

the knowledge
vault

aa⁺
plus

with Ustazah
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A Divine Match

EP 1: RECONCILING THE EXISTENCE OF
BOTH LIGHT AND DARKNESS IN THE SELF &
WAYS TO INCREASE OUR SPIRITUAL LIGHT



CHAPTER MARKERS



01

Between Darkness and Light

02

Attaining Spiritual Lightness

03

Leaving Darkness for Light



Chapter 1:

BETWEEN DARKNESS AND LIGHT



The First Pairing

- The first theme of this series will be on 'the Self'. Only when we have worked on the Self - the foundation - can we move on to other bigger things in life In Sha Allah. Ultimately, our roles, responsibilities and goals are for Allah SWT.
- The first pairing to start this series is **الظلام والنور** (Darkness and Light).

وَمَا يَسْتَوِي الْأَعْمَىٰ وَالْبَصِيرُ

Those blind 'to the truth' and those who can see are not equal, (Fatir 35:19)

وَلَا الظُّلُمَاتُ وَلَا النُّورُ

nor are the darkness and the light, (Fatir 35:20)

- The verse points out that darkness and light - like the blind and the seeing - are not the same, unequal. In the absence of light, we are unable to see.

Meanings of Darkness & Light

- We may relate 'darkness' to the lack or absence of Iman; while 'light' refers to the presence of Iman and Allah SWT's Guidance.
- الظُّلُمَاتُ not only holds the meaning of 'darkness'. It shares the same root word of ظلم (cruelty or injustice) as well as ظَلُمْتُ (when something is not where it belongs).
- نُورٌ means 'light', but it also makes up one of the characteristics of Allah SWT, Al-Hadi [The Guide or The One Who Guides or gives Guidance (Hidayah)].
- نُورٌ also gives the meaning of 'Truth' or 'Reality', when something is as it should be. It also carries the meaning of 'the absence of cruelty'.
- الظُّلُمَاتُ is the absence of all the above meanings of النُّورِ.

Statement of Humility

- In English, *Light* also means 'not heavy'. Is there an element of heaviness in الظُّلُمَاتُ (darkness)? Let's ponder Surah Al-Falaq below:

قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ الْفَلَقِ

**Say, "I seek refuge in the Lord of daybreak
(Al-Falaq 113:1)**

- قُلْ أَعُوذُ is a statement of humility from us, where we humble ourselves to ask for protection from Allah.
- قُلْ is اَلْفِعْلُ الْأَمْرُ (an imperative verb). Allah commands us to say, "I seek refuge in the Lord of daybreak".
- It is a statement of humility because:
 1. We must **start by admitting that we need Allah** and rely on Him - there are things we cannot do ourselves.
 2. **We are seeking a type of protection that only Allah SWT can provide** - the type where there is a complete shield and shelter (similar to a baby that is protected in the womb).



Everything has a potential for Evil

مِنْ شَرِّ مَا خَلَقَ

*from the evil of whatever He has created,
(Al-Falaq 113:2)*

- Allah does not create evil, but everything He created has the potential for evil.
- For example, wood can be used to build a house but can also be used to smack someone's head. From this, we know that **evil emerges from the actions of humans and the choices we make.**
- Syaitan was not created evil, but it was the choice that he made - to disobey and challenge Allah SWT - that made him evil.



The Overflowing Dark

وَمِنْ شَرِّ غَاسِقٍ إِذَا وَقَبَ

*and from the evil of the night when it grows dark,
(Al-Falaq 113:3)*

- غَاسِقٍ implies that the night is immensely dark - it is pitch black and absolutely no light is present at all. It is similar to the time of the Prophet ﷺ when only the moon and stars lit people's way.
- غَاسِقٍ can also mean 'tearing' as in 'eyes are tearing'. This implies that the darkness is 'tearing' out of the sky.
- غَاسِقٍ when applied to an injury means the injury is 'seeping pus'.
- Not only did Allah SWT describe the evil of a غَاسِقٍ (dark) night, but He went to describe that the evil is وَقَبَ 'overflowing'. وَقَبَ also brings the meaning of a deep hole in the ground in which water continues to flow into it endlessly.



Danger of Darkness

- Surah Al-Falaq acknowledges that **the potential for evil is greater when darkness comes**. It is easier for us to spiral (into sins or wrongdoings) in the dark. We also use the term 'keeping things in the dark' when keeping a secret from someone.
- When we type horrible comments and hide behind the anonymity of a username, **Allah is not privy to our wrongdoing just because other people don't see us committing them**. Allah sees EVERYTHING.
- The more we keep something 'in the dark', the closer it has the potential to be evil. We are comfortable to sin when we know people are not watching.
- Spiritually, the further we are from Allah, the darker it becomes. Shirk is a darkness that is so great because Allah says in the Quran:

إِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيمٌ

Indeed, association [with Him] is great injustice."
(Luqman 31:13)



Darkness is not always bad

﴿اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ﴾

**Allah is the Light of the
heavens and the earth. (An-Nur 24:35)**

- The closer we get to Allah, the brighter our lives will be.
- Darkness can be sinister and bring evil, but it isn't all bad. Allah created the night for rest and to prostrate to Him through supererogatory prayers like the Tahajjud prayers.

