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Tawakkul: Exemplary Deeds of the Mother and The Sister of Prophet Mūsā

Che Amnah Bahari *

Abstract

Tawakkul or reliance on God has a strong relationship with īmān (faith) in Him. It also refers to taqwā or God consciousness. Al-Qur'ān for that matter has stipulated success depends on one’s complete reliance on Him, steadfast in obeying and fulfilling all the commandments postulated by Him. This would mean that tawakkul requires the essential steps needed to achieve the goals and so the act of striving for the goals is an act of submission while believing and reliant on God is faith in Him. This paper attempts to study Qur’ānic approach to tawakkul in connection with the uncertainties faced by the mother and sister of Prophet Mūsā to protect baby Mūsā from evil deeds of Fir‘ān. It also discusses the good-natured actions applied by them to overcome their fears. This paper ends by explaining the relevancy of practicing the correct method of tawakkul and the impact on wellbeing of mind.

Keywords: Tawakkul, taqwā, uncertainties, good-natured action

Introduction

َّلاَّ وَأَنْتُمْ تَوَكَّلُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ بِحَقِّ تَوَكُّلِهِ لَرُزِقْتُمْ كَمَا تُرْزَقُ الطَّيْرُ تَغْدُو خِمَاصًا وَتَرُوحُ بِطَانًا

If you were to rely on Allah with the required reliance, then He would provide for you just as a bird is provided for, it goes out in the morning empty, and returns full."  

Tawakkul or reliance as indicated in the above citation reflects that reliance on Allah is to work and involve in searching for permissible source of income. At the same time while so doing, one is relying on Divine power, sources and wealth for his/her sustenance. The reliance as highlighted in the ḥadīth is an analogy to explain the act of birds that does not sit idle for spoon feeding rather searching for it wherever they could and return to their nests with full bellies. It is not a one-way relationship

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rather it shows a two-way dimension whereby; one fulfills the responsibly related to his/her affair and rely the result from Allah, be it good or bad.

The term *tawakkul*, literally originates from the root word, *wakala* which means to entrust, assign and appoint someone else or *wakil* for your affairs.¹ According to Ibn Manzūr (d.1113 AH / 1701 CE), tawakkul is of two aspects. First – *tawallaytu lahu* means to turn to someone and the second, *i’tamadtuhu* refers to rely on someone.² In al-Qur’ān the term *i’tamadtuhu* is not found but *tawallā* is sporadically applied in transitive sense. For examples – *tuwallu* brings the meaning “to turn in a physical sense” (Sūrat al-Baqarah, 2:177) or *tawallau* means “to turn away from someone” (Sūrat al-Baqarah, 2:246) and *yatawalla* refers to “As those who turn (for friendship) to Allah, His Messenger and the fellowship of the believers – it is the fellowship of Allah that must certainly triumph”(Sūrat al-Māʾīdah, 5:56). In verse three (3) of Sūrat al-Ṭalāq, the term *yatawakkal* reflects a wider dimension – “And whoever places his trust and reliance in Allah then He will suffice him”.

These evidences intrinsically say that to practice *tawakkul* requires one’s knowledge on the *wakil*’s ability such as well inform, trustworthy, powerful to undertake the task and concern of the wellbeing of the *tukalah* (clients/one who puts the reliance). In other words, a true believer needs to have self-confidence in God as his *Wakīl*, such as self-knowledge on the greatness or supremacy of his *Wakīl*, knowledge of his duties to his *Wakīl* and knowledge of true and guided utilization of all resources and materials conferred to him by his *Wakīl* for the purpose of fulfilling his submission to his Lord. At the same time the believer is aware that life of full of tribulations and having built the self-confidence in his *Wakīl*, shall incite in him the courage to confront any looming evils in his path impinging his acts of submission. He shall not feel weak or humiliated rather relying on the boundless power of his *Wakīl* and should feel the victory of overcoming the tribulations.

Further readings on the concept of *tawakkul*³ reveal that relying on God is rendered extensively in al-Qur’ān using various forms of

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² Ibid, p. 736.
tawakkala and mutawakkil. It is noted that tawakkul strongly correlates with the state of īmān (faith), the religious practice of ṣalāt (prayers), the social practice of infāq (spending out of God’s bounties) and the experiential state of wajāl (awe).

Al-Mu’minūn (true believers) are wajilat qulūbhum (those whose hearts tremble with awe) when God is mentioned, zādathum īmānan (whose faith increases) when His revelations are recited to them, wa’alā rabbihim yatawakkaliīna (who put their trust in their Lord), yuqīmūna al-ṣalāta (who keep up the prayer) and yunfiqūna (give to others) out of what We provide for them (Sūrat al-Anfāl, 8:2–3).

