

The Need for Courage

By Brother Nejb Mohammed

In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is reported to have said; Allah loves two human qualities and dislikes two; The two qualities Allah loves are generosity and courage: The two qualities Allah dislikes are bad character and miserliness.

The Need for Courage in times of trials and tribulations, patient perseverance and courage is required. There are dozens of words used synonymously with courage: audacity, fearlessness, heroism, valor, fortitude, bravery, resolution, spirit, boldness, and, colloquially, guts [Merriam-Webster Dictionary]. Courage is the mental or moral strength to venture, challenge, persevere, and withstand danger fear or difficulty.

When a friend called me to ask me if I read the article on Negashi OJ my reaction was: OH! NOT AGIAN! Reading the article, at times I felt like crying and at times I felt to have the courage to pick-up the phone and call the brothers from Negashi OJ and ask for explanation and perhaps plead with them to remove the article from their page. However, I felt that once it is posted and who knows how many people are exposed to it and whose mind is already been poisoned, I got the courage to write what I feel about the article. As member of “the group” the article alludes to, I have the responsibility to let the readers to know the facts.

Let me first talk about courage and the need to take actions: Developing courage is an important attribute, and is manifested in a variety of ways; -“Courage is not merely the physical strength of the body; a man may be strong but cowardly. Rather, courage is the strength that one has in his heart. In a battle, victory is brought about by both strength of the body and courage of the heart.” [Ibn Taymiyyah] -To see what is right and not to do it, is lack of courage, it is cowardice. [Confucius] When we think of courageous people, we don't think of those who take great risks to show off, to become famous or to receive some personal gain. We think of those whose hearts directed em, in spite of fear, to accomplish something great, often times for others. Not for personal gain.

genuine courage is the moral virtue which prompts a person to undergo hardships, face dangers, be patient, and support the efforts of human struggle according to the demands of justice and reason 'Ali Ibn Abi-Talib (ra)said: شجاعة الجبن منقصة و الصبر cowardice is a defect in character and patience requires courage. Ibn El-Qayyim al-Jawzi explained that “courage comes from the heart being stable at the time of fear. Author, Charles Swindoll says:” The real tests of courage are ... the inner tests, like remaining faithful

when nobody's looking, like enduring pain when the room is empty, like standing alone when you're misunderstood."

Why I am tempted to say all this? Allah knows best that from the inception of the idea that Ethiopian Muslims must have a media that gives them voice and this goes 2 years prior to the start of Radio Bilal, we were not sure about the venue and we were enquiring. The first clue came from a brother in Atlanta who got us in touch with a Muslim individual that had experience in Satellite Short Wave Radio programming but after several attempts that failed and as we were wondering, our dear brother Sadiq Ahmed searched and communicated with the company that we signed contract with to broadcast Bilal Radio. During all the waiting, the structure of Bilal Communication was being drafted and Alhamdulillah we were able to organize Bilal Communication as prudent as we thought practical. In the process of this organization, we have Brothers and sisters from America, Europe, and Ethiopia how were devoutly involved. All this effort was without any personal gain to any except the anticipation of being rewarded from Allah (SWTA).

At the beginning, we could only afford to broadcast an hour a week and this went on for almost one year. Even then, we faced financial challenges and we have to sustain the cost by receiving loans and grants from individuals who were members of the organization. And once again the programming was so labor intensive that our dear brother Sadiq had to juggle his time between taking care of his family need and preparing the programs. Then, came another opportunity when we were contacted by good will individuals who wanted to finance 65% of the expense if we are willing to do a daily program rather than weekly one. From the start and all along there was courage when we ventured into this but the most courageous decision was to accept the offer of these individuals to finance the daily program. As I quoted Confucius "To see what is right and not to do it, is lack of courage, it is cowardice". At the time, it was unconscionable not to accept the offer.

What else could have been done? Was it prudent to not act upon any given opportunity for fear of failing? How is failure defined by our brothers at Negashi OJ? This venture was not for personal aggrandizement or out of EGO as their article portrays it. People were elated to see the first of such action by Ethiopian Muslims. We at Bilal Communications were devastated when we heard that the financing of the daily program was suspended and in the scramble to cover the cost we turned to our brothers and sisters for loan. Even though there are several reasons that I am not ready to discuss at this moment, one of them was someone from Negashi OJ was actively pursuing to identify these anonymous individual donors. One should ask why Nagashi OJ is so interested to identify them. Why all this negativity and animosity towards the individuals at Bilal? The article tries to portray a concern and at the same time throw accusations of impropriety. There were no efforts Ethiopian Muslims in Diaspora tried to do but was damned by Nagashi OJ. We should all ask why? What were the motives and the intensions behind this relentless attack?