﴿إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَعْلَمُ أَنَّكَ تَقُومُ أَدْنَىٰ مِنْ ثُلُثَيِ اللَّيْلِ وَنِصْفَهُ وَثُلُثَهُ وَطَائِفَةٌ مِّنَ الَّذِينَ مَعَكَ﴾

Surely your Lord knows that you 'O Prophet' stand 'in prayer' for nearly two-thirds of the night, or 'sometimes' half of it, or a third, as do some of those with you. (Al-Muzzammil 73:20)

Ask yourself:

Does being in
the dark drive
you to do
more good or
more bad?





Chapter 2:

ATTAINING
SPIRITUAL
LIGHTNESS

Spiritual Lightness and Darkness

- **النُّورُ** and **الظُّلُمَاتُ** are not mutually exclusive. Just because we wear our hijab or perform our Solah, does not mean there is no darkness within us.
- With that being said, it also does not mean we are totally in darkness if we struggle with sins.
- All of us have spiritual lightness and darkness in our lives. We cannot be 100% spiritually light because that would mean we are angels. We cannot be 100% dark too because it would mean we are Iblis.
- Both of them - light and darkness - exist in us, and we need to acknowledge that.

Refusing Guidance

أَوَمَنْ كَانَ مَيِّتًا فَأُحْيَيْنَاهُ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُ نُورًا يَمْشِي بِهِ فِي النَّاسِ
كَمَنْ مَثَلُهُ فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ لَيْسَ بِخَارِجٍ مِنْهَا كَذَلِكَ زُيِّنَ
لِلْكَافِرِينَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

Can those who had been dead, to whom We gave life and a light with which they can walk among people, be compared to those in complete darkness from which they can never emerge? That is how the misdeeds of the disbelievers have been made appealing to them. (Al-An'am 6:122)

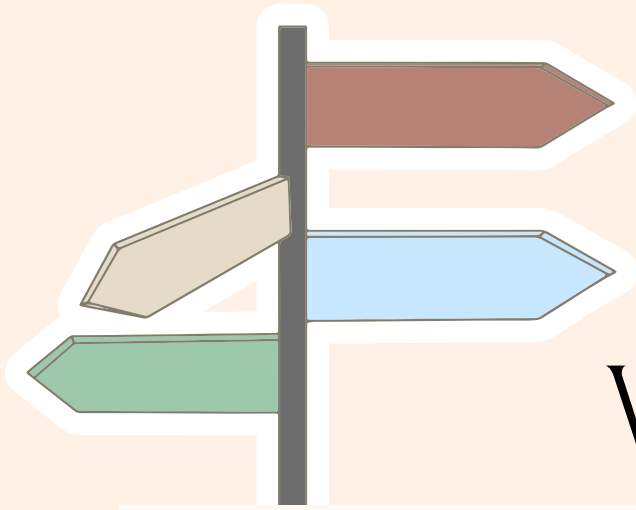
- The comparison is between someone who was given Guidance after being spiritually dead and someone who is in complete darkness and wants to stay in darkness. They prefer darkness and choose it over light.
- The comparison between the two - one is willing to accept Guidance and the other is not open to receiving Guidance at all. **They refuse to be guided.**

Those whom Allah Guides

أَوْمَن كَانَ مَيِّتًا فَأُحْيَيْنَاهُ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُ نُورًا
يَمْشِي بِهِ فِي النَّاسِ

Can those who had been dead, to whom We gave life and a light with which they can walk among people, (Al-An'am 6:122)

- For those who accept guidance after they struggle with their sins and addictions, Allah SWT elevated them by making them a source of light among people. Not only did Allah save them, but He made them a source of hope among people!
- We put pressure on ourselves to be perfect. But Allah SWT only wants to see our sincere effort. As a believer, we should then strive to continuously work on ourselves.



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The Many Ways to Allah

- The beauty and reward of finding Allah and tasting the sweetness of faith (*Iman*) is in the journey.
- Allah uses the word سَبِيل (path) a lot in the Quran implying that **it is never about the destination; it is about staying on the path (to Him)**. Even if we steer away from the path, we just need to hurry back and return to it.
- 'Path' indicates **an ongoing journey** - some days, we are great but there are also not-so-great days. What matters is our efforts and our striving to catch and reel ourselves faster, before we dwindle into sin and despair.



