


Weekly Booklet



Remembering Allah Almighty in Old Age

- 
- Four stages of life
 - Faking old age
 - Who was the first person to have a white hair?
 - Golden words of advice

Presented by: (DAWAT-E-ISLAMI)
AL-MADINAH-TUL-ILMIA
Islamic Research Centre

بڑھاپے میں یادِ خدا

Remembering Allah Almighty in Old Age

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الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ وَالصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَى خَاتَمِ النَّبِيِّينَ
أَمَّا بَعْدُ فَأَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Supplication for reading this book

Recite the following before you read a religious book or begin an Islamic lesson; you will remember whatever you study **اِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ**.

اللَّهُمَّ افْتَحْ عَلَيْنَا حِكْمَتَكَ وَانْشُرْ
عَلَيْنَا رَحْمَتَكَ يَا ذَا الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ

O Allah! Open the doors of knowledge and wisdom for us and have mercy on us! O He Who is the Most Glorious and Honourable! (*Al-Mustatraf*, vol. 1, p. 40)

Note:

Recite *salāt* upon the beloved Prophet ﷺ once before and after.

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الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ وَالصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَى خَاتَمِ النَّبِيِّينَ
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Remembering Allah Almighty in Old Age

Supplication of Attar

O Generous Lord, whosoever reads or listens to the booklet entitled *Remembering Allah Almighty in Old Age*, grant him the ability to worship You in every stage of his life, from youth to old age, and forgive him without accountability.

اٰمِيْنُ بِجَاہِ خَاتَمِ النَّبِيِّينَ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَاٰلِهٖ وَسَلَّم

Leading the angels in prayer (virtue of sending *ṣalāt* upon the beloved Prophet ﷺ)

Sayyidunā Ḥaṣṣ b. ‘Abdullāh رَحْمَةُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهِ narrates:

I saw Imam al-Muḥaddithīn Abū Zur‘ah رَحْمَةُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهِ in a dream after his passing. He was leading the angels in prayer in the first heaven. I asked, “O Abū Zur‘ah, how did you receive this honour?”

He replied, “I wrote one million *Aḥādīth* with my hand, and I would send *ṣalāt* upon the Prophet with each Hadith, and the beloved Prophet صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَاٰلِهٖ وَسَلَّم said, ‘If

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a Muslim sends *ṣalāt* upon me once, Allah Almighty sends ten mercies upon him.”¹

صَلُّوا عَلَى الْحَبِيبِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ

The righteous man who lived in solitude

The esteemed *tābiʿ*, Sayyidunā Ayās b. Qatādah رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ was the leader of his tribe. One day, he looked in the mirror and saw a white hair in his beard, so he supplicated, “O Allah Almighty, I seek Your refuge from a sudden accident. I know that death is pursuing me and I cannot save myself from it.” He then went to his people and addressed them, “O Banū Sa’d, I gave my youth to you, so grant me my old age.” (Meaning, I took care of your affairs in my youth, but you must allow me to worship Allah Almighty now in my old age.) After this, he رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ went to his home and busied himself in worship until he رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ left this world.²

May Allah Almighty have mercy upon him, and may we be forgiven without accountability for his sake.

اٰمِيْنُ بِجَاهِ خَاتَمِ النَّبِيِّينَ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ

Let us listen to the translation of some Arabic couplets of

¹ Sharh al-Sudur, p. 294

² Bahr al-Dumu, p. 112

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admonition:

1. O old man, do you still wander in ignorance (i.e., you have forgotten death) even though old age has arrived? The display of ignorance by you is not acceptable at all now (at this age).
2. The white hair on your head have decided, yet you still incline towards the world, and the fleeting thing (world) is deceiving you.
3. Leave feeling regret over the temporary world, for you will die one day, and go forward (i.e., worship) with such determination that contains no element of wrongdoing.
4. By preventing myself from worship, I have adopted destruction, and I have burdened my back with weighty sins. By being disobedient it is as though I have challenged my Lord, whilst He is the bestower of favours, bounties and generosity. As well as fearing His seizing, I also have hope in His forgiveness and pardon, and I have complete certitude that He is the just, Supreme Judge.¹

صَلُّوا عَلَى الْحَبِيبِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ

¹ Bahr al-Dumu, p. 113

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What have you sent ahead?

