

With the Name of Allah, Most Merciful, Ever-Merciful

THE JOURNEY OF LOVE

AL-QASIDAH AL-MIMIYYAH

BY IMAM IBN QAYYIM AL-JAWZIYYAH

Translation: © Usama Hasan

Peace

When the sun does rise at each new day,
It shines with my *salam*, so return it and pray:

“Peace from God at every hour and time
With rest and perfume, and favours Divine
Upon the Brethren, Companions and Bless’d Household,
And their helpers and friends since the days of old,
And all who followed the Pure Way without
Wavering” – They deserve it most, no doubt!

They’re the Prophet’s followers, the party of Islam’s birth:
Were it not for them, there’d be no Muslim on earth.
Were it not for them, it would tremble and shake:
They’re the pegs and anchors that prevent the quake.
Were it not for them, there’d be darkness without light:
They’re the moons and stars of the prevailing night.

They’re my companions: quickly welcome them for sure.
Hurry up and welcome the favoured and pure!
For every one of them, an individual *salam*
From the next in the chain: “Peace, no harm!”

O doer of good, will you please convey
My *salam* to them, and to them say:
“Your lover greets you, and for you does pray.”

O critic of my love, have you no shame?
Reflect, may Allah guide you: who deserves the blame?
Based on what, or with what argument
Do you decry my love for them and lament?
Real shame is to show them anger and hate
And to love their enemy, the true ingrate!

By Him who opens up the heart
And fills it with love without it breaking apart;

Who strengthens the lover's heart in taking the strain
Tho' it can't carry a shirt without unbearable pain;
Who moulds it to withstand Love's fearsome attack
Without wavering, flinching or bending its back;
Who restrains the soulful heart as with every breath
There bubble around it the fountains of death;

Whether your abodes are far, far away or near,
Whether you're present or absent, you are most dear!
Please ask the gentle winds, if to questioning they yield,
What tender love they carry, with desire unconcealed?
Do witness the winds, as they gust and storm:
They'd exclaim their passion if their speech had a form!

When my passion and desire reach the peak of their matter
And the bonds of beautiful patience are ready to shatter,
I console my self with thoughts of a close reunion-date
And try to soothe it, but it begins to hallucinate!

I send glances towards Your direction: towards You they are sent:
That sanctuary is my spring-camp, where I will pitch my tent!
And I remember the words of one of the people of old
When his patience had left him, in Love's tight stranglehold,

"I ask, about You, by every eve and morn
As I point towards Your homelands and greet You, all forlorn."

How is a lover so patient, for ages and ages,
When his heart's fire of grief burns and rages?

The Journey

By Him whose House the loving pilgrims visit,
Responding with *ihram* at the appointed limit,¹
Uncovering their heads² in total humility
Before One to Whom faces bow in servility.

They exclaim in the valleys, "We've responded to You -
All Praise is Yours, and Kingdom too!"³
He invited and they answered, with pleasure and love;
When they called upon Him, nearer came the One above.

You see them on their mounts, hair dusty and dishevelled,
Yet never more content, never happier have they felt;
Leaving homelands and families due to holy yearning,
Unmoved are they by temptations of returning.

Through plains and valleys, from near and far,
Walking and riding, in submission to Allah.

At the Ka'bah

When they see His House - that magnificent sight
For which the hearts of all creatures are set alight -
It seems they've never felt tired before,
For their discomfort and hardship is no more.

Now the eye of the Lover drowns in its streams:
It sees through its tears the goal of its dreams.
Now for Allah, how many tears are issued,
Each one being followed by a multitude?

When the eye perceives the House, its darkness clears,
And from the sorrowful heart, pain disappears.
Our vision cannot encompass this beautiful sight:
Each glance returns with greater delight!

No wonder at this, for when the Merciful preferred
The House for Himself, it became most honoured.
He clothed it in Majesty, a magnificent garment;
Embroidered it with Beauty, a wonderful ornament!⁴
The hearts all love the House therefore,
Whilst awed and humbled, in respect and honour.

At 'Arafat

Now to 'Arafat, for Mercy and Forgiveness
From the One overflowing with Grace and Kindness;
Now for Allah is that Magnificent Standing
So like, though lesser than, the Day of Reckoning.
The Irresistible draws near, His Majesty manifest,
Boasting to His angels, for He is the Mightiest,
"My slaves have come to Me so lovingly,
I'll be Generous and Merciful, most willingly.
I've forgiven their sins, – to this you're witness –
Fulfilled their hopes, and showered them with goodness."

So joyous is the news, O people of that standing,
When sins are forgiven and Mercy is spreading!
How many slaves are set completely free?
Whilst others seek a cure, and heal will He.

