



The importance of PREPARATION in everything - a lesson story

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A woodcutter's contest reveals the power of preparation: while a young challenger works relentlessly, an older champion takes frequent breaks—but uses them to sharpen his axe. The talk connects this lesson to Qur'anic and Prophetic teachings on being thoroughly prepared for life's challenges.

SAŽETAK

This talk uses a forest fable to explore the importance of adequate preparation. A champion woodcutter defeats a stronger, harder-working younger opponent not by constant labour, but by repeatedly stopping to sharpen his axe—something the young man fails to notice. The speaker applies this principle broadly: just as a sharp axe multiplies effort, so preparation multiplies the effectiveness of any endeavour. Qur'anic counsel (Surah Al-Anfāl 8:60) commands believers to ready all possible force to deter enemies, while the Messenger Muhammad ﷺ personally scouted terrain and organised fighters before the Battle of Badr. The talk extends the concept beyond warfare to study, work, worship, and personal development, cautioning against burnout through a hadith about a rider who exhausts his horse without reaching his destination. The core message is that doing everything within one's power to prepare, then entrusting the outcome to God, is both a practical and spiritual imperative.

KLJUČNE PORUKE

The young man's constant work with a dull axe was less productive than the champion's work with a repeatedly sharpened axe—showing that preparation, not just effort, is key.

The Qur'an (8:60) explicitly commands adequate preparation with all available means to deter enemies and prevent conflict.

Before the Battle of Badr, the Messenger Muhammad ﷺ personally conducted reconnaissance, consulted companions, and positioned fighters according to their weapons—modelling thorough preparation.

Preparation applies to every area of life: studies, exams, work, competitions, and personal spiritual discipline.

A hadith warns against burning out like a rider who pushes his horse too hard without reaching his destination, emphasising sustainable, prepared effort.

Beginning any task with adequate preparation is more than half the work; the famous saying ‘a journey of ten thousand steps begins with a single step’ applies here.

After doing everything in one’s power to prepare, one should entrust the matter to Allah, asking for goodness in all undertakings.

ČLANAK

Introduction

Peace be with you. Today I want to share a very interesting story from which we can extract certain lessons and messages for ourselves. We will then connect these lessons to teachings from the Sunnah of the Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, and to the text of the Qur'an. This story takes place in a forest region where many people worked with wood—cutting, processing, and trading timber. The majority of the people there were woodcutters by profession.

The Contest

There was a man who was, in a sense, a champion at felling trees. He was the most skilled, the most expert, the best, the fastest, and the highest quality in his work. He became known throughout the region for this mastery. One day, a young man who believed himself to be stronger, better, smarter, and more skilled than this champion decided to challenge him. He wanted to prove that he was superior in the art of felling, cutting, and processing wood. Of course, the only way to prove this would be through a competition.

So the people of the region divided a section of the forest between the two competitors, positioning them so they could see each other. They gave them a task: to start at the same time, work as much as they wished for the duration of the workday—eight or ten hours—and at the end of the day, whoever had felled and processed the most wood would be declared the winner.

The Young Man’s Efforts

The young man threw all his strength into the work. He cut and processed wood continuously with great intensity. Throughout the entire competition, he took only one break for lunch. And he kept watching his opponent, the champion. Every time he

looked over, it seemed to him that the champion was either resting or eating. The young man saw that the champion took a large meal, had several snack breaks, sat down multiple times to rest, and seemed to be doing all sorts of things other than working. Naturally, the young man felt confident that victory would be his.

The Unexpected Result

When the workday ended and the competition concluded, the people from the village came to measure, weigh, and calculate the cubic volume of wood each man had felled. To everyone's astonishment—and to the young man's complete disbelief—the champion had cut and processed more wood than the young man. The young man could not believe it. He said to the champion, "This is impossible! Almost every time I looked at you, you were either sitting down or resting, eating or doing something else. I did not see you working, but I could tell you were not working as intensely as I was. How is it possible that you accomplished so much more than me?"

The Champion's Wisdom

Then the champion shared with the young man a life lesson that I want to share with you now, and first and foremost with myself. The champion said: "It is true that you saw me sitting down many times, but you did not notice something crucial: every single time I sat down, I was sharpening my axe. Every time I took a break, I would sharpen my axe again. That was the advantage between you and me. Every time after each rest, I would continue my work with a sharp, well-prepared axe, and that is why I achieved so much more than you. You, on the other hand, came with a sharp axe only once at the beginning. You did not pay attention to that crucial detail, and you spent the entire time cutting with a dull axe."

The Lesson for Our Lives

This very interesting story is advice for both me and you today. The question it raises is this: How much do we prepare ourselves for the challenges in life? Do we know how to sit down and reflect on our situation? Do we know how to pay attention to whether our axe is sharp or dull? Are we truly ready for the challenges that lie ahead of us? Have we done everything necessary to ensure that our work, our activities, our endeavors will be successfully realized? When we examine the Qur'anic text, we see that Allah the Exalted prescribes for Muslims an adequate **preparation** for every matter of this worldly life.

Qur'anic Guidance on Preparation

The Lord of the Worlds says: وَأَعِدُّوا لَهُمْ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ قُوَّةٍ وَمِنْ رِبَاطِ الْخَيْلِ تُرْهَبُونَ بِهِ عَدُوَّ اللَّهِ وَعَدُوَّكُمْ (wa a'iddū lahum mā istata'tum min quwwah wa min ribāṭ al-khayl turhibūna bihī 'aduwwa Allāhi wa 'aduwwakum) — "And prepare against them

whatever force you are able and steeds of war by which you may terrify the enemy of Allah and your enemy." The Lord of the Worlds says: prepare yourselves, prepare against potential enemies, as much as you possibly can, with force, with cavalry and horses, with weapons and tools, so that you may strike fear into the hearts of Allah's enemies and your enemies. The goal is that conflict should never actually occur. Rather, