

From KEY TO THE BLISSFUL ABODE  
*Miftāḥ Dār al-Saʿāda*

[PROLOGUE]

*In the Name of God, Most Compassionate and Merciful*

When God's wisdom and mercy dictated that Adam and his offspring descend from the Garden, He substituted for them something better: His covenant. He made it a means of attaining unto Him, and it is a clear and obvious path. Whoever holds on [to His covenant] is successful and guided; and those who shun it are wretched transgressors.

This noble covenant—[which is] the straight path and the great tidings—cannot be fulfilled except through the door of willpower and knowledge. In this manner, willpower is the door; and knowledge is the key without which the former cannot be opened. A person's perfection can only be achieved by fulfilling two requirements: firm resolve to elevate his [rank] and knowledge to enlighten and guide him.

If one of these [two latter requirements] is absent, the ranks of bliss and success will elude a servant. In that case, he either does not have knowledge, and so he does not know how to pursue those [high ranks]; or he lacks a firm resolve, and so he cannot rise up to them. In those cases, he remains motionless in a lowly state while his heart is barred and impeded from the perfection he was created for. If both are absent, then he becomes a degenerate, allowing himself to graze untended along with livestock,<sup>1</sup> finding pleasure in the abyss of relaxation and inactivity, and comfort in the bed of incapacity and laziness.

<sup>1</sup> Ibn al-Qayyim gives a detailed explanation of this analogy in Chapter Nine.

This [aforementioned person] is not like someone for whom knowledge is esteemed and so he embarks towards it. The latter is blessed in his unrivalled pursuit. He adheres firmly to the path and is upright upon it. His overwhelming and fervent longing for God refuses everything but the emigration to God and His Messenger. He disdains to have any companions except those who accompany him on this path.

Since the perfection of willpower is related to what one intends and the eminence of knowledge is associated with that which it concerns, the servant achieves his ultimate bliss by making his will subservient to that of the Desired One, Who never wanes or eludes. One cannot attain any bliss or [spiritual] life except by having a firm resolve to act in accordance [with the religious commands] of the Ever-Living One Who never dies.

There is no way for one to reach this high goal and good fortune except with knowledge inherited from His servant [Muḥammad]—His Messenger, friend and beloved one—who He has sent for such a purpose and established as a guide on this path. He made the Messenger an intermediary between Him and the people, whereby he invites them by His will to the peaceful abode [of Paradise].

The Sublime refused to grant success or open [the gates to Paradise] for anyone except through the Prophet. God will not accept anyone's efforts unless they begin with the Prophet and end by being devoted to Him. All of the paths are now blocked except the way of the Prophet Muḥammad (may God bless him and grant him peace). All hearts are barred and obstructed except for those of the followers of the Prophet.

It is thus obligatory upon someone who seeks bliss for himself, and whose heart is alive and aware, to make these two principles [i.e. knowledge and willpower] the bases for all his sayings and actions. One should hold them dear like a hidden treasure, and rely on them to pave the way during any of life's frightening situations.

This book's intent is to reveal the eminence of these two principles. I named it *Key to the Blissful Abode: Proclamation of the Sovereignty of Knowledge and Willpower* as these are some of the inspirations and gems that God disclosed to me when I was at His House [the Ka'ba], withdrawn [from all others] except for Him alone. I had cast myself at His door in submission and humility, and had exposed myself to His bountiful gifts and immense power throughout the day and night. The person who depends on God for his needs, attaches his hopes to Him, resides permanently at His gate for His assistance, and seeks refuge under His protection, will never be disappointed.

Since knowledge comes before willpower, takes precedence over it, qualifies it and guides it, we will discuss the importance of knowledge first. Upon the completion [of these two] we will follow this, God willing, with [another] book about love.<sup>1</sup> We will include here the sections, wisdoms, benefits, fruits and causes, as well as what strengthens, weakens or hinders [knowledge or willpower]. We will seek evidence for it through all means, whether transmitted [from the Qur'ān and the Sunna] or through reason, or the innate disposition, or analogy, or through taste and experience [of the truth] (*al-dhawq wa'l-wajd*).<sup>2</sup> Our [will and love should only] be attached to the True God—there is no god but Him—and it is wholly inap-

1 Since love of God leads to a stronger willpower, Ibn al-Qayyim discusses it at length in his other books. Whether Ibn al-Qayyim had initially intended to discuss love in *Miftāḥ dār al-sā'ada* or not is debatable. His earlier book *Rawḍat al-muḥibbīn wa-nuzhat al-muḥtaqīn* discusses love, and is extant; but his *al-Mawrid al-ṣāfi*, which he wrote afterwards on the topic of love, is now lost.

2 *Dhawq* and *wajd* are popular Sufi terms. Ibn al-Qayyim derives them from two *ḥadīths*. Firstly, 'He who is content with God as his Lord, Islam as his religion, and Muḥammad as his Prophet has tasted (*dhāq*) the sweetness of faith' (Muslim 54; Tirmidhī 2623; Aḥmad 1778). Secondly, 'If one possesses these three [characteristics], then he has experienced (*wajada*) the sweetness of faith: [1] he who finds nothing more beloved to him [than following] God and His Messenger; [2] he who only loves another person for the sake of God; and [3] he who hates to return back to disbelief—after God has saved him from that—just as he would hate to be thrown in Hellfire' (Bukhārī 6941; Muslim 67; Tirmidhī 2624; Ibn Māja 4032; Nasa'ī 4988; Aḥmad 12,002). See Ibn al-Qayyim, *Madārij*, vol. II, p. 67.

propriate to act to the contrary. We will also respond to those who deny this and show their errors.

These [aforementioned matters] are included in this gem, and the best of its meanings will now be shining before you. It is like an astonishingly beautiful bride, with her dress trailing as she proceeds in the wedding ceremony towards you. Be one who accepts this shining bliss, and do not be like one who is blind and paralysed. You can choose for yourself either [knowledge or ignorance] and have either [a strong or weak will].

Inevitably, each blessing has those who are envious of it; and each truth has its deniers and those who stubbornly reject it. The author will be exposed to the attacks of the envious and unjust, who fire arrows at him and [attempt to] defame him. But you, the reader, will find here the quintessential arguments and fruits that the author has taken upon himself to plant. I ask God to excuse my errors and mistakes, and those of His believing servants.

I seek God's protection from those who lack knowledge and have sold their religion. They are insolent in their ignorance and use all their capabilities to harm Your servants. Due to their ignorance, such people consider benevolence to be evil, the Sunna [of the Prophet] to be blameworthy innovation in religion, and good tradition to be strange. Due to their injustice, they recompense a good deed with evil and one evil with ten. They also disregard the rights of others and despise people, so that they may attain their false desires and pleasures. They do not acknowledge what is good except that which accords with their wishes, nor do they renounce what is abominable unless their desires oppose it. They act arrogantly with the loyal supporters (*awliyā'*) of the Messenger and they quicken to sit amongst those who are astray and ignorant. They may think that [in knowledge] they are the foremost, but God, His Messenger and the believers consider them to be cut off from the Prophet's inheritance.

*Prologue*

Now, when journeying on this path, one should only accompany those who are [spiritually] alive, rather than dead. A poet said it best:

There is a [spiritual] death before the [physical] one for those who are ignorant.

And for their bodies, there are [spiritual] graves before the [physical] ones.

Their spirits are estranged from their bodies.

There will be no resurrection for them until the Day of Resurrection.

O God, You are deserving of praise and we seek Your assistance and help regarding our grievances. We rely on You, and there is no power nor any strength save in You. You are sufficient as our Guardian and the best Trustee. We will now commence with our objective, by the power of God and His strength.