Now Satan is never known to lose such face:
He's blameworthy, rejected, in utter disgrace.
For he sees a matter that enrage him, it must:
He flees, slaps his face and covers it in dust!
Forgiveness such as this, he never did see
As granted by the Lord, and such Mercy!

He built his edifice from every temptation available
Till he thought it was complete, unassailable;
Then Allah struck his building at its very foundation:
It fell upon his head, tumbling in devastation;
What worth has his structure, this evil ploy,
That he does build, and the Lord does destroy?⁵

Muzdalifah and Mina

Now to Muzdalifah, to spend the night
In the Sacred Area, then Prayer at first light;
Now on to the Great *Jamrah*, at which they need
To stone at the time of the Prayer of 'Id;⁶
Now to their tents for the sacrifice prepared,
Reviving the tradition of a Father revered.

If sacrificing themselves were Allah's demand,
They would respond, submitting to the command;
Just as they'd expose their necks in Jihad
To the enemies of Allah, till those stream with blood;
They discipline themselves, presenting the head for a shave:
Bringing humility and happiness to the obedient slave.⁷

The *Tawaf* of *Ifadah* or *Ziyarah*

So when they've removed those natural growths,
Completed their rites, and fulfilled their oaths,
He invites them again to visit His House:
What honour and welcome this visit allows!
By Allah, they visit it in so much splendour,
Receiving their rewards and plenty of honour;
There Allah bestows Grace, Favour and Kindness,
Showing Grace, and Mercy, and Forgiveness.

Mina

Now they return to Mina, each to his tent,
Every minor⁸ wish is granted, and they are content;
They stay there a day, then another, then a third,
They're allowed to depart early, but to stay is preferred;
They stone the devils daily after the sun's decline,
With a slogan of *Takbir* in the presence of the Divine!

If only you could see their standing there:
With palms outstretched, hoping for Mercy's share!⁹
"O Lord! O Lord! Knowing as You do
That we hope for no-one, but only You!
Then grant our wish, O You All-Knowing,
We pray for Your Mercy, so overflowing!"

The Farewell Tawaf

As they've achieved at Mina all their gains,
Once more they fill the valleys and plains:
To the Ka'bah, the Sacred House, by the end of the day,
To circle it seven times, and then to Pray.

When departure nears and they are certain
That the bond of proximity is about to loosen,
There's only a last stand for a final farewell:
Now for Allah are the eyes that swell,
And for Allah are the hearts that turn
Into cauldrons of desire where fire does burn;
And the passionate sighs whose heat so vigorous
Nearly melts the Lover, ecstatic, rapturous!¹⁰

Now you see those bewildered, perplexed in the throng,¹¹
Whilst others do chant their sorrowful song:
"I depart, but there remains for You my yearning,
My fire of grief is raging and burning;
I bid farewell, yet longing pulls my reins -
My heart is encamped in Your eternal plains!"¹²

No blame today for saying what you feel:
No blame for expressing what you used to conceal!¹³

So O camel-waterers, by Allah your Lord!
Stop for me on those plains and convey my word
And say, "A lover, whom passion led to You,

Has fulfilled his vow: may Your peace be true!”

For the Lord of the Throne, has decreed from above:
That hearts are struck blind and dumb by Love!
Love of You is Love’s basis and endless source,¹⁴
The success and felicity for the lover in his course.

After death, the bones of the lover will decay;
His desires are an endowment that, untouched, will stay.

O heart whose drawstrings are pulled by such passion,
Until when will you continue this indefinite inaction?
Until when will you sit idle, tho’ the goal is nigh:
It’s time to depart – let the sleeping people lie!

Nay, you shall stir when the veil lifts its embrace
And the matter that you conceal stares you in the face!¹⁵

O you who kindles fire to illuminate your friends
Whilst the heat of its flames burns between your ends,¹⁶
Is this the harvest of the knowledge you planted,
The sustenance you hoped it would have granted?
Is this the share for which you’re game
In both the worlds: just wealth and fame?
Is this the profit for which you pranced?
Neither profit earned nor capital advanced!

So miserly with money – tho’ you can spend it without measure,
But you wastefully spent the priceless treasure;
So miserly with this worthless, useless leisure,
You lost through your folly the Eternal Pleasure!

You sold the inimitable, endless Bliss
For a woeful price that shall soon go amiss!
You’d have reversed the matter, had you any sense
But your wasting of your fortune is rather intense!
You demolish what you struggle to build with your hand:
All your life, you gather and then disband!

At the commands of God, you’re still as though dead;
At the wishes of the self, you rush on ahead!
When you disobey the Command, destiny’s your ruse
As an argument against God: determinism’s your excuse!

You absolve the self of the evil of its deeds
Yet the Decree is to blame – these are injustice’s seeds!

You unravel the matters that the Law has bound
And you wish to obstruct what the Law has made sound!

