



The Excellence Of The Book And An Explanation Of Its Benefits

Al-Haafidh Abee Bakr Ahmad bin 'Alee al-Khateeb al-Baghdaadi (died 463H)

Trans. Abu Haatim Faarooq

Whenever you see a garden being carried in the sleeve, and a gathering in the palm of the hand, and a stone that talks of the dead, and translates the speech of the living, and the one who is there from friendliness who does not sleep except when you sleep, more open country than the earth itself, and more complete as a holder of secrets – than a friend who is entrusted with secrets, and more precise in protecting the trust than the proprietors of trust, one who is silent when silenced, and yet eloquent when called upon to speak, and who is there as a partner in conversation who will not impose upon you in your state of busyness, and one who calls out to you at your times of enthusiasm, and one who does not be in want of your seeing its beauty, nor of receiving blame from it, and who else is your visitor, if you wish – you could abstain from its visit upon you, and its specified time is five-fold, if you wish, it could accompany you – just as your shadow accompanies you, and it is from you like it were a part of you, and the book is a union of solidarity by itself, and has no need of that which is found with other than it, and it is a sitting – which does not fall silent upon you, and it is the friend who does not betray you, and the companion who does not seek possession, and the granter who does not increase upon you (i.e. burdens), and your neighbour who does not cause you to become sluggish, and a companion who does not seek extraction from you through flattery, and nor does it plot against you, nor does it betray you with hypocrisy, and does not betray you with lies, and the book is such that if you glanced into it then it would perpetuate your assets, and sharpens your intellect, and rolls out for you your tongue, and exemplifies your speech, and makes your words magnificent, and fills your chest, and bestows upon you the exaltation of the people, and earns the friendship of kings, you come to know through it in a space of a month – that which you would not come to know of through the mouths of men in a whole lifetime, whilst being safe from arrears - and the fatigue of research, and coming to a halt at the door of those given acquisition through learning, and yet is a sitting in which you are better than it in manners and more noble than it in descent. And it is the teacher who if you parted from – does not scorn you for it, and if there is a gap of time between it and you, it will not gap you from its benefits, and if it is isolated – it will not cease from obeying you, and if your enemies gain advantage over you, then its condition and loyalty does not change with you.

It has reached me that al-Ma'moon said, “There is nothing more effective for the soul, nor more abounding to the chest, nor more abounding for ones honour, nor more intelligent for the heart, nor more outstretched for the tongue, and nor more severe for the limbs, nor more in conformity, nor least disagreeable, nor more clearer as a sign, nor more better put in statement which adds to benefits, its burdens dwindle, and its wickedness to fall away and its end becomes praiseworthy, and it is a narrator who does not become tired, and a friend who does not turn sour, and a sitting which does not require alertness, and an author of the thoughts of the past and bygone wisdom, and of the nations that have past,

it gives life to what died in the memory, and renews that which time makes more appropriate (for its return), and it brings out that which became hidden by ignorance, and draws back together when the trust becomes lost, and continues on even when the kings prove treacherous.

It was said by some people once to someone, 'Why is it that you do not accompany so and so the eminent one'? So he said 'I accompany his father and his grandfather, and the companionship of his father and his grandfather is more beloved to me than accompanying him', so it was said, 'But his father and his grandfather are dead, so how do you accompany them'? So he said, 'Through their reports, and their narrations in the books which when I read, I accompany them'.

It was said to a man, 'Who is there as your intimate friend'? So he struck his hand on his book and said, 'This!', so it was said 'And from the people'? So he said, 'Those who are in it'."

Taken from the book:

Taqyeed ul-'ilm of Al-Khateeb al-Baghdaadi (*Daar ihyaa as-Sunnah an-Nabawiyyah*) pages 122-126.