196020 - She is suffering from a skin disease on her face that prompted her to attempt suicide

the question

I have a skin disease on my face, known as melasma. I am studying in college, but I asked my mother to let me off completing this semester until I receive treatment, because my face looks like this: My nose is white, but my right cheek is black and my left cheek is a little lighter than the right. This has caused me psychological distress which no one knows except Allah, may He be glorified and exalted. But my mother categorically refused, and my oldest brother – who is responsible for me after the death of my father (may Allah have mercy on him) – also refused. Please note that I have attempted suicide on several occasions because of this matter, but my family are only aware of one occasion, when I tried to cut my wrists in front of my mother. But she still insists on not letting me off this semester. I am crying most of the time, and I have become very nervous. I pray to Allah to grant me speedy healing. The students and teachers at the college do not help me much, and their glances tell me that I am ugly, and the way they treat me also indicates that. This is in addition to the hurtful words they say behind my back, or sometimes to my face.

I cannot bear it any longer, and I often think of suicide. Every time I repent, I go back and try to commit suicide again, but nothing happens to me. I don’t know if it is because Allah loves me or because He is angry with me and wants to punish me. Sometimes I think bad thoughts, that I hate Allah – I ask Allah to forgive me – or that Allah does not love me, even though my intention is good and I love all people. Please help me, because I do not know what to do.

I hope you will help me, O shaykh, and pray to Allah to heal me soon; perhaps Allah will answer your supplication, O shaykh.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Many people in this world live with wrong ideas, because of which they think that what they have of good health, or wealth and comfort, safety and security, are all permanent states that will never change or alter. Yet every day they see the sickness, pain and problems that befall people around them, or in nearby countries, and they think that they are safe from that, or that Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, has singled them out for protection and care, to the exclusion of all other people.

Some of them remain hopeful, and perhaps immersed in wishful thinking, until they are suddenly faced with a calamity that they never took into account, and they have no means of warding off the anxiety and distress that has come upon them.

One of the most important things that all of us should become accustomed to – in order to be able to overcome the calamities of this world – is to constantly be aware of our circumstances and be prepared for any calamity or problem that may befall us. Indeed we should expect the vicissitudes of time that may befall us, for it is impossible for things to remain the same all the time. One of the most serious delusions with which people live is the idea that one will live and die far away from any trial or calamity. For the Prophets were faced with the gravest trials and calamities and suffered all kinds of illness and sickness. Some of them were imprisoned, some of them were killed, some of them were driven out by their people, while others were persecuted and tortured. This also befell the scholars and the righteous after them, and this is what we see nowadays in many of the Muslim countries around us, where people are going through all kinds of calamities night and day, such as no one knows except Allah, may He be glorified and exalted.

All of that should prompt you to ask the natural and logical question: are you dearer to Allah than all of these people? Or do you have a covenant from Allah that He will protect you from all calamities, to the exclusion of all other people? Or were all of these people evildoers who deserved what befell them? Or is your heart so pure that you do not deserve the test which Allah is giving you? Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{And as for man, when his Lord tries him and [thus] is generous to him and favors him, he says, "My Lord has honored me."

But when He tries him and restricts his provision, he says, "My Lord has humiliated me."} (al-Fajr 89:15-16).

If you wish, we can remind you that what has befallen you, no matter how hard it is, is easy in comparison to what may befall others who are patient and seek reward with Allah, and we invite you to look at the state of women who are held captive, oppressed and persecuted in prisons, and those who are incapacitated by illness and calamity to the extent that they will never again be able to move or speak or talk. What is your situation in comparison to theirs?

We appreciate what you say and we feel sad for what has befallen you and you are a university student, but we also appreciate the blessings that Allah has bestowed upon you and upon all His slaves. We know that if you were to follow the advice given by the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) to those who are afflicted by calamity, what you are suffering would become easier to bear.

It was narrated that Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Look at the one who is at a lower level than you, and do not look at the one who is above you, for that may keep you from scorning the blessing of Allah.” (Narrated by Muslim (2963))

You are not suffering from physical pain that tears you apart, Allah forbid, and what you are suffering is not causing extreme poverty that forces you to beg from people; you are not being subjected to oppression and injustice from the most evil of people. As for the healthy and well-off people you see around you, you are only seeing their external appearances. If you were able to examine their true situations, you would see in them and in their families, calamities and hardship the likes of which has never crossed your mind, and if you knew anything about it you would praise Allah for the well-being that you have.