You interpret the Prophet's words against his intention;
Your heart is struck dumb by all your contention:
Obedient to error's call, heedless of what's right;
When it returns to its Lord, it'll see the light.

One who wastes the command of God, he has deceived his self,
Humiliated it: how shall he be shown love or respect?
Slow in obedience, faster towards obscenity
Than the unobstructed deluge flowing along its path!

Yet, despite all this, you imagine that you're a Gnostic
You are certainly deluded in what you think!
You're only an ignorant one, on top of that unjust,
Ahead of all those steeped in ignorance!

If this is your sincerity towards yourself,
From whom will guidance ever be learned?
And about this they said in the distant past
(And whoever said it, spoke extremely well),

"If you don't know the answer, you have a problem.
If you know the answer, the problem is worse!"

Were you to observe the world from behind its veils,
You'd see the imaginings of sleep, soon to be cut through.
Like the dream of a phantom beloved, visiting during slumber,
The dream ends, the phantom goes, the lover is ensnared!
Or like the shadow revealed by the sun upon rising
That fades and disappears at the height of noon.
Or like the cloud in summer, under whose shade one naps,
Then it moves swiftly away, and the heat begins to sear.
Or like the food eaten by the guest, delighting his taste,
But very soon it turns into the well-known waste!

Thus is this world, like the dreams of a sleeper:
Soon the Home of Eternity shall take its place.
Cross through it as a passer-by, not a resident:
Be a stranger here, you will live in respect and peace.
Or as a traveller napping under the shade of a tree
Who departs, leaving its shade to disintegrate.
The wayfarer, whose rest does not endure
Until he sees his homeland and greets it with peace!¹⁷

O amazement! With how many deaths has it admonished
Its sons, but they are blind to its own End!
It gave them cups of love to drink; when intoxicated
It served them cups of poison whilst the people were asleep.

More amazing is that the slave sees all these calamities
But remains immersed, and totally enraptured,
For no other reason than that the wine of its love
Snatches a person's mind and uproots it all!

Even more amazing is that it humiliates its lovers
Whilst looking after and respecting its hardened foes:
Proof that its value is the wing of a gnat
Or less than that, or more worthless!¹⁸
Sufficient for you is the Messenger's parable
Of the world and the Hereafter, for Truth is understood:
As when one dips his finger in the ocean,
When he takes it out, what has he gained?¹⁹

O how I wish! Will I ever spend a night
Wary of the world, with my state definite?
And will I ever drink from the Spring of Life
And quench my thirst from his overflowing Fount?
And will its landmarks ever appear clearly again
After those dust-storms swept all over it?²⁰

And will I ever rest my cheek on the dust of Their doorways
Out of humility, that They may soften and have mercy?
And will I ever throw myself outstretched outside Their door
Whilst Love's birds of death hover above me?²¹

¹ A reference to the repetition of the *talbiyah* (declaration of response) and the assuming of the state of *ihram* (sacredness, comprising various prohibitions) that begin from the *Miqat*, one of the physical points from which the Holy Sanctuary is approached.

² *Uncovering their heads*: in nearly all cultures until recently, men and women would generally cover their heads, especially when outdoors, be it with a turban, cap, hat, veil or shawl of some description. Covering the head instils a sense of dignity and gravity, as in the saying, "*Al-'imamah 'alamah al-amanah*: The turban is a symbol of the responsibility placed upon Man." Only in the last century, with increasing "globalisation," have masses all around the world followed the fashion of generally going bareheaded, corresponding to the loss of contemplation of the seriousness and meaning of life. In this line, the author is reminding us of the significance of the restriction in *ihram* that male pilgrims must not wear anything on their head (some jurists even go as far as forbidding use of any man-made shade including tents, even in the searing heat of the desert, especially on the Day of 'Arafah). Just as covering the head symbolises the dignity and responsibility bestowed upon Man by Allah, uncovering the head in *ihram* symbolises humility before Him.

³ The *talbiyah* includes the words, “*Labbayk Allahumma labbayk ... inna l-hamda ... laka wa l-mulk* (We have responded to You, O Allah ... Truly All Praise ... belongs to You, as does the Kingdom!)”

⁴ *He clothed it in Majesty ... Embroidered it with Beauty*: Some of the people of knowledge have stated that the Names of Allah are of two types: *Asma' al-Jalal* (Names of Majesty) and *Asma' al-Jamal* (Names of Beauty). Examples of the former are: *al-Malik* (The King), *al-'Aziz* (The Powerful), *al-Jabbar* (The Overpowerer) and *al-Mutakabbir* (The Proud), whilst examples of the latter are *al-Rahman* (Most Merciful), *al-Rahim* (Ever-Merciful), *al-Ghaffar* (Intensely-Forgiving) and all the other Names denoting Mercy and Forgiveness. Referring to the *kiswah* or covering of cloth over the Ka'bah, embroidered with calligraphical and geometrical designs, the author is reminding us that the Ka'bah's real covering and embroidery is its reflection of the Divine Majesty and Beauty, respectively.

⁵ The theme of this passage is taken from the saying of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, to 'Amr b. al-'As, may Allah be pleased with him, “Do you not know that ... the Hajj destroys that (i.e. those sins) which came before it?”

⁶ After sunset at the end of the Day of 'Arafah (9th Dhul Hijjah and the essential component of the Hajj), the pilgrims proceed to Muzdalifah, where they spend the night, praying the evening and dawn prayers there. They then proceed to Mina, where they must stone the Great *Jamrah* between sunrise and noon – this is the same as the time for the 'Id prayer being held on that day (10th Dhul Hijjah) by Muslims who are not making the pilgrimage.

⁷ Shaving the head accompanies the sacrifice of an animal, a token of thanks that they are not required to slaughter their firstborn children but also a reminder that they may be called upon to sacrifice their lives in Jihad.

⁸ In the original, there is a pun on the words *Mina* (also known as *Muna*) and *munahum* (their wishes). Here I have attempted to reproduce the flavour of this pun in the translation.

⁹ This passage refers to the following rules of Hajj: (i) It is recommended to stay in Mina for the entire period of *tashriq*, i.e. three days and nights, stoning the *Jamarat* daily. However, pilgrims are allowed to depart after the first day and night, stoning the *Jamarat* with extra pebbles to compensate for the days missed. (ii) The *Jamarat* should preferably be stoned between noon and sunset, as in the Sunnah. Only out of necessity are the pilgrims, especially women, children and the infirm, allowed, in the huge crush of the modern Hajj, to stone at any time of day or night. (iii) It is from the Sunnah to exclaim, “*Allahu Akbar* (Allah is the Greatest)” when throwing each pebble. (iv) After stoning the first two of the *Jamarat*, it is from the Sunnah to face the Qiblah and raise one's hands in prayer.

¹⁰ *Muhibb*, *mustaham* and *mutayyam* are three stages or degrees of Love in the quest for the Divine, translated here using the terms love, ecstasy and rapture, respectively.

¹¹ Bewilderment and perplexity are spiritual stations that follow the Lover's annihilation in the Divine, when he returns to his own senses and cannot describe the temporary spiritual state that previously overtook him: “I am his hearing by which he hears and his sight by which he sees” (hadith qudsi). The goal now is to convert the temporary spiritual state into a permanent spiritual station.

¹² A breathtaking image: just as the pilgrim has encamped in the vast plains of the desert during the Sacred Journey, his or her heart is encamped in the Celestial Plains of Spirituality, yearning to circle the Ka'bah of the Heavens along with the angels.

¹³ The path of Islam is, in general, a sober spiritual path. However, there are occasions when an outpouring of spiritual emotion is to be expected.

¹⁴ Cf. al-Baqarah, 2:165, “Those who have faith are most intense in their love for God.”

¹⁵ Cf. Qaf, 50:22, “Truly, you were in heedlessness of this. We have removed your veil from you, so your perception today is very sharp!”

¹⁶ cf. the hadith, “The example of a person of knowledge who does not act accordingly is that of a candle: it gives light to others whilst burning itself out.” (Al-Albani's *Silsilah al-Sahihah*)

¹⁷ For the last few verses, cf. the famous hadith, “Be in this world as though you are a stranger or a traveller.” (Bukhari)

¹⁸ Cf. the famous hadith, “Had the world been worth to Allah the wing of a gnat, He would not have granted the disbeliever a drink of water from it.” (Tirmidhi)

¹⁹ Cf. the hadith, “By Allah, the world compared to the Hereafter is like when one of you dips his finger into the ocean and sees how much water it captures.” (Muslim)

²⁰ These verses are based on the lines (transmitted by Imam Malik in the Muwatta') composed by Bilal (may Allah be pleased with him) in longing memory of Makkah after the hijrah to Madinah, when he fell ill due to the heat of Madinah before the Messenger's prayer removed its plague and intense heat by the permission of Allah:

O how I wish! Will I ever spend a night again
In a valley surrounded by *idhkhir* and *jalil*?
And will I drink one day from the springs of Majannah,
And will Shamah and Tufail appear clearly again?

(*Idhkhir* and *jalil* are two desert-shrubs that were plentiful in Makkah, which also had the springs of Majannah and the two mountains named Shamah and Tufail.)

By "its landmarks," Ibn al-Qayyim is either referring to the world or to the Sunnah.

²¹ In these verses, as throughout the poem, Ibn al-Qayyim is referring to the Divine Beloved in the plural, i.e. "They" and "Their" refer to Allah here.