The final Prophet ﷺ said:

Listen! There is an angel of Allah Almighty which calls out every day and night, “O those who are forty years of age, the time to reap the harvest has arrived! O those who are fifty years of age, prepare for accountability! O those who are sixty years of age, what have you sent ahead and what have you left behind? O those who are seventy years of age, what are you waiting for? Would that creation had not been created, and if it has been created, then would that it understood the purpose of its life and acted in accordance with it. Beware! The Day of Judgement has drawn close to you, so come to your senses!”¹

My beloved elderly Islamic brothers: Old age is the time of regret and little hope. There are perhaps very few elderly individuals who do not feel regret over their past. If he is pious, then he will feel regret over his lack of worship and righteous deeds. If there is one who is still living a life of sin, then he probably has other regrets in accordance to his state and intentions, معاذ الله wishing that he had committed such-and-such sin too, أَلَا مَانُ وَالْحَفِيفُ.

May Allah Almighty grant us the ability to live our lives in

¹ Hilyat al-Awliya`, vol. 8, p. 167, Number 11748 With Changes

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accordance with His good pleasure.

Remember that life is a trust, and our body parts are also a trust from Allah Almighty. If we use them in the obedience of Allah Almighty then that is excellent, but if not, our body parts will testify against us on the Day of Judgement. Just as Allah Almighty states in verse 24 of Surah al-Nūr:

يَوْمَ تَشْهَدُ عَلَيْهِمْ أَلْسِنَتُهُمْ وَأَيْدِيهِمْ وَأَرْجُلُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

On the Day when their tongues and their hands and their feet will bear witness against them concerning what they used to do.¹

صَلُّوا عَلَى الْحَبِيبِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ

His excuse is not accepted

Sayyidunā Abū Hurayrah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ narrates that the beloved Prophet صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ said, “Allah Almighty does not leave any excuse for the one whose life He extends until he reaches sixty years of age.”²

It is mentioned in the commentary of this Hadith in *Fath al-Bārī*:

Meaning, he cannot make an excuse that if I was given time, I would have fulfilled the commands of Allah

¹ Al-Quran, part 18, Al-Nur, verse 24, translation from Kanz al-ʿIrfān

² Sahih Bukhari, vol. 4, p. 224, hadith 6419

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Almighty. If he abandoned worship throughout his life despite having the ability to do so, then he has no excuse in this age now, and he ought to seek forgiveness.¹

After old age there is only death

Mufti Aḥmad Yār Khān رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ states:

There are two meanings of this narration: (1) The meaning of **أَعْذَرَ** is it takes away any excuses. Thus, the purport is that a person's excuse of spending their childhood and youth in heedlessness might be accepted, but the one who does not turn to Allah Almighty in old age, his excuse will not be accepted. This is because in childhood, one has hope of reaching youth, and in youth, one has hope of reaching old age, but what else does one await in old age other than death? If a person does not still worship, then he is worthy of punishment. None of his excuses are acceptable.

(2) The second meaning of **أَعْذَرَ** is that a person is excused. Meaning, if there is an elderly person who cannot carry out much worship due to old age but he did plenty of worship in his youth, Allah Almighty excuses him and records the worship of his youth in his

¹ Fath al-Bari, vol. 12, p. 202, under hadith 6419

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book of deeds. Sixty years is complete old age. An elderly worker is given a pension, and the Most Merciful Lord also grants his elderly slaves “a pension”, but a pension is only given to the one who serves in his younger days.¹

Four stages of life

‘Allāmah Ghulām Rasūl Riḍawī رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ writes the following in the explanation of this Hadith:

Doctors mention that there are four stages of life: (1) The first is childhood and youth, and this is up until thirty years. (2) The second stage is prime adulthood, and this is until forty years. (3) The third is late adulthood, and this is until sixty years. (4) The fourth is old age, which is after sixty years. This is when a person’s strength declines, his weakness and old age start to show, and death hangs above his head. This is the time to turn to Allah Almighty.

It is narrated in *Tirmidhī* that Sayyidunā Abū Hurayrah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ said, “The beloved Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ stated, “The age of my nation is between sixty and seventy years old.” There are very few people who live beyond this age. What we take from this is that a person remains

¹ Mir`at al-Manajih, vol. 7, p. 89 Selected

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strong until the age of sixty, and then weakness and old age begin after this. At this age, Allah Almighty renders all his excuses unacceptable because the age of puberty till sixty years old is a lengthy period of time during which he can think and reflect.¹

My dear elderly Islamic brothers! There is a saying, ‘Better late than never.’ If, Allah forbid, you carried out acts of disobedience to Allah Almighty in childhood, adolescence and adulthood, then you still have time, so take benefit of it by repenting in the court of your merciful and generous Lord. There is still time yet, you are still breathing, and the world has not yet ended.