Choose Your Guardian

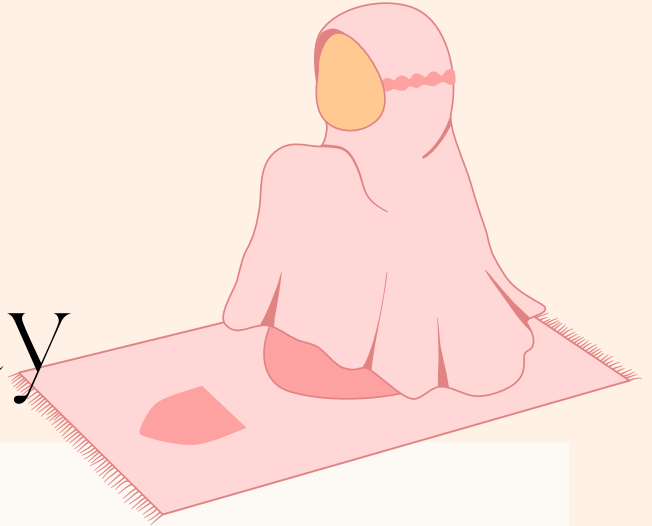
- As much as it is about us putting in the work, it is also about Allah guiding us and allowing for it to happen.

اللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا يُخْرِجُهُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ
وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَوْلِيَائُهُمُ الطَّاغُوتُ يُخْرِجُونَهُم مِّنَ النُّورِ إِلَى
الظُّلُمَاتِ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ ۖ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

Allah is the Guardian of the believers—He brings them out of darkness and into light. As for the disbelievers, their guardians are false gods who lead them out of light and into darkness. It is they who will be the residents of the Fire. They will be there forever. (Al-Baqarah 2:257)

- This verse teaches us that we need to choose who we want as our Guardian. We may say Allah, but do we put our trust in Allah to be our Guardian or is it only mouth service?
- We have a choice to allow Allah to guide us continuously. Just like marriage, we have to choose our spouse every single day, even on bad days.

Check Your Accountability



- We are always presented with the choice - to do something following how Allah wants us to live our lives versus doing something that He objects to. Allah doesn't force us to choose or not to choose Him. Neither does He force us to go astray or to be guided.
- We often lack a sense of accountability. We say that Guidance (*Hidayah*) have not come to us, but perhaps it is because we chose not to accept His Guidance or act on the Guidance that has been given to us.
- We have to be real with ourselves and think about the excuses that we give. We are our best lawyers - we often give ourselves excuses to not act on something beneficial.



STUDY BREAK





Chapter 3:

LEAVING DARKNESS FOR LIGHT



Are We Making the Right Choices?

- We often think about life here and now - about our immediate pleasure - instead of about Jannah and meeting Allah one day. We do not, or rarely, think about the end goal.
- Humans are created flawed and selfish but **we have to be honest with ourselves about the choices that we make in our lives.**
- On the other end of the spectrum, we may think that we are a lost cause and beyond repair. Syaitan loves to take away hope from us; as a result, we may feel that we are far from repentance or far from turning over a new leaf.
- At the end of the day, everything boils down to our choice - no one else can change it except ourselves.

Don't Give Up, Just Take A Break

- Speaking about making choices - we may have performed the Istikharah prayer before marriage but perhaps stopped performing it once we got married, when in reality, it is better to continue making the Istikharah prayer.
- Why? Because we need to make choices/decisions in our marriage every day so performing Istikharah every day is recommended!





Always Put in the Work

- We have to keep putting in the work. Take lesson from the story of Bani Israel during the time of Prophet Musa - they were not grateful even after being saved from Firaun and his army.

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا مُوسَىٰ بِآيَاتِنَا أَنْ أَخْرِجْ قَوْمَكَ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ وَذَكِّرْهُمْ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُورٍ

Indeed, We sent Moses with Our signs, 'ordering him,' "Lead your people out of darkness and into light, and remind them of Allah's days 'of favour'."
Surely in this are signs for whoever is steadfast, grateful. (Ibrahim 14:5)

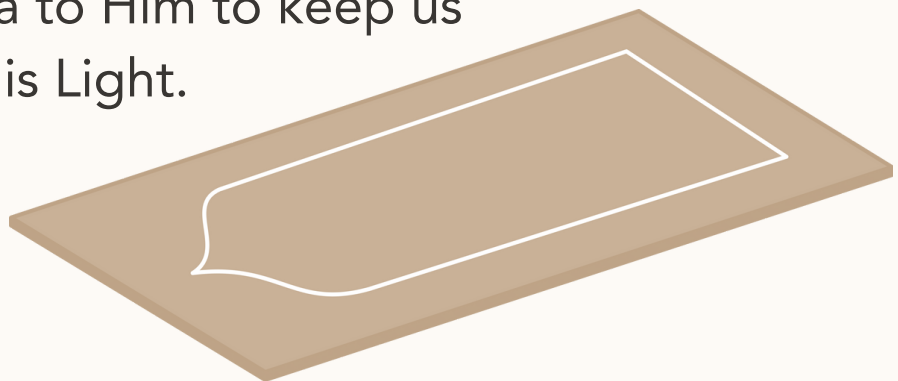
- Putting our best efforts into everything we do and continuing to work on ourselves will not be easy but we need to be continuously steadfast and grateful.
- Both صَبَّارٍ Sabr and شَكُورٍ Shukr are صيغ المبالغة (exaggerated forms). Allah uses صَبَّارٍ in this verse denoting a hard-fought patience, not just normal patience.

