

"Allah Wishes Ease"
By Ahmad Adisa

On September 5, 2018 there was a major "shakedown" in the prison I now live. During these sorts of searches, officers from other prisons are called in to aid with all the goings ons. We were all placed outside our respective cells after being searched and told to face the wall. Two officers from another prison searched my cell, and one of them threw out my television antenna: it was a makeshift antenna that was made from the copper line inside of a coaxial cable. I was asked by and unfamiliar voice what my name was and I told him my name.

Seeing that something was off, I asked the guard standing just outside my cell door is that going to be a problem. He said that it is a problem because there is so much copper. He said that if it were just a small amount that it wouldn't be an issue; however, since it was so much that it will likely be a problem.

At the time, I had only anticipated a simple violation for contraband; however, this was not the case. After being asked my name again, I was handcuffed and subsequently escorted by a guard and a caseworker the ad-seg unit (the hole).

When I arrived to the ad-seg unit I was handcuffed, briefly, to a bench and awaited placement to a cell. The guards there knew me and said that they were trying to find a good cellie for me. They did. They asked me if I knew "Big Washington". Then they gave me his full name and told me that he was in my housing unit for a while. None of it rang a bell, but I told them that it was no big deal and that I'd be fine.

When we got to the cell I saw the brother inside. All of the names they told me before now made sense; however, I knew him as Big Rob, but mainly by his Islamic name: Qawi. Qawi had went to the hole almost a month earlier for dangerous contraband as well. When I got into the cell he joked that he thought that he was dreaming at first as was headed back to sleep until the door opened. We talked a little about what I could expect with regard to getting the basics while I'm in the hole. I told him what I was down there for and we both came up with the idea that I would be down there for about a week before I'm seen by anyone and possibly a year if everything stuck as it was. In an attempt to stay warm, I started doing push-ups while intermittently trying to catch a guard for a t-shirt, a sheet, and a blanket so that I could possibly sleep some part of the night. It was during this time that Qawi and I began talking about Islam.

Qawi had told me before that he felt closer to his Blood homies that he did with the brothers in the masjid here. He repeated that now and I asked him where he was from. He ended up being from the same part of town as me. I asked him if he had heard of my old block. He said that he had and asked me if I was really from there. I told him that I was not only from there but that me and my brother initiated the block and a few other sets throughout St. Louis in the mid to late 80's.

I told him that I understood him totally about how he felt closer to his Blood homies; however, its really about whether they care about your well-being, and that lifestyle can never account for that. I also told him that there are more Muslims in the world that those here at this prison and that its never about going there to learn for them, its for you and for your relationship with Allah Ta'ala. He agreed.

We continued to talk as I cleaned to cell and tried still to get the

guards attention. He said that he felt that Allah had sent me there because he felt that he had fallen off completely. Nothing happens by coincidence, so I agreed and we talked about Islam a little and how he was set to get out of the hole in about two weeks, in sha Allah.

A few hours after my arrival the guards came and read me my conduct violation. I was given a dangerous contraband: introducing a knife/firearm. This violation is a 3.1 only after murder and assault. I thought that was a little too much and pleaded not guilty to that and readied myself for a long stay in the hole.

Eventually, I caught a young guard and asked him what I had asked the others and he promptly brought me a sheet, a blanket, and a t-shirt. I preparted my bed and headed straight to sleep.

From my cell I could see the clock and Qawi had told me about what time the inmate "workers" would be let out at about 4:30 a.m. or so and I was sure that those sounds would wake me up and allow me some time for a few raka'at of Tahajjud before Subh. So, I got up at those sounds, asked the workers the time and I had about twenty to thirty minutes before Subh salat came in. Qawi woke up and I told him what I was doing so he opted to pray Subh with me. I told him I would wake him when I finished. We are not given pants in the hole here, so I wrapped the blanket as it is done durring hajj (the sheet was far too small) laid down the sheet and prayed. When I was finished, I woke up Qawi for Subh. Qawi is 6'2" and weights about 520 pounds. He told me that at his highest weight he was 640, and that was when he was 17 years old. He told me that his mother had passed away and that after that eating had been something that always made him feel better. He now understood his addiction and he said that he would get help with that.

I guided him through wudu (as he had forgotten this also) and due to his weight he was going to sit on the bunk instead of prostrate of sit in jalsa. I told him, briefly, about the 7 modes of salat and the importance of doing what you absolutely can or you invalidate your prayer. I asked him why he didn't prostrate. He said that, because of his weight, it was very difficult for him. I told him that if he could prostrate without having to pull himself up, then he should; however, if it proved to be that difficult then it wasn't necessary for him to do. I then showed him how to lean forward to attempt the motion of prostration even though he could not prostrate.

I gave the adhan and performed Fajr. I then gave the Iqama and lead Qawi in Subh. After prayer we began to talk about what he knew about Salat. Eventually, I asked him to recite al-Fatiha for me - He could not. He was slightly embarrassed by the whole situation at this point so I told him I would write it down and go over it with him, and I did. We went over al-Fatiha line for line and worked on the pronunciation. He read it off to me a couple of times and I left him to review it while I read Qur'an. Qawi lied back and taped the paper under the bunk and I heard him go over it for the next hour or so. After reading Qur'an I hunted down a guard and got me a pair of socks. He was still lying down, so I asked him to recite it from memory for me. He did. He recited excellently to an amount that I felt like he had it.

Then he told me that he didn't know the other parts and that frustrated him and made him feel overwhelmed. I asked him what he meant and he said that he was basically told that he had to know all of the prayer and he felt like he wasn't a good or proper Muslim since he couldn't get it all down quick enough. I told him that was not necessary and that all he needed to know, essentially, were the obligatory parts of Salat and that he could incorporate the other things as he learned them. He was dumfounded. First,

I explained to him about the five rulings and how they apply to all of human's actions, salat included. At this point, he was excited. I told him I would show him all of the obligatory parts and write them out for him (which I did). He couldn't believe how simple it was. He had it after I showed him two or so times. I showed him all of the movements of Salat. I told him which were obligatory and which were not; however, I made sure that he knew all of the movements and their order.

Qawi lay back and continuously went over what I had written down and we anticipated breakfast. I began to write a letter and was hoping to catch the caseworker; however, that never happened. We ate breakfast and went about reading and talking for a while after that. Qawi then asked me about learning Arabic. He said that he had the alphabet written down somewhere, but that was as far as he went. He said that he didn't remember them either.

I told him that after lunch I would teach him the first few alphabets and if he picked up quickly that I would teach him more later in the day. After lunch, we did just that and he picked up quickly to my surprise. I showed him how to connect the letters and pronounce them and we were discussing doing more later. He began to practice the letters I gave him and I was thinking of what letters to teach him next. Just then the caseworker for the hole came in and I was waiting for him to come around; however, he didn't. Qawi saw a guard that he was familiar with and was able to get me a roll of toilet paper. A few minutes later the guard came back with the toilet paper and left. Not long after that he came back to the cell and asked if I was from five house. I told him that I was. He said that whatever mix-up they had they fixed it and I was being released by to my housing unit.

Qawi said he told me so and shook my hand. I was released right then and I look forward to seeing Qawi this upcoming Sunday when he is released from the hole.

I gave the Khutba the Friday following this whole ordeal and it gave me the opportunity to talk about how we can overwhelm brothers without trying to get to know their personal capacity for things. Likewise, we should be very mindful of giving out information about things that we really don't know much about. I told the ummah about the obligatory aspects of Salat and about my encounter with "a brother" in the hole. Allah Ta'ala wishes ease for us in our deen; however, we make it difficult for ourselves and others. Knowledge is the answer for this.