All the stages that come about in a person’s life have passed by. Childhood was spent in playing, adolescence was lost in hanging out with friends, adulthood passed by in heedlessness and folly, and now it is the time of old age, which will not leave until you are placed in the grave. The greatest counsel for the elderly is death. If a person does not awake from his stupor of heedlessness despite his old age, he should at least reflect over the fact that he will leave the world very soon.

صَلُّوا عَلَى الْحَبِيبِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ

Seventy years of worship

The honourable *Tābiʿ*, Sayyidunā Masrūq رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ would

¹ Tafheem al-Bukhari, vol. 9, p. 703

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lengthen his prayer so much that his feet would begin to swell, causing his family to feel sorry for him and weep. One day, his mother said, “My son, why do you not take care of your weak body? Why do you place it through such hardship? Do you not feel any compassion towards it? You should rest a little. Has Allah Almighty created Hellfire solely for you, such that no one else besides you will be cast into it?”

He replied, “Dear mother, a person should continue making effort in every state. Beloved mother, on the Day of Judgement, two matters will come to pass in regard to me; I will either be forgiven or I will be seized. If I am forgiven, then this is all out of the mercy and grace of Allah Almighty, and if I am seized, it will certainly be out of the justice of my Lord, so how can I rest now? I will continue to make every effort in defeating my carnal self. **إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ**.”

When the time of his passing arrived, he began to weep. The people asked him, “You have spent your entire life in worship, so why are you weeping?”

He replied, “Who should be crying more than me? The door which I spent seventy years knocking on will be opened today, but I do not know whether the door of Paradise will open, or the door of Hell. If only my mother had not given birth to me and I did not have to experience this hardship.”¹

¹ Hikayat al-Salihin, p. 36 With Changes

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May Allah Almighty have mercy upon him, and may we be forgiven without accountability for his sake.

اٰمِيْنُ بِجَاہِ خَاتَمِ النَّبِيِّنَ صَلَّی اللہُ عَلَیْہِ وَاٰلِہٖ وَسَلَّم

Blessed white beard hairs

Sayyidunā Abū Juḥayfah رَضِيَ اللہُ عَنْہُ said, “I saw whiteness on this part of the beloved Prophet صَلَّی اللہُ عَلَیْہِ وَاٰلِہٖ وَسَلَّم,” whilst pointing towards the hairs between his lips and chin.¹

The beloved Prophet’s white hair

The Prophet’s special servant, Sayyidunā Anas b. Mālīk رَضِيَ اللہُ عَنْہُ stated, “When the Messenger of Allah صَلَّی اللہُ عَلَیْہِ وَاٰلِہٖ وَسَلَّم left this physical world, he صَلَّی اللہُ عَلَیْہِ وَاٰلِہٖ وَسَلَّم had less than twenty white hairs in his noble head and blessed beard.”²

It was said, “O Abū Ḥamzah [his teknonym], the beloved Prophet’s صَلَّی اللہُ عَلَیْہِ وَاٰلِہٖ وَسَلَّم age had increased.”

He replied, “Allah Almighty did not place the defect of old age in His Beloved.”

“Is this a defect?” it was asked.

“Each one of you dislikes it (i.e., old age),” he responded.³

¹ Sahih muslim, p. 981, hadith 2342 selected

² Sahih Bukhari, vol. 2, p. 487, hadith 3548

³ Qut al-Qulub, vol. 2, p. 244

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May I be blessed to gaze upon his noble countenance

Mufti Ahmad Yār Khān رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ writes, “The beloved Prophet’s صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ hairs on his head and in his beard did not become so white that they required dyeing; only a few hairs were white.”

In this regard, Shaykh ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq Muḥaddith Dihlawī رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ mentioned that the white hairs were very few and some hairs had turned red, meaning, they were about to become white. Such was the love of the noble Companions رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ that they described him in such detail. May Allah Almighty allow us to remember this blessed appearance in the grave too, as success therein depends on this.

The master poet, Mawlānā Ḥasan Razā Khān رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ states:

Itni Muddat Tak Ho Deede Mushaf ‘Ariz Naseeb

Hifz Kar lun Nazirah Parh Parh kay Quran-e-Jamaal¹

Words: Deed: vision, Mushaf: noble Quran, ‘Ariz: countenance, Jamaal: beauty.

Explanation of Mawlānā Ḥasan Razā’s poetry: Would that I continue to gaze upon the beloved Prophet’s beauty to such an extent that his beauty remains before my eyes in every state.

Faking old age

Imitation can be a good thing, and in relation to this, I am

¹ Zouq-e-Naat. P. 120

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presenting an interesting account here from part 1, page 54 of *Ma'dan-e-Akhlāq*, with some changes:

At the time of his death, a comedian told his friend that when they are burying him, they should sprinkle some flour on his head and beard. His friend exclaimed, “You made jokes and made light of things during your life, at least avoid it now in your final moments.”