Ibn Kathîr (d. 120AH / 738CE) in the context of tawakkul as cited in the above verses, states that tawakkul is the result of believers’ intense submission to their Lord through ṣalāt and infāq. In other words the outcome of the earnest submission to God through ṣalāt and infāq, the believers rejoice and desire to be near to God, hope in Him alone, unswerving dedication to Him alone, seek protection with Him alone, invoke Him alone for their various needs and beseech to Him alone. They know that whatever He wills, occurs and whatever He does not, will never occurs, that He alone is the One Who has the decision in His kingdom; none can avert the decision of Him, and He is swift in reckoning.

As for the verse that speaks “tawakkul brings about wajal” Sayyid Qutb (d. 1386 AH / 1966 CE) clarifies that wajal is a feeling of awe that fills believers’ heart when God’s name is mentioned in connection with any duty. While performing the duty, the believers feel God’s greatness, majesty, greatness and recall their defective attitude. This “burning sensation and trembling” in turn motivates them to intensify their action of submission in the form of ṣalāt and infāq that eventually provide solace to them. This will reinforce the nature of true believers who take precaution of doing things and “… put their trust in their Lord”. The outcome of those actions will be accepted by them unreservedly and fervently hope that they be rewarded for so doing in their obedience to God. Due to this good-nature of acceptance and obedience, God affirmed

3 Sayyid Qutb, In the Shade of the Qur’ān, (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation 1999), vol. 7 p. 64, cited as In the Shade of the Qur’ān.
5 Ibid. p. 66.
and promised that “.... They shall be given high ranks with their Lord, and forgiveness of sins and generous provisions.”¹ Hence, just as the true believers believe in truth and do right in obedience to God’s command and in turn God also made good His Promise by giving them victory. Mawdūdī (d.1399 AH /1979 CE) further enlightens readers that the verse on promise means the shortcomings of the believers shall be forgiven, gives great solace to them.² However, believers may be great and good but are liable to commit offenses. And it is not at all possible that all human being will always do good deeds correct at all time and free from defect, deficiency and fault. God, however, shows one of His greatest blessings to those who patiently perform obligatory duties, and forgives their shortcomings by His grace, and rewards His servants with a far greater recompense than the one they deserve.³

In brief, tawakkul leads believers to feel the tremor and awe before their Wakīl, Who in turn inspires, revitalizes and regenerates endurance and resilience in themselves due to their earnest submission to Him. The question arises in mind, how does the concept of tawakkul befits the deeds of the mother and sister of Prophet Mūsā? How relevant are their deeds in today’s context? The following discussion will briefly discuss on Qur’ānic exposition on the mother and sister of Prophet Mūsā.

**Qur’ānic exposition on the mother and sister of Prophet Mūsā**
The narration of Prophet Mūsā is frequently repeated in many places in al-Qur’ān, right from his birth up to the end of his life.⁴ The reason behind this recurrence is to explain the valuable experiences of Prophet Mūsā that could contribute to people on various levels be it individual, community and the leadership level.⁵ The resemblance of experiences between Prophet Mūsā and Prophet Muḥammad is another important reason that necessitates such focus on the repeated narrations of Prophet Mūsā.⁶ Due to these reasons also, this paper will focus on the role of Prophet Mūsā’s mother and sister for their exemplary deeds of tawakkul.

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¹ Sūrat al-Anfāl, 8:4
³ Mawdūdī, vol. 3, p. 679
⁵ Refer to Sūrat Yūsuf, 12:111.
⁶ Sūrat al-Kahf, 18:60-82.
Prior to the birth of Prophet Mūsâ, al-Qur‘ān introduces the readers of Fir‘aūn, who decree the killing of male newborn of Israelis in his empire and allowed his men to have their way with Israeli women and then burn down their house.\(^1\) Egypt at that time was a land of corruption and exploitation based purely on racial discrimination where Israeli people were enslaved and tortured.\(^2\) Moreover, plunged into arrogance and cruelty, Fir‘aūn saw himself as a god on earth. He kept track of all the pregnant women in the city and secretly marked their houses so that when the mother gave birth, he would send his soldiers to kill the baby as soon as he was born.\(^3\) To protect the unborn baby Mūsâ from the killing, the mother and the sister of Prophet Mūsâ would take pain to ensure his safety. Her sister was always on alert on the oncoming soldiers to be prepared before they came, by rushing her mother into the bushes.\(^4\) This monitoring act on the part of his sister and hiding on the part of his mother indicates to readers the protection effort (juhd al-‘imāyah) put forward by the family members of Prophet Mūsâ.

The strategy goes on until Prophet Mūsâ was born and al-Qur‘ān informs that anyone who would see him would immediately love him: “And I cast (the garment) of love (maḥabbah) over you from Me.”\(^5\) In other words, God made baby Mūsâ comely and lovable and he attracted the love of the people who, on general ground would have killed him. Here again, it shows how much God loved Prophet Mūsâ and how much we, readers should love him as well.

Selfless thinking leads readers to ponder the situation of Prophet Mūsâ’s mother, a faithful and a strong lady, who had to give birth in silence, with all the pains of delivery a woman goes through, and later she had to cover baby Mūsâ’s mouth to prevent his crying from being heard by Fir‘aūn’s people. Readers almost virtually see “the knife being taken out to cut baby Mūsâ’s throat”. His mother was so worried, fearing that the news of his birth might reach Fir‘aūn’s people. She understood that if the news reached them, she would not be able to protect or hide him. How could she prevent him from crying and so betraying his presence? She knew herself,  

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\(^1\) Sūrat al-Qaṣās, 28:2-4; Yusuf ‘Alī in his short summary of this sūrah is of opinion that it emphasizes how Prophet Mūsâ was trained by Allah for his high destiny even the period of his infantile till the end of his life was protected by Allah from the evil acts of rejection of the truth due to overweening arrogance. See ‘Abd Allâh Yūsuf ‘Alī, The Holy Qur‘ān, (Maryland: Amana Corporation, 1983), p.801, cited as The Holy Qur‘ān.

\(^2\) Stories of the Prophets, p. 321.


\(^4\) Ibid.

\(^5\) Sūrat Ṭā Ḥā, 20:38
helpless and powerless except for her trust (tawakkul) in God. How stressful life could be for her and her family members; readers can never imagine! At this point God’s hand intervened, making direct contact with the worried mother, and inspiring¹ her with what to do:

“We revealed to the mother of Moses: ‘Breastfeed him, and then when you have cause to fear for him, cast him in the river, and have no fear and do not grieve. For We shall restore him to you, and We shall make him one of Our messengers’” (Sūrat al-Qaṣāṣ, 28:7)

Readers may question: “What sort of inspiration is this?” One could never imagine for a caring mother who was suckling her newborn baby to cast him into the river. But at the same time, she was promised of being given something else that was priceless. Indeed, this is a promise for the future, and God’s promise is certain to come true. Decision must be made, finally baby Mūsā was placed in a box, put out to sail away in the river and paradoxically docked at Fir’aūn’s lair. What a turn of event!

Contemplating on the event of baby Mūsā, readers observe that his mother was not a saint neither clairvoyant nor psychic but was an ordinary mother and a housewife with strong reliance in God. And yet God inspired her with two commands, two prohibitions and two glad tidings. The first command was to “suckle him” so Mūsā may recognize her milk later and to show us the lovely relationship between a mother and her child. In today’s readings, suckling is a special bonding time that begins when the baby is placed skin-to-skin on the mother’s chest. The heartbeat of the mother will calm the baby and will smell the breastmilk. Similarly, breastmilk’s features include special factors and hormones that contribute to the optimal health, growth and development of infants.² As for the second command, was to “cast baby Mūsā in the river” which tested the strength of a mother. Looking at the strong water currents and the big risk, his mother thought that there was always a chance where baby Mūsā would never come back to her because he might drown in the river and being eaten by the fish. With heart full of tawakkul in God, she cast him in the river, and was fully aware that God was much more merciful to baby Mūsā than to her, that He loved him more than her. God was his Lord and the Lord of the river. And the other two prohibitions were: “do not fear, nor grieve” while the two glad

¹ See also Sūrat Ṭā Ḥā, 20:37
² Hanson, L., Korotkova, M., “The Importance of Colostrum, Breastfeeding May Boost baby’s Own Immune System”, Pediatric Infectious Disease Journal; (2002, 21, pp. 816-821).
tidings were: “Surely We will turn him back to you and will make him one of His Messengers.” Sayyid Qutb in response to this episode said that the inspiration was not like the revelations of the Prophets; rather it was a feeling that filled her heart with strong conviction and tawakkul.¹

The Qur’anic narration goes on revealing to readers of baby Mūsā’s fate where “Fir‘aūn’s household picked him up.”² Is this the security promised Mūsā’s mother? Readers are in perplexing situation, asking further; does this turn of event augur the realization of the given good news? How can this happen to baby Mūsā when she feared for her son’s life none other than Fir‘aūn?

Pondering over the event, readers could clearly see the challenge laid down for all to understand. It is in fact, a challenge for Fir‘aūn, Hāmān and the soldiers. All of them were searching to kill every newborn boy of Israeli in the country, with all the detectives around to ensure the catch and yet God effortlessly laid in their hand the helpless newborn baby, unable to defend himself even though he was in danger of being killed. Al-Qur‘ān informs:

*The Fir‘aūn’s wife said: “(Here is) a joy of the eye (qurratu ‘ayn) for me and for you, slay him not, it may be that he will be of use to us or we may adopt him as a son” (Sūrat al-Qaṣās, 28:9)*

Here readers can perceive that not only God brings baby Mūsā into Fir‘aūn’s palace but also into his wife’s heart thus offering him with tender and loving protection. Baby Mūsā needs no weapon nor authority neither money for his own safety. Meanwhile Prophet Mūsā’s mother was in frantic situation. Verse ten (10) of Sūrat al-Qaṣās describes:

“In the morning an aching void came over the heart of Mūsā’s mother (aśbāḥa fu‘ād umm Mūsā fārīghan) and she would indeed have disclosed his identity had We not strengthened her heart so that she could continue to have faith.”

The verse portrays an anguish mother with an unstable state of mind, feeling void and could not think and act. In today’s medical report discloses that breastfeeding increases the level of oxytocin³ and it has beneficial effects on mothers’ own mood, affect, and stress, and

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¹ In the Shade of the Qur’ān, vol 13, p. 164.
² Sūrat al-Qaṣās, 28:8
³ Oxytocin is a hormone that acts on organs in the body including the breast and uterus. It is a chemical messenger in the brain, controlling key aspects of the reproductive system, including childbirth and lactation, and aspects of human behavior. See “You and your hormone”, http://www.yourhormones.info/hormones/oxytocin/ Retrieved 7th July 2019.
breastfeeding facilitates responses to positive emotions in others.\(^1\) But in the case of Mūsā’s mother, the feeling of void probably attributed to the stress of parting from her baby that lead to low level of oxytocin. Looking from another perspective, one can imagine being in the state of void at parting from her son, mother Mūsā could have betrayed herself but her faith and tawakkul in God’s providence prevented her from it. This indicates the significance of tawakkul on one’s life that motivate people to act as shown by mother Mūsā.

As mentioned in the following verse, mother Mūsā recovered from her difficulty (\(rabaṭnā ‘alā qalbihā – strengthened her heart with faith\)),\(^2\) urged her daughter to follow (\(quṣṣīhi\)) baby Mūsā along the river. The girl intelligently moved around in disguised (\(baṣūrat bihi ‘an junubin\)) seeking to get information. Praising the wise decision of sister Mūsā, Mawdūdī says that the sister did not go and sit back at home when she found that her brother had reached Fir‘aūn's palace, but cleverly hung about the palace to watch every new development. Then, when she found that the baby was not taking to any wet-nurse, and the Fir‘aūn's wife was anxious to get another one but the intelligent girl patiently waited and did not barge in.\(^3\) And al-Qur’ān informs:

> “And We ordained that he refused suck at first, until his sister said: “Shall I point (\(adullukum\)) out to you the people of a house (\(ahl al-bayt\)) that will nourish and bring him up for you and be sincerely attached to him (\(Sūrat al-Qaṣāṣ, 28:12\))”

As stated earlier, people at the palace were in frantic on the wailing baby Mūsā. And at the precise moment the sister of Mūsā choose to come forward and proposed the \(ahl al-bayt.\) Hamka citing Ibn ‘Abbās (d. 67AH /687 CE), explains that people in the palace were confounded of a young girl who could suggest somebody to suckle the wailing baby Mūsā.\(^4\) They were questioning of her veracity and her relationship with the \(ahl al-bayt.\) And she wisely responded that the \(ahl al-bayt\) would like to render a little service to the monarch, so that the issue of suckling

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\(^2\) *Sūrat al-Qaṣāṣ, 28:10*

\(^3\) Mawdūdī, vol. 7, p. 575f.

could be resolved. The wife of Fir‘a‘ūn agreed to the proposal and Mūsā finally returned to her mother’s bosom.

Viewing from another angle, readers can vividly see the running of God’s will carrying out to show Fir‘a‘ūn, if only he could realize. It brings the Israeli baby Mūsā to them, they pick him up, they love him, they search for a suckling mother. However, God made him refuse and until his sister came in to suggest someone and they accept, not knowing that the person is Mūsā’s mother. Mūsā is now is in his mother’s bosom, secure, well protected by Fir‘a‘ūn, loved by his wife. God’s promise always comes true and Mūsā’s mother rejoices and no more grieve, which is the outcome her struggle, complete faith and tawakkul in God. Readers can visualize the feeling of tremor in Mūsā’s mother – wajilat qulubuha – her heart full of awe as she holds her baby in her bosom for al-Qur’ān says:

“Therefore, We restore him to his mother that her eye might be comforted (taqarra ‘aynuha) that she might not grieve (la tahzan) and she might know that the promise of God is true.” (Sūrat al-Qaṣāṣ, 28:12)

Such is the outcome when readers place their trust in God. As in the case of the mother of Prophet Mūsā, who has strong conviction and trusted the guidance given to her by God, her son was safely returned to her. However, if she had taken matters into her hands by not doing what she supposed to do then Prophet Mūsā would not have survived. The question comes to mind, what benefit do we get from the Qur’ānic narration of the mother and sister of Prophet Mūsā? How relevant are their deeds in today’s context?

**Benefit of Tawakkul**

There are numerous benefits of tawakkul that one need to understand. Among the important one is that it is the core teaching of Islam. Whether we realize it or not, it is part and parcel of Muslim life. The reason is, human is helpless without guidance. The narration of mother of Prophet Mūsā is sufficient to show how significant tawakkul in life could be. Had she not practice tawakkul we can imagine, probably baby Mūsā has no opportunity to live but died in the hands of the blood thirsty Fir‘a‘ūn. Indeed al-Qur’ān makes it clear that tawakkul is not an option. Once we have put our effort in achieving our goal the success is solely depends on God’s permission. Tawakkul in this context is a requirement for God.

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1 Ibid.
2 Sūrat al-Qaṣāṣ, 28:13.
affirmed: “...and put your trust in Allah if you are believers indeed.” In contextualizing the story of Prophet Mūsā’s mother and sister to current situation, readers have to deeply understand the concept of Qur’ānic narratives; most beautiful stories (aḥsān al-qaṣāṣ) of people of the past.  
What needs to be done is to deeply understand that:

1. **Tawakkul** is a requirement in life
2. **Tawakkul** in Allah was the manner of all the Prophets
3. **Tawakkul** leads to peace of mind
4. Impetus to tawakkul

1. **Tawakkul is a Requirement in Life**
   
   There are several Qur’ānic verses that call for all to practice **tawakkul** in life. Some of which are:

   a. “It is part of the Mercy of Allah that you do deal gently with them. Were you severe, they would have broken away from you: so pass over their faults and ask for Allah’s forgiveness for them and consult them in affairs, then when you have taken a decision put your trust (tawakkal) in Allah. For Allah loves those who put their trust (al-mutawakkilīn) in Him.” (Sūrat Āl ‘Imrān, 3:159).

   b. “But if they turn away, say: Allah suffices me:there is no God but He: on Him is my trust (tawakkaltu)He the lord of the Throne of Glory Supreme.” (Sūrat al-Tawbah, 9:129)

   c. “And put your trust (tawakkal) in Him Who lives and dies not; and celebrate His praise and enough is He to be acquainted with the faults of His servants.” (Sūrat al-Furqān, 25:58)

   The above cited verses are some examples of which God, by His love on His servant urges us to have trust in Him. However, in verse 159 of **Sūrat Āl ‘Imrān** reminds us of the process to do before embarking into **tawakkul**, that is, to deal things in gentle manner, invoke God’s forgiveness, consult people and then reliance. Similarly, readers find various steps applied by the mother and sister of Prophet Mūsā to save baby Mūsā, before their reliance in God. Ibn Qayyīm (d 751AH/ 1350 CE) for that matter says that “whenever the slave has good thoughts of Allah, great hope for what is with Him, true tawakkul (trust) in Him,

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then indeed Allah will never disappoint him.” 

Indeed, if readers practice tawakkul God will never disappoint them. Thus, it is not unusual for people of the past, particularly the Prophets, tawakkul was the manner applied by them, shown in the following.

2. Tawakkul in Allah was the Manner of all the Prophets

While reading some verses of al-Qur’an, for example that narrate on Prophet Ibrāhīm, readers should try to focus and relate how those events of tawakkul together with that of Prophet Mūsā’s mother and sister to their own personal life and challenges. In so doing readers will find that Prophet Ibrāhīm, his son Ismā‘īl and his wife Hājar were greatly tested and all of them practiced the high level of tawakkul that they have been recorded in history as models of submission. Indeed, the models, featuring two Prophets - Ibrāhīm and Ismā‘īl inspire readers towards the Straight Path of God. Similarly, in the deeds of Hājar, the mother of Prophet Ismā‘īl, readers find an unconditional love of a mother and her endurance in practicing tawakkul by leaving baby Ismā‘īl on the desert sand in search for water to quench her thirsty son. This sense of courage and tawakkul could equally be seen in the deeds of the mother and sister of Prophet Mūsā in their effort to save baby Mūsā from the blood thirsty Fir‘aūn.

Another prophetic practice of tawakkul can also be observed in the Sunnah of Prophet Muḥammad himself. In the event of his migration (hijrah) to Madinah from Makkah, readers can perceive how Prophet Muḥammad has taken every possible means and precautions to elude and escape his enemies who sworn to kill him. Once he had done to his utmost ability to defend himself from any form of danger, Prophet Muḥammad placed his unconditional and absolute tawakkul in his Almighty Lord. Had his Lord willed He could protect His Prophet, but the sunnah of the Prophet was to strive hard and then relied on his Lord. Al-Qur’an commends this reliance saying:

“If ye help not (the Prophet, it is no matter): for Allah did indeed help him; when the disbelievers drove him out (during

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2 Some examples: for Prophet Ḥūd – Sūrat Ḥūd, 11:156; Prophet Shu‘aib – Sūrat Ḥūd, 11:88; Prophet Ya‘qūb -Sūrat Yūsuf, 12:67;
the Hijrah): he had no more than one companion: they two were in the cave and he said to his companion [have no fear for Allah is with us]: then Allah sent down his peace (sakīnah) upon him and strengthened him with forces which ye saw not, and humbled to the depths the word of the disbelievers. But the Word of Allah is exalted to the heights: for Allah is Exalted in might Wise. (Sūrat Tawbah 9:40)

The outcome of unconditional tawakkul in God has resulted the feeling of calm or sakīnah on Prophet Muḥammad. Yūsuf ‘Alī says that the Prophet never approved overweening confidence or reliance upon human strength, numbers or resources; in the hour of danger he was calm and cool courage relying on the help of God, Almighty.¹ In other words, tawakkul is an attribute of one’s strong faith in his Lord, deliberate in the following.

3. Tawakkul leads to peace of mind
Ibn Taymīyyah (d. 728AH/ 1328 CE) says:

“The heart’s neglecting to seek something from Allah and place hope in Him leads inevitably to it drifting away from the worship of Him… **Obedience is the key to tawakkul.**

The praiseworthy are those who have actualized [Allah’s words], “It is You (alone) we worship, and You (alone) we ask for help” and “So worship Him and rely upon Him.” They sought assistance from Him by obeying Him, confirming that He is their Lord and that He must be worshipped alone through obedience to Him and to His Messenger.”²

What Ibn Taymīyyah intends to highlight from the above citation is tawakkul means an unconditional reliance and absolute submission to God. Tawakkul also refers to obey and fulfill all the rules and regulations set by God. While submitting to God, the element of sincerity comes into play. This could be in the form of:

a. loyal submission to all of God’s ruling;

b. obey intelligently (contextualize) of God’s ruling;

c. conscious state of mind in fulfilling the duties

d. sincere state of heart in internalizing the duties

e. approve manner of submission and obedience exemplified in the deeds of Prophet Muḥammad

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¹ *The Holy Qur‘ān*, p. 358.
In other words, when a person has a strong faith in God, he will put his unconditional trust in Him. He will submit by obeying and fulfilling all God’s ordinances. This act of submission becomes continuous part of his daily activity. Due to this continuity act of submission, it leads him to pious life known also as God’s consciousness (taqwā). Taqwā in turn, is the force that can restrain man from evil and wickedness. It is this consciousness of God that brings the tranquility on the heart and the mind of people.\(^1\) God says:

\[\text{And whoever fears Allah, He will make for him a way out} \]
\[\text{And will provide for him from where he does not expect. And} \]
\[\text{whoever relies upon Allah - then He is sufficient for him.} \]
\[\text{Indeed, Allah will accomplish His purpose. Allah has already} \]
\[\text{set for everything a [decreed] extent (Sūrat al-Ṭalāq, 66:2-3)} \]

Just like the deeds of the mother of Prophet Mūsā, who completely trusted God and obeyed the command intelligently by placing baby Mūsā in a box and later cast him into the river; demonstrate to readers of the outcome of tawakkul. Despite being in an unstable state of mind, which is human myriad, she held onto her grit and managed to move forward by remembering God’s promise “do not fear, nor grieve.” And by God’s Mercy, the sister of Prophet Mūsā upon her mother’s request, was inspired to seek whereabouts of her brother, to get information on his state and to assist the people of palace to get a wet-nurse for suckling, who later turned out to be her own mother. All of these events illustrate to readers the aspects of loyalty, obedience, conscious state of mind, sincere heart and precise act of doing things that contribute to peace of mind and happiness to all; the mother, the sister and baby Mūsā. The question that arises is, what could there be the impetus to tawakkul?

4. **Impetus to Tawakkul**

In today’s world, with its prevailing idea of immediate gratification, to develop tawakkul seems to be a little bit difficult. Although it is known to readers that all matters in human’s life have been decreed by God, yet man continues to go after things at all costs despite those things might not belong to him. The barrier towards tawakkul is due to disease of the heart\(^2\) for not having faith or conviction in the promises and benefits of God’s rulings,

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\(^1\) “Those who believe (in the Oneness of Allah), and whose hearts find rest in the remembrance of Allah, Verily, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest. (Sūrat al-Ra’d, 13:28)