The truly happy one is the one who praises Allah, may He be exalted, for his situation and is pleased with his Lord and his Lord is pleased with him; he accepts whatever He decrees with a contented heart, and with hope for that which is with Allah, may He be glorified, of compensation

and an immense reward. This world is fleeting and will not last forever, and these calamities are but reminders to us, so that we will not love that which is transient and forget the Hereafter. In fact, they are a mercy and a gift from Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, so that we will not transgress and disbelieve, and so that we will not forget and fall short. Thus we will be constantly aware that we are on a journey and will gather provisions for it by doing righteous deeds and fearing Allah a great deal, for the best of provision is fear of Allah.

We need spiritual strength with which to face our calamities, and we cannot attain that except by contemplating the ideas discussed above and by reminding ourselves of the other blessings that we enjoy, of which many people are deprived. Over and above all that, each of us needs to live an active and productive life so that we may attain the goals that are set for all Muslims, namely to attain true servitude to Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, and to spread values and virtues and bring happiness to all people. When we focus on that goal, and live and die to achieve and fulfil it, only then will these obstacles in our path become insignificant to us, and we will realise that everything that is less than hellfire and the wrath of the Almighty is bearable and can be endured.

It was narrated that Jabir (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “On the Day of Resurrection, those who were healthy and well-off will wish, when they see the reward that is given to those who suffered calamities, that their skin had been cut with scissors in this world.” (Narrated by at-Tirmidhi (no. 2402). He said: A ghareeb hadith. It was classed as hasan (good) by al-Albani in Saheeh at-Tirmidhi)

So focus on your studies, for we do not advise you to delay them because of your sickness. If everyone who suffered a setback were to stop striving for success and achievement, because of what has befallen him, no human would ever reach any goal and all people would fail to achieve their aims. We would like to suggest that you wear niqab, for it is an act of obedience to Allah and a means of drawing closer to Him; moreover, it will spare you from the feeling that people are always looking at you. If there is another college similar to the one where you are studying, and you can transfer there and start over in a new environment, that would be a good idea.

You should understand that Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, has honoured you by saving you from death and your attempts at suicide, for He has protected you from that grave sin and has opened to you the door of repentance from those evil, devilish whispers. This is one of the signs of goodness, praise be to Allah, for which you should give thanks to Allah by doing righteous deeds, repenting sincerely and asking for forgiveness for all the attempts that you have made at suicide. When you call to mind the grave sin of the one who commits this major sin, you will realise the greatness of the blessing that Allah has bestowed upon you. Life is a precious and unique opportunity that will not be repeated, and the ummah needs you to succeed and achieve great things in your field. You are a brick in the great structure of our ummah, so you should never feel weak or unable to contribute anything good, no matter how small.

It was narrated that Nafi‘ said: When Ibn ‘Umar sat in a gathering, he would not leave before he offered supplication for his companions by saying these words, and he said that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) used to offer this supplication for his Companions in any gathering: “O Allah, allocate to us a share of fear of You that will serve as a barrier between us and disobedience towards You; and a share of obedience to You that will enable us to reach Your Paradise; and a share of certain faith that will make it easy for us to bear the calamities of this world. O Allah, let us enjoy our hearing, our sight and our strength so long as You keep us alive, and let that stay with us until the moment we die; help us to settle the score with those who wrong us; support us against those who show enmity to us; do not let our calamity affect our religious commitment; do not let this world be the focus of our concern or the sum of our knowledge; and do not let people gain power over us who will not show us mercy.” (Narrated by an-Nasai in as-Sunan al-Kubra (9/154); at-Tirmidhi in as-Sunan (no. 3502) – he said: It is hasan ghareeb. It was classed as saheeh by al-Albani in Saheeh at-Tirmidhi).

It was narrated from ‘Ata ibn as-Saib that his father said: ‘Ammar ibn Yasir led us in prayer, and he made it brief. Some of the people said to him: You have made the prayer brief. He said: But in it I offered a supplication that I heard from the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). When he left, one of the people – namely my father – followed him, and asked him about the supplication, then he came and told the people about it: “O Allah, by virtue of Your

knowledge of the unseen and Your power over creation, grant me life so long as You know that life is good for me, and cause me to die if You know that death is good for me. O Allah, I ask You to enable me to fear You in private and in public, and I ask You to enable me to speak the truth whether I am calm or angry, and I ask You for moderation in spending whether I am poor or rich. I ask You for blessing that will never end, and I ask You for delight that will never cease, and I ask You for contentment after Your decree comes to pass, and I ask You for a life of bliss after death, and I ask You for the joy of gazing upon Your Countenance, and longing to meet You, with no unbearable harm or misleading turmoil. O Allah, adorn us with the adornment of faith and cause us to be guided and to guide others. (Narrated by an-Nasai in al-Mujtaba (no. 1305); classed as saheeh by al-Albani in Saheeh an-Nasai)

For more information, please see fatwas no. 21677 and 111938

And Allah knows best.