“If you truly wish well for me, you must do what I told you,” he responded.

Therefore, the friend agreed, and when burying him after his death, he sprinkled some flour on his head and beard. Some days later, he saw his deceased friend in a dream and asked, “How did Allah Almighty deal with you?”

“I was asked why I requested that flour be sprinkled on me. So, I said, ‘O Allah Almighty, I heard the statement of your beloved Messenger ﷺ that, *إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَيَسْتَعِجُّ* عَنْ ذِي السَّيِّئَةِ الْمُسْلِمِ” – Indeed, Allah is most merciful to the aged Muslim.”¹ Being old was beyond my control, so I thought that I should adopt the appearance of an elderly person.’ Allah Almighty said, ‘Go, I have forgiven you.’”

Rahmate Haqq Bahaa, Na Mi Joyad

¹ Mu'jam al-Awsat, vol. 4, p. 82, hadith 5286 Selected

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Rahmate Haqq Bahaana Mi Joyad

Meaning that Allah's Mercy does not demand a price, rather it seeks an excuse.

White hairs will become light on the Day of Judgement

Many older people today dislike white hairs, even though having white hairs due to old age, whilst being a Muslim, is a great blessing. The final Prophet ﷺ said, "Do not pluck white hairs, as they will be a light on the Day of Judgement. The one who has one white hair, Allah Almighty will record one good deed for him, forgive one of his sins, and raise him by one rank."¹

In another Hadith, it is mentioned:

مَنْ شَابَ شَيْبَةً فِي الْإِسْلَامِ كَانَتْ لَهُ نُورًا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ

"Whosoever grows a white hair in Islam, it will be light for him on the Day of Judgement."²

Meaning, if a person spends his youth and old age in Islam, it is a means to attain light. Thus, we come to know that in this regard, an old Muslim is better than a new Muslim. Based on this Hadith, some scholars have said that a person should not

¹ Al-Tarhib Wa al-Tarhib, vol. 3, p. 86, hadith 6

² Mishkat al-Masabih, vol. 2, p. 37, hadith 3873

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pluck white hairs from the head or beard, as they are a light.¹

The punishment for plucking white hairs

The noble Prophet ﷺ stated, “The one who intentionally plucks a white hair, it will become a spear on the Day of Judgement, which he will be pierced with.”²

Who was the first person to have a white hair?

Prophet Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was the first person to see a white hair. He عليه السلام asked, “O Lord, what is this?”

Allah Almighty replied, “O Ibrāhīm, this is honour.”

He عليه السلام said, “O my Lord, increase my honour.”³

The king who remembered death upon seeing a white hair

In ancient times, there was a king who kept a coffin in his home. When looking at it, he would remember his death. One morning, he looked at his face in the mirror and saw a white hair in his beard, so he announced, “There is no need for this coffin anymore, as a white hair has appeared in my beard, which is a herald of death, so now I will remember death upon seeing it.”

¹ Mir`at al-Manajih, vol. 5, p. 473 With Changes

² Kanz al-Ummal, vol. 3, p. 281, Juz 2, Number 17276

³ Mu`atta Imam malik, vol. 2, p. 415, hadith 1756

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White hairs appearing after black hairs

The second Caliph of Islam, Sayyidunā ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ said to his son, “White hairs appearing among black hairs prevents you from disobeying Allah Almighty.”¹

Old age arrived but evil traits did not depart

Sayyidunā Bāyazīd Bisṭāmī رَحِمَهُ اللهُ عَلَيْهِ once looked in the mirror and saw white hairs in his head and beard, so (humbly addressing himself) he said:

ظَهَرَ الشَّيْبُ وَلَمْ يَذْهَبِ الْعَيْبُ

“Old age has arrived, but the defect has not gone.”²

Ja’far b. Muhammad Khurāsānī states: It was said to an old man, “What do you prefer in the life you have remaining?” He replied, “Crying over (my) sins.”³

Repentance after twenty years

It has been said that a young man from Banī Isrā’īl worshipped Allah Almighty for twenty years and then spent the same amount of time disobeying Him. One day, upon looking in the mirror and seeing the white hairs in his beard, he felt remorse

¹ Musu’a Ibn Abi Dunya, vol. 7, 562, hadith 26

² Mirqat al-Mafatih, vol. 7, p. 433, Under Hadith 3873

³ Musu’a Ibn Abi Dunya, vol. 7, p. 562, hadith 28

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over his disobediences and said in the Divine Court, “O Allah Almighty, I worshipped You for twenty years, then disobeyed You for twenty years. If I return to You, will You accept my repentance?”

He heard a voice from the unseen, “You showed friendship to Us, so we loved you; you left Us, so We also left you; you disobeyed Us, so We granted you respite; if you now return to Us, We will accept you.”¹

Golden words of advice

Speaking about the value of life, Imam ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Jawzī رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ gives the following encouragement to those at the stage of old age to prepare provisions in the form of good deeds on their journey to the Hereafter:

O he who travels without provisions, the destination is very far, whilst your eye is dry, your heart harder than iron, and you remain submerged in the sea of sins with every passing day. Then, who is more worthy of calamity than you? Sadly, youth could not awaken you and old age could not frighten you. Worst of all, not even the whiteness of your hair could prevent you from sins. Your success seems very unlikely to me. Look at those who have concern for the Hereafter and where

¹ Ihya al-‘Ulum, vol. 4, p. 19

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they have reached. They have rolled up their comfortable beds and busied themselves in weeping in Allah's Court and preparing for the Hereafter. The tears that flow on their cheeks have left marks.¹

O my brother, you wasted your life in play. Whilst others attained their goal, you remained behind. Have you ever heard that so-and-so returned (after death) and repented! O you who still has time to become fortunate, when will you escape from the trap of carnal desires and when will you return to your Glorified and Mighty Lord! O pitiful one, if only you could see the grief of those who repent and witness the restlessness of those who fear due to the terror of the warning! Those who placed the coolness of their eyes in prayer, zakat and turning away from the world.

The misfortunate ones have wasted their youth in heedlessness and their old age in greed and unrealistic hopes. You neither took benefit from your youth nor repented in old age. O you who ruined his youth and old age, old age has given you clear news of death. O wayfarer, you have crossed the limit! Shed tears over your predicament, lest you are rebuked. O you who has lived most his life, that which has passed cannot return. Advice has guided you and old age has warned you that

¹ Bahr al-Dumu', p. 147

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death is close and telling you:

يَا أَيُّهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّكَ كَادِحٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ كَدًّا حَافِلٌ عَلَيْهِ ۖ

*O mankind! You indeed are hastening to your Lord, then you will meet Him.*¹⁻²

My dear elderly Islamic brothers! This old age in particular is a time for repentance, seeking forgiveness and leaving sins. It is mentioned in a narration that, “The one who reached forty years of age and his goodness did not outweigh his evil, he should prepare for Hell.”³

If there was no struggle in opposing the carnal-self, people would not be given the name “complete man”. O dead heart, if you could not engage in good deeds in your youth, then incline towards them in your older age, for play is futile after the head turns white. Disobedience in old age is worse, when it will be said to you that you wasted your youth in heedlessness and now you cry over your lack of (good) deeds; if you knew of the punishment that awaits you, you would spend the entire night crying.

The bell of old age is signalling your departure from this world. Prepare for the Hereafter! For how long will you make excuses? For how long will you display laziness? How much heedlessness

¹ Al-Quran, part 30, Al-Inshiqaq, verse 6, translation from Kanz al-ʿIrfān

² Bahr al-Dumuʿ, pp. 48-152 Selected

³ Tanziyah al-Shariʿah al-Marfuʿah, vol. 1, p. 205, Number 68

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will you show? I do not find you with an excuse on the Day of Judgement. Your house of meeting is empty, but your house of separation is full. Step forward; perhaps your wrongdoings will be removed through repentance and your sins forgiven. Perform such a prostration prior to true dawn that will grant you salvation from the terrors of the Day of Judgement.

O you who repent, let us shed tears over our sins, for this is the time to weep. O those who put off repentance despite entering old age, O those who spent their youth in heedlessness, O those who have been rebuked in the divine Court due to their misdeeds, you were heedless in your youth, if you remain deprived of repentance like this in old age, then when will you present yourself in the divine Court?

This is not the way of friends; your outer appears in full splendour, but your inner is ruined and desolate. How many sins have you committed that have placed barriers between you and Allah Almighty.

You spent the best days of your life in sins. When will you turn toward rectification? If you had sent forward good deeds in your past, your accountability would be easy. How will it become easy now that you have spent your life in heedlessness and amassing the material goods of the world? When old age warned you about death and you did not send forth any provisions, then what answer will you give? Would that somebody explain to me why sinners like their lives so much.

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Translation of some Arabic couplets

When the time for meeting and being pleased has left, you began to seek the return of the matter that has passed. Why did you not come, even though you had the chance to meet, and the whiteness of your old age was shinier than (the whiteness of) teeth.¹

صَلُّوا عَلَى الْحَبِيبِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ

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¹ Bahr al-Dumu', p. 49

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