\(^2\) Sūrat al-Jāthiyah, 45:23
stipulated in al-Qur’ān and exemplified by ʿahdīth of the Prophet. So, the impetus to tawakkul is to mindset one’s thinking to plan, train, apply and strive for reliance in God. When God says that He holds man’s life then mankind really needs to believe that He does. Imagine that the mother of Prophet Mūsā who upon God’s inspiration does not cast baby Mūsā in the river and doubted His promise; today one might hear the demise of baby Mūsā was due to his mother’s insubordination to God. Likewise, the sister of Prophet Mūsā who upon the request of her mother, refused to search for baby Mūsā’s whereabouts, now one might accuse her as an insolent daughter. Hence, in practical, to develop the incentive to tawakkul, one needs to do the following deeds:

a. Start with al-Qur’ān
b. Repent to God regularly
c. Seek His help and be patient¹

a. Start with al-Qur’ān

As it is duly known to all al-Qur’ān is one of the authentic references of Islam and anyone who intends to develop tawakkul must refer to this reliable source. Then once the teachings are comprehended well one must infuse the Qur’ānic teachings in life such that one becomes a living, walking, talking embodiment of the teachings.

In other words, al-Qur’ān helps man to develop tawakkul by presenting Himself and His Asma’ al-Ḥusnā² (Beautiful names), Authority and Attributes. With His Attributes, God provides to all of His creations their sustenance, kindness, good or evil, blessing, richness, poverty, healthy, death etc. Readers will put their trust in God for He is: “The Creator of all things, and He is the Wakīl (Trustee, Disposer of affairs, the Guardian) over all things.”³ And whoever relies on Him, He is the best to rely upon: “All-Sufficient is Allah as a disposer of affairs.”⁴

Equally, readers of al-Qur’ān will find with certainty that God is the All-strong, the All-Knower, Whose Knowledge grasps in the most perfect manner all things, hidden or open, all things are known to Him. He is Ever living and all that is on earth and heaven belongs to Him and He

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² Refer to Sūrat al-Ḥāshr, 59:24 - ”The most beautiful names belong to Him (Allah).”
³ Sūrat al-Zumar, 39:62.
⁴ Sūrat al-Nisā’, 4:171.
stands in needs of nobody. Hence, the more readers know of God’s Attributes the stronger reliance be on Him.

b. Repent to God Regularly
To err is human myriad. At times, whether knowingly or unknowingly man makes mistakes and feeling guilty of those sins become the first step towards tawbah or repentance. God says:

“O you who believe! Turn to Allah with sincere repentance (tawbatan nasūhā)! It may be that your Lord will expiate from you your sins... (Sūrat al-Taḥrīm, 66:88).

In the verse, it specifically points out that sincere tawbah is not merely an utterance of words rather it subjects to the strong intention of the doer to forsake the sinful acts forever, strong determination to restore other’s right or property involving wrongdoings on others and solid commitment not to repeat of the past mistake before death looms over him. God says:

“And whoever does evil or wrongs himself but afterwards seeks Allah’s forgiveness, he will find Allah Oft Forgiving, Most Merciful” (Sūrat al-Nisā’ 4:110).

Once a person feels ashamed of his past evil deeds and determines to change, all he needs to do is to put his tawakkul in the power of tawbah by sincerely fulfilling all rules and ordinances set by God. Indeed, sincere tawbah has several virtues, such as:

i. Tawbah paves way for success (Sūrat al-Nūr, 24:31)
ii. Tawbah keeps us away from hardships and trials (Sūrat Tawbah, 9:126)
iii. Tawbah helps clear our conscience (Sūrat al-Taḥrīm, 66:88)
iv. Tawbah pleases God (Sūrat al-Baqarah, 2:222)
v. Tawbah is a life transformational process (Sūrat al-Baqarah, 2:160)
vi. Tawbah makes the supplication (du‘ā’) more ‘worthy’ of a response (Sūrat al-Zumar, 39:53)

Knowing the merits of tawbah and tawakkul in its power, in practicum; a person should choose a time where he could be in khulwah or solitary, be in a state of peace and be truly near to God by performing his salāh and dhikr (God’s remembrance). In the beginning one may feel dry on his tongue but regular and persistent deeds will make tawbah

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a session to look forward for it rejoices and awakens the heart. A heart which is alive develops a stronger sense of tawakkul in God and whatever events confront the beholder, he is able to face them amicably, discussed in the following discussion.

c. Seek His Help and be patient

God says:

“Be sure We shall test you with something of fear and hunger, some loss in goods, lives, and the fruits of your toil. But give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere. Those who say, when afflicted with calamity, 'To Allah we belong, and to Him is our return.' They are those on whom descend blessings from their Lord, and mercy. They are the ones who receive guidance.” (Sūrat al-Baqarah, 2:155-157)

Life as pointed by the above citation is full of test. During times of deep trial, despair, and sadness, al-Qurʾān requests readers to inculcate “patient, perseverance and prayer.” Indeed, God reminds that people of the past have suffered and had their faith tested. Just like the mother and sister of Prophet Mūsā were severely tested but due to their patience and tawakkul in life they succeeded. On another plane, Ibn Qayyim in his Miftāḥ Dār al-Saʿādah invites readers to critically ponder:

“How many great blessings and favors Allah bestows by means of trials and tests?... how Prophet Ādam’s trial and test ended with Allah choosing him, bringing him close to Him, accepting his repentance, guiding him and raising him in status?”

Think about how Prophet Ibrāhīm’s trial and patience ended, and how he was ready to offer himself for the sake of Allah. Think about where his willingness to offer himself for the sake of Allah took him; because he strove to support the religion of Allah, Allah took him as His close friend... Allah increased his progeny, blessed them and made them numerous to the extent that they filled the world, and He granted Prophethood and Scriptures to his progeny only, from among whom he brought forth Prophet Muḥammad, and commanded him to follow the path of his father Prophet Ibrāhīm...

All those tests and trials were, in reality, a blessing by means of which Allah increased him in honor and virtue and caused Prophet Muhammad to attain the highest status. This is the situation of his heirs [the scholars and righteous] after him, the best and then the
next best; each of them has a share of trials, by means of which Allah causes him to attain perfection commensurate with the extent to which he follows their Prophet.\textsuperscript{1}

Readers can deduce that test and tribulation are part and parcel of life. The forthright purpose of those tests are to raise the status of believers that commensurate their patience and tawakkul to God. The question is how readers could be motivated to get closer to God and to seek His help? At times, in negative tone; why continuous \textit{du'ā’} receive no response from Him? To answer these questions Ibn Qayyîm requests readers to consider the following four conditions:\textsuperscript{2}

i. Have certainty that Allah will answer your \textit{du'ā’}.
   The Prophet said, “Ask Allah with certainty that He will answer your prayers.”\textsuperscript{3}

ii. Show submissiveness and devotion during your \textit{du'ā’}.
   The Prophet said, “Know that Allah will not accept the supplication from an absent heart.”\textsuperscript{4}

iii. Be patient and do not hasten for an answer.
   The Prophet said: ‘The \textit{du'ā’} of any worshipper will continue to be responded to, as long as… he is not hasty’\textsuperscript{5}

iv. Continue to gain a lawful means of living.
   The Prophet narrated a story about a man asking Allah, saying “O Lord! O Lord!” but his food was unlawful, his drink was unlawful, his clothing was unlawful, and he was nourished unlawfully; so how can he be answered?!\textsuperscript{6}

The four conditions brought forth by Ibn Qayyîm suffice for readers to answer why the existence of emptiness in their hearts while praying or supplicating. This emptiness is resulted from their selfish intention for the submission done was not for seeking the pleasure of the Almighty

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\textsuperscript{1} Ibn Qayyîm, \textit{Miftáh dâr al-Sa‘âdh}, (Dimashq: Dâr ‘Ilm al-Jawzî, 2011) vol. 1, pp.229-331, cited as \textit{Miftáh dâr al-Sa‘âdh}.
\textsuperscript{2} Ibid, vol. 1, 404.
\textsuperscript{3} \textit{Jami’ al-Tirmidhî}, vol. 6, Book 47, Ḥadîth 3372, cited as \textit{Jami’ al-Tirmidhî}.
\textsuperscript{4} Ibid, vol. 6, Book 47, Ḥadîth 3479.
\textsuperscript{5} Ibn Majah, Muḥammad ibn Yazîd, \textit{Sunan Ibn Majah}, (Bayrût: Dâr al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 2008), vol. 5, Book 34, Ḥadîth 3853
\textsuperscript{6} \textit{Jami’ al-Tirmidhî}, vol. 5, Book 44, Ḥadîth 2989.
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God. Similarly, demanding an immediate gratification due to impatience heart leads to emptiness, despondent and frustration. This means that to develop *tawakkul* requires patience and pure intention to seek the pleasure of Almighty God. It is a journey of enormous spiritual growth. Hence the four conditions as outlined by Ibn Qayyīm must be fulfilled so that readers’ supplication be answered just like the deeds of patience and submission practiced by the mother and sister of Prophet Mūsā that contributed to success in their life.

**Conclusion**

In short, *tawakkul* means reliance and trust in Allah upon effort in one’s affair. It is a two-way relationship whereby a person takes a responsibility on his affair and employing God’s resources and spiritual insights and then relies on Him. The person will always reach the intended result and will not fear anything, because such a person sees God as the One who can affect things in this world. However, if one does not rely on God, he will be constantly worried, for he has forgotten his true Guardian and has put his faith in unreliable entities. The Qur’ānic narration on the mother and sister of Prophet Mūsā prove to be an important lesson for all of us today; to be emulated in particular to develop *tawakkul* in life during peace period and time of conflict. Patience and obedience to God become the key ingredients for successful life in this world and the world to come.

**References**
