

Making the Quran the Spring of Our Hearts

By Hamza Yusuf

AS THE WORLD turns and seasons change, our lives move inexorably toward their fated ends. Our minutes become hours, our hours days, our days weeks, our weeks years, and our years make up the totality of our lives. In these days of great imbalance, we are in greater need of connecting to the natural order that surrounds us. Each planet knows its course and each tree its cycle: "And the stars and the trees submit in prostration." The stars ornament the sky, and the trees the earth, and between the two realms resides man who is made up of both terrestrial and celestial elements, spiritual and bodily, willful and appetitive, angelic and bestial, light and dark. Each resides in us, at times compelling us to wrongs, and at others to rights. In these latter days, it appears as if the bestial aspect of our natures is waxing, and the spiritual is waning. Wordsworth reminded us of this when he wrote:

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!

In spite of the insanity of this country's recent attacks on Iraq that began on March 20th, 2003, the next day the sun crossed the equator on its apparent path North to initiate a new Spring. That evening, I went out and gazed up at old Orion, known to the Iraqis as al-Jabbar, and sure enough, there he was in all his glory, right where I expected him to be. The trees outside my home were blooming, and nature's order was so palpable, I realized that no matter how disorderly man becomes, God's order in His Divine creation is there to constantly remind us: "Come back, come back, a thousand times come back."

Birth, growth, maturity, decay, and death: these are the cycles we see around us, and these are our own reality. We too are part of nature, and it is our task to comply with the laws of nature and nature's God. This is submission, what we call Islam. It is not a socio-



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logical category of creedal belief that determines how we are to be classified nor a culture or civilization – although those elements are invariably there. It is a state of being.

We were in that state so perfectly when we were children. We knew just what to do at each stage. We knew just what to do in our mothers' wombs: as each stage progressed, our cells fulfilled their destinies becoming the organs and structures they were meant to be. We knew when to leave the womb, and we came into the world effortlessly, latching onto our mothers' breast. We never overate but knew when we were satiated. We knew when to take our first steps, to walk, to run, to imagine, to play. We were following the natural order of childhood.

Then, a strange event occurs – not so suddenly but over time. We begin to learn how not to be ourselves but to be what our society expects of us. We lose that state of submission to our true nature, which is servitude to our Lord, Cherisher, and Sustainer; we begin to transgress. We learn to lie; we learn to say the opposite of what we think, feel, or believe. This new state is not arrived at effortlessly but with much pain and sorrow. Our thoughts are troubled, our actions are heavy, and our states laden with cares that are not our own.

"If you truly believed," said our Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, "you would go out in the morning like birds, hungry and return in the evening filled." Effortless is the bird's movement towards its predetermined sustenance, and without anxiety it seeks it. The bird is in submission. The trees that provide the bird's home are in submission. The worm that becomes its dinner is in submission – each fulfilling its function, its purpose; each taking its place in the grand scheme of things. Only man is the odd one out, and we are the ones who suffer as we squander our energies on pursuits not suited to our souls, on desires not

healthful for our natures, on thoughts not conducive to our salvation.

Spring is here gently reminding those willing to listen: "Come back, come back, a thousand times come back." Our Prophet, peace be upon him said, "O Allah make the Quran the Spring of my heart." What a glorious request! If indeed the Quran was the Spring of our hearts, our hearts would be in bloom always with the freshness of nature's newness and nature's order: the green that cools our eyes, the fragrances that perfume our scent, the fruits that delight our taste and nurture our bodies, and the flowers that remind us of life's bounty and delicacy.

The Quran should be the Spring of our hearts, and our Lord can make it so. Let the Spring of this season renew you once again. Let your return be to your Lord once again. Just as Spring has returned, let us return. Just as Spring has brought life to countless fields and innumerable flowers, let our hearts come back to life.

May this Spring renew our hearts and our commitment to grace the world with states of submission and gratitude, peace and prosperity. May this Spring bring forth in us a desire to dedicate our lives to working toward the changes in ourselves that we demand of our leaders and our societies. May we be people of charity and concern for others. May God grant us victory over our real enemies: pride, envy, covetousness, spiritual sloth, wrath, gluttony, and lust. In conquering those, we are prepared to conquer the forces in the world that threaten humanity's well-being. In submitting to our real enemies, we become easy prey to the forces that result in our own submission to their means of occupation. Please pray for our brothers and sisters in the Middle East, who have so long suffered, that light may come soon to that region. We, like our beloved Prophet, peace be upon him, before us pray: "God forgive our people, for they know not what they do."