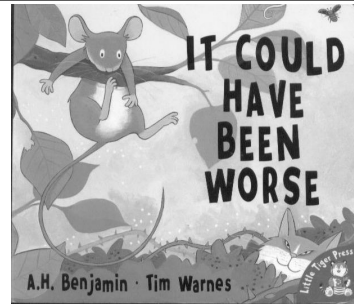




Connecting To Our Creator

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Lessons

Two key lessons (amongst many)

1. With each challenge, Allah was protecting mouse and doing what was best for him, without his awareness.
2. With each challenge mouse encountered, he lost the opportunity to reflect and connect with Allah
 1. too focused on the immediate goal (get home) – stuck in rat race



Why we joined MAS?

- Reality of the Akhirah
- Invest in the future via currency of Allah
- MAS is the best means at this time and in this country that will help us prepare for our akhirah
- Passion to convey with utmost clarity
- Be careful: Connection with Allah



Challenges, pitfalls, signs

- Too busy/stressed/ exhausted to connect with Allah
 - Prayers: Fajr, concentration
 - Purifying intentions: before, during, after events
 - Reflection
- Imbalance in role and responsibilities → burnout and disconnected with Allah
 - Da'wa activities at the expense of self (personal development, health, etc.
 - Family sacrificed



Impact of not connecting with Allah

- Lost investment in Hereafter
- Lack of clarity of purpose → Burn out
- Judgmental and arrogant behavior
 - Whispers of Shaytan: we do so much compared to others, I have more experience, etc.
 - So disconnected from Allah, don't even realize what we are doing and its implications
 - Abdullah ibn Mas'ud relates that the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) once said, "He who has in his heart the weight of a mustard seed of pride shall not enter Paradise." (Muslim)



Need to be Rabbani

- A Rabbani refers to that person who is excessively related/connected to their Rabb, Allah, the One who raises us, nourishes us, develops us, fixes our imperfections, made us pure, etc.
- This relationship is a deep connection that occurs through our knowledge of Him. This knowledge/ understanding of Allah is translated into action because the Rabbani is both a teacher and worker.



Tazkiyah

- Not just heart – but complete purification
يَتْلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ
- Allah sent the Prophet “to recite to them His signs, and to purify them, and to teach them the Book and Wisdom.” (3:164)
- Sh. Qaradawi: “Tazkiya is to practice what you know”
 - o Patience in theory vs. community event: test→
 - + response→ self purification
 - o Relationship between Usrah/connect and activism in MAS - Cannot purify in isolation



Paradigm Shift – New Mindset

- Everything in our life can be an opportunity to deepen our relationship with Allah
 - o Seeking knowledge; spending time with our families; the planning and execution of our responsibilities in MAS
 - o Activism creates opportunities for tazkiyyah, which creates the possibility of strengthening our relationship to Allah
 - o No separation of “tazkiyah” and “activism,” everything integrated



How to develop and/or strengthen that connection with Allah?



Personal Responsibility

- Not someone else’s job – Accept responsibility before its too late
 - o Often look outside for help (shaykh, leaders, usrah/connect leader, etc)
 - o They may be able to help ignite fire, but can’t keep it going
- Lack of accepting responsibility or delaying taking of responsibility, hurts no one but ourselves



Tafakkur- Purposeful thinking/reflection

- Develop within ourselves the ability to constantly reflect and think about Allah to help build our connection
 - o Mouse in “It could have been worse”
- Not just prayers – everything in life
- Consciousness will result in remembrance of Allah(dhikr)
 - o Traditional and non-traditional



Self-assessment

- We need to figure out where we currently stand with Allah
 - “If someone wants to know what position he enjoys in the eyes of God, he has only to look at what place he gives to God (in his life).” (Hakim)
- Need to understand what and where we need to begin in order to become closer to Allah
- Prioritize and make change: PDP



Personalized Process

- Need to know yourself and your heart
 - Your specific issues: Arrogance? Ego? Greed?
- What works for one person, will not work for another person
 - People motivated through different manners
 - Same issue, different solutions for different people
- Everyone has a different capacity
 - Our abilities and capacity will improve over time (like exercise, etc)
 - Allah will not burden us more than we can bear (2:225)



Sincere Effort

- Never will Allah change a condition of a people until **they change** what is **within** themselves (13:11)
- Often say we tried—but then give up—that’s **not genuine effort**. (e.g. Fire burning motivation)
- Allah looks at process – not just outcome
 - وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ (29:69) And (as for) those who strive hard for Us, We will most certainly guide them in Our ways; and Allah is most surely with the doers of good.
- How much time spent – indication of importance



Consistency

- Fire is ignited after meetings/conferences (TAM ☺)
- Make mistake of trying to do too much, too quickly (due to excitement)
 - Set up for failure
- Start small, but do it consistently
 - Build up to larger items
 - Building endurance, setting for success
 - But if don’t use muscles regularly, they start losing strength. Same with connection to Allah



Reclaim ibadaat (acts of worship)

- Our ibadaat (salah, fasting, zakah, etc) are tools to help us to maintain connection with our Lord, but we have made them rituals
- Example: Salah
 - *Arihna ya Bilal!* “Refresh us O Bilal” - Implying, that with prayers, believers get refreshed and full of energy
- Have to pray v. want to pray?



Self-Accountability

- “Account for yourselves before you are accounted for” Umar (RA)
- Is today better than yesterday?
 - If not going up, likely going down
- State of heart, mind, body, soul?
- PDP?



Support System

- Strong support system can help support your relationship with Allah
- People you can trust, feel comfortable with – who will push you to reach potential
- Share some of the things you are struggling with, they can help support you, give reminders, help stay focused etc
- But you need to speak up/ask – they can't read minds



Conclusions (1)

- Our ultimate goal – paradise
- Need to “believe and *do good works*”
- Live in this world but Be of the next world (ie Rabbani or muttaqi)
- Umar (ra) – “Iman increases and iman decreases” => does not stay still.
- We need to constantly reflect on Allah, be thankful for all His blessings, and beg Him for Paradise



Conclusions (2)

- If we are aware of the ultimate reality → no choice but to be active
- Activism our trade/investment with Allah
- As we become more active → get tested more → opportunity to purify ourselves more → opportunity to be closer to Allah in this world and in the Hereafter
- “Islam is a state of becoming not a state of being” Khurram Murad (RH)