



NIZAMIYE MOSQUE COMPLEX

“Where heart and mind meet”

FRIDAY SERMON – 11 : FRUGALITY

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

Eat and drink, but waste not by excess. (7:31)

This verse gives most important and wise instruction in the form of categorically commanding frugality and clearly prohibiting wastefulness. The matter contains seven points.

FIRST POINT

The All-Compassionate Creator desires **THANKS** in return for the bounties He bestows on mankind, while wastefulness is contrary to thanks, and slights the bounty and causes loss.

Frugality;

- shows respect for the bounty and is profitable.
- is both a sort of thanks
- shows respect towards the divine mercy manifested in the bounties
- most definitely is the cause of plenty. So too, like abstinence, it is health-giving for the body, and since it saves a person from the degradation of what is in effect begging, is a cause of self-respect. It is also a powerful means of experiencing the pleasure to be found in bounties, and tasting that pleasure in bounties which apparently afford no pleasure. As for wastefulness, since it is opposed to these instances of wisdom, it has grave consequences.

SECOND POINT

The All-Wise Maker created the human body in the form of a wonderful palace and resembling a well-ordered city. The sense of taste in the mouth is like a **door-keeper**, and the nerves and blood vessels like **telephone and telegraph wires**; they are the means by which the sense of taste communicates with the stomach, which is at the centre of the body, and informs it of the food that enters the mouth. If the body and stomach have no use for it, it says: “Forbidden!”, and expels it. And sometimes the food is harmful and bitter as well as not being beneficial for the body, and it spits it out immediately.

Thus, since the sense of taste is a doorkeeper, from the point of view of administering the body, the stomach is a **master and a ruler**. If the gifts arriving at the palace or city and those given to the palace’s ruler are worth one hundred liras, only five liras’ worth is appropriate for the doorkeeper in the form of a tip, lest he becomes conceited and is corrupted, then forgetting his duty he lets revolutionaries into the palace who will give him a bigger tip.



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In consequence of this mystery we shall now imagine **two mouthfuls**. One consists of nutritious food like cheese and egg and costs forty para, ¹ and the other is of the choicest pastries and costs twenty rand. Before entering the mouth, there is no difference in these two mouthfuls with respect to the body, they are equal. And after passing down the throat, **they are still equal in nourishing the body. Indeed, forty cents worth of cheese is sometimes more nutritious. Only, in regard to pampering the sense of taste in the mouth, there is a half-minute difference. You can see from this what a meaningless and harmful waste it is to increase the cost from forty cents to twenty rand for the sake of half a minute.**

Now, although the gift arriving for the palace’s ruler is worth one lira, to give the doorkeeper a tip nine times bigger than **his due will corrupt him**. He will declare: “I am the ruler,” and will allow to enter whoever gives him the biggest tip and most pleasure; he will cause a revolution and conflagration to break out. Then he will compel them to cry out: “Oh! Call the doctor and get him to put out this fire in my stomach and bring down my temperature!”

Thus, frugality and contentment are in conformity with divine wisdom; they treat the sense of taste as a doorkeeper and give it its remuneration accordingly.

As for wastefulness, since it is

- **to act contrarily to wisdom, it**
- **swiftly receives its punishment,**
- **upsets the stomach, and**
- **causes real appetite to be lost.**

Producing from the unnecessary variety of foods a false and artificial appetite, it causes indigestion and illness.

THIRD POINT

We said in the Second Point that the sense of taste is a doorkeeper, and indeed, for the heedless and those who have not progressed spiritually or advanced in the way of thanks, it is like a doorkeeper. Wastefulness should not be indulged in or the sense of taste’s price be raised from one to ten for the sake of giving it pleasure.

However, **the sense of taste of those truly on the way of thanks, those seeking reality, and those who approach reality with their hearts is like a supervisor and inspector in the kitchens of divine mercy, as is explained in the comparison in the Sixth Word.** Its duty is **to recognize and weigh up the varieties of divine bounties on the tiny scales present in it to the number of foods, and to send the body and stomach news of the food in the form of thanks.** In this respect the sense of taste does not only look to the physical stomach; since it looks also **to the heart, spirit, and mind**, it holds a position and importance superior to the stomach. It can follow its pleasure on condition it is not wasteful or extravagant, and is purely to carry out its duty of thanks and recognize and perceive the varieties of divine bounty, and on condition it is licit and does not lead to degradation and begging.



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In fact, delicious foods may be preferred in order to employ the tongue which bears the sense of taste in giving thanks. The following is an instance of Shaykh Geylani’s wonder-working which alludes to this truth:

At one time, being instructed by Ghawth al-A‘zam, Shaykh Geylani (May his mystery be sanctified), was the only son of an aged and anxious woman. This esteemed lady had gone to her son’s cell and seen that he had nothing to eat but a piece of dry, black bread. Her maternal compassion was aroused by his emaciated condition resulting from his asceticism. She felt sorry for him. Later she went to Ghawth al-A‘zam in order to complain, and saw the Shaykh was tucking into roast chicken. Out of her concern, she declared:

- “O Master! My son is dying of hunger while you are eating chicken!”

Whereupon Ghawth al-A‘zam said to the chicken:

- “Rise up, with God’s permission!” At this, the cooked chicken bones assembled and were thrown out of the dish as an entire live chicken. This has been related unanimously through many reliable and documented channels as a marvel of someone whose extraordinary wonder-working is world-famous. Ghawth al-A‘zam said to her:

- “When your son reaches this level, then he too can eat chicken.”

Thus, the meaning of Ghawth al-A‘zam’s words is this: whenever your son’s spirit rules his body, and his heart rules the desires of his soul, and his reason rules his stomach, and he wants pleasure for the sake of offering thanks, then he may eat delicious things.

May Allah make us one of those who asks tastes just become grateful in return for them. Amin