstacle that separates the servant from Harām, engaging excessively in Makrūh can diminish this barrier, and that can potentially result in the individual committing Harām acts والعياذ بالله.

There are numerous remarkable examples of Wara' in the actions, of course, of the Messenger ﷺ and in the stories of the Salaf. Sadaqah is Harām to the Messenger ﷺ and his family, as we know. In Sahīh Al-Bukhāri and Muslim, the Prophet ﷺ came upon a date that was on the road. It's Halāl, because he doesn't know of its origin, he doesn't know if it's Sadaqah or not, but there's a doubt in it. There's a doubt that *that* date may be from the Sadaqah. He said,

لَوْلَا أَنِّي أَخَافُ أَنْ تَكُونَ مِنَ الصَّدَقَةِ لَأَكَلْتُهَا

Were it not that I feared that it may be part of the Sadaqah, I would eat it.

When his baby grandson **رضي الله عنه** took a date from the dates of the Sadaqah and he put it in his mouth, he could have let him go with that. He's a non-Mukallaf infant or young boy. The Prophet **ﷺ** said, **كخ كخ! Don't you know that we do not eat from the Sadaqah?**

Ash-Shātibi in Al-Muwāfaqa and Ibn Al-Jawzi in Sifat As-Safwā mentioned the story of the great worshiper Bishr Ibn Al-Hārith Ibn 'Abd Ar-Rahmān Al-Marwazi. He was known Muhaddith who eventually devoted his life to 'Ibādah during the time of Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal **رحمه الله جميعا**. He earned his name Al-Hāfi, he was known as Bishr Al-Hāfi, which means barefoot, due to his habit of walking without shoes. He had a sister like him, just as good as him, in her 'Ibādah and Zuhd and Wara'. She went to Imām Ahmad Ibn Hanbal and she asked him a question. She said, *"I spin wool on the roof of my house during nighttime, and sometimes the government officials and the patrols pass by with their torches and they light up the area to see what's going on, and I benefit from the light that they turn on from their torches."* She took advantage of their light to spin some wool in the dark nights. She wanted to know if that's permissible, to spin wool using their light? Imām Ahmad **رحمه الله** was astonished at that level of Wara', he knew she had to be someone special. He said, *"Who are you?"* She said I'm the sister of Bishr Ibn Al-Hārith. Imām Ahmad wept and he said, *"From your household comes true Wara', don't spin using their light."* It might be permissible for an ordinary person to benefit from such a light, but Imām Ahmad held her to a more elevated standard of Wara' because of the noble background she belonged to. Any hint of doubt, no matter how slight, should be kept from entering the home of Bishr Al-Hāfi. The stories from the books of Wara' are astonishing. It was mentioned that the great Khalīfah 'Umar Ibn 'Abd Al-'Azīz would block his nose to prevent inhaling the scent of musk that was designated for the Muslim treasury. He said the value of musk lies in its fragrance, he was determined not to derive any personal benefit from the wealth of the Muslim community, even if it was simply the aroma of the musk that belonged to the Muslims. In Siyar A'lām An-Nubalā, Adh-Dhahabi mentioned in the stories he mentioned about 'Abdullāh Ibn Al-Mubārāk that 'Abdullāh Ibn Al-Mubārāk borrowed a pen from somebody in Ash-Shām and he wanted to return it, but he forgot. When he arrived to Khurasān, which is the

eastern part of Irān, the pen was still with him. Look at the distance between Khurasān and Bilād Ash-Shām. He returned to Bilād Ash-Shām to give it back to its owner. And there are plenty of other similar examples in the stories of the Salaf. Wara' brings peace of mind and cleans the heart just like one cleans his own clothes.

وصلی اللہ علی سیدنا محمد وعلی آلہ وصحبہ وسلم