- On top of being extremely patient, we need to also be extra, extra grateful because the moment we are ungrateful, we will fall back into darkness.

يَا مُقَلِّبَ الْقُلُوبِ ثَبِّتْ قَلْبِي عَلَى دِينِكَ

Ya Muqallibal-qulūb, thabbit qalbī `ala dinik
O Allah, the Turner of the hearts, turn our hearts to Thine obedience. (Muslim)

- Even if we continue to choose Allah, ultimately Allah alone holds the power over our hearts and our faith.
- Our mountains of knowledge of the religion mean nothing if Allah SWT wills us to turn away from His Light, so we should constantly make Du'a to Him to keep us close to His Light.





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Are You Ready to be Tested?

- **To have strong faith (Iman), we must undergo a period of doubt.** It will trigger a desperation in us to never want to lose this Faith. Our conviction is greater after we have overcome this doubt. This is because we usually won't appreciate what we have until we lose them (or at the verge of losing them) - i.e. our faith.
- For many of us born Muslims, we think we have it all set - that we will live and die as Muslims. We may think nothing will take away our faith.
- But when our faith is being tested, we should continue to cling to Allah, to choose Him even though He is the One who planted that seed of doubt in us.
- **A relationship that has been tested is stronger than one that is not tested.** If we want to have a strong faith, we cannot run away from being tested.



We won't
appreciate what
we have until
we lose them
(or at the verge
of losing them).

The Light is For You

- Tests come to us because Allah SWT has prepared us for them. For example, He put in place people around us who can assist us.
- Allah will never test us beyond our means.

هُوَ الَّذِي يُنَزِّلُ عَلَىٰ عَبْدِهِ آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ لِّيُخْرِجَكُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُمْ لَرَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ

He is the One Who sends down clear revelations to His servant to bring you out of darkness and into light. For indeed Allah is Ever Gracious and Most Merciful to you.
(Al-Hadid 57:9)

- If Allah does not want to bring us into the Light, why does He keep sending people to bring us out of darkness and into light? Why has He given us the Quran, which has stood the test of time, for us to be able to hold on to His Words and Guidance? Because He wants us to win in life!



Allah's Kind of Love

وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُمْ لَرَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ

For indeed Allah is Ever Gracious and Most Merciful to you. (Al-Hadid 57:9)

- رَءُوفٌ is not romantic love; it is a tender love that has mercy (Rahmah) in it.
- Allah's Love for us has both Rahim and Rahmah. We can see how His Mercy supersedes everything! His Love for us is the kind of love that wants to see us succeed, like a parent's love for their children.
- You don't need much light to see in the dark. Likewise, when we are in a dark place in life, it doesn't require much for us to start 'seeing' again. We just need a little bit of light in our season of darkness to start again.
- Allah will not leave us in complete darkness without giving us the source of light that we need to get out of the darkness.

Allah's Ways of Peace

- When we allow the light to guide us, it will give guidance in all aspects of our lives.

يَهْدِي بِهِ اللَّهُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ رِضْوَانَهُ سُبُلَ السَّلَامِ وَيُخْرِجُهُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ بِإِذْنِهِ وَيَهْدِيهِمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

through which Allah guides those who seek His pleasure to the ways of peace, brings them out of darkness and into light by His Will, and guides them to the Straight Path. (Al-Ma'idah 5:16)

- If we choose to follow Allah's Guidance, He will bring us to ways of peace. **'Ways of peace'** indicate there is more than one way of attaining peace. As long as we choose to be guided, we will be on one of the many paths to peace.

- We all come from different backgrounds in life, with different priorities and responsibilities. It doesn't matter who we are, but In Sha Allah, we will be on one of the paths.





There is
darkness and
light within us,
but it is up to
us to choose
which to
amplify.

HEART WORK

ACTION:

Measure your current spiritual lightness / darkness and write down how you want to amplify the Light in you.

REFLECTION:

Can you think of the different ways we can attain peace with Allah SWT? Have you strive in one of these ways?

CONTRIBUTION:

Share with a friend about the concept of light and darkness in Surah Al-Falaq that you learnt in this lesson.