If there are weaknesses, we were not afraid to talk about them and we have tried to do our best to mitigate some of the problems we had faced. Some of the decisions taken by the management team might not be to the liking of some individuals who are feeding wrong information or giving Negash OJ incomplete information. Intelligent and holier than thou as they think of themselves, and as a brotherly organization, Negash OJ never communicated with us to advise or give suggestions. However, the minute they got the information that we are facing financial problem they started throwing their accusatory salvos to destroy whatever struggle we are making to salvage Bilal Communication. In fact, they did not limit their attack to Bilal communication but the Interfaith Paltalk room and the noble causes it is undertaking such as the Hajj Mohammed Sani Habib Foundation was a fair game for them. Individuals were called puppets and dictators spewing political rhetoric. The insinuation that we were not frank about the financial problem we face is untrue and misleading at best. We have written several letters to different Ethiopian Muslims organizations in the US and Canada and we have talked and informed the public on Ethio/Interfaith Dialogue Paltalk Room about the dire situation we are facing. The so called concern and warning that Nagashi OJ is drumming about regarding the venture Bilal Communication to TV, is but another attempt to hold us back from any progress and attempt to scuttle our forward move. I don't understand the logic that fears and apprehension should keep any movement towards progress. I would appreciate if Nagashi OJ would come out and try to do something remotely closer and I will be the first to support them. The TV show was another opportunity that popped in front of us and we could not pass it. Once again we were approached by the founders of EBS and were asked if we are willing to buy time for Islamic programming. As we approached the idea, we found it to be the best alternative to the Radio Program. This is not a competition but Ethiopian Christians of different denominations established themselves in the TV channel and are broadcasting to Ethiopia and we already have concrete evidences that the public is tuning to EBS. Somehow, Negash OJ and the Mahbere Kudus and the like of them will not be happy to see Ethiopian Muslims have any views and voices be it Radio or TV programming. We depend on our Creator Allah (swta) and our people of good will to support Bilal Communication in making this dear come true. I believe and hope that Ethiopian Muslims in Diaspora would ultimately put Bilal Communication in a strong financial footing that the ups and downs of what we are going through will vanish. Inshallah.

Positive criticism can be well taken from well-intended people. However, rumors and unfounded accusation dressed up as positive suggestion are more piousness and destructive. The Bilal TV show is yet to air soon and you deemed it Haram. Have you seen the content of the show to arrive to this conclusion or just because the owners of the channel are non-Muslims that you said it is a haram channel? Do you know how many Islamic programs are transmitted through channels that are not owned by Muslims? Do you think if a Muslim is interviewed by CNN or BBC etc, etc, is a sinner according to your logic? Where did you get this Fatwa from? May be we can check and be saved too.

You know, I admit there were necessary improvements in the programming of Radio Bilal that I wish we have made. We have not claimed that we are professionals but our brother Sadik was doing what he can under difficult circumstances even though for some it looked like a one man show. Yes we should not have relied on such a big promise from individuals that we did not even meet. Yes Radio Bilal was not widely known or heard within Ethiopia as we thought and we should have found about it soon. Yes we should have done better programming and heeded to the few advices we were given. We should have done better job in advertising Bilal. I can go on and on in identifying what could have been done better. However, be assured that the decision taken to launch Radio Bilal and now Bilal show is the right decision. Once more, “To see what is right and not to do it, is lack of courage, it is cowardice”.

We are not born with courage, but neither are we born with fear. Maybe some of your fears are brought on by your own experiences if any, by what someone has told you, by what you’ve read in the papers and perhaps out of meanness. We will not be intimidated and we will not back off. Our source of strength is our intention to serve Allah (SWTA) by serving this Deen. My advice to Nagashi OJ is to relieve your selves from negativity and fear. Fears, even the most basic ones, can totally destroy our ambitions. Fear can destroy fortunes. Fear can destroy relationships. Fear, if left unchecked, can destroy our lives. Fear is one of the many enemies lurking inside us. That is what I think your enemy is. If we sit back and contemplate about the negative that we might face in what we do, we will not venture outside our shelters to be productive human beings.

In conclusion, many times we focus our efforts in detecting faults of others, but we forget our own selves, here are some advices/warnings for us to take lessons from, inshallah Hadith – Bukhari’s Book of Manners #313, Ahmad, Ibn Hibban, and Hakim... ‘Abd Allah reported that the Prophet of Allah, upon him be peace, said, “A believer is not a fault-finder and is not abusive, obscene, or coarse.”

Hadith – Bukhari’s Book of Manners #329... Ibn ‘Abbas said, “If you wish to mention the faults of your friend, mention your own faults first.”

Hadith – Bukhari’s Book of Manners #330... Ibn ‘Abbas said on the following verse of the Qur’an, “Nor defame one another” (49:11), “Do not spend your time finding fault with one another.”

Hadith – Bukhari’s Book of Manners #545 Jubayr ibn Nufayr reported that Mu’adh ibn Jabal said, “If you love someone, do not quarrel with him and do not annoy him. Do not ask others about him, for the one you ask might be his enemy and thus tell you things about him that are not true and thus break you apart.”

Bukhari :: Book 8 :: Volume 73 :: Hadith 90 Narrated Abu Huraira: The Prophet said, “Beware of suspicion, for suspicion is the worst of false tales; and do not look for the others’ faults and do not spy, and do not be jealous of one another, and do not desert

(cut your relation with) one another, and do not hate one another; and O Allah's worshipers! Be brothers (as Allah has ordered you!"

O Allah! I seek refuge in Thee from anxiety, grief, incapacity, laziness, stinginess, cowardice; from the burden of debt and from the domination of people. O Allah! I do not ask to walk smooth paths nor bear an easy load. I ask for strength and fortitude to climb the rock-strewn road. Give me such courage and with your help I can scale the hardest peaks alone, and transform every stumbling block into a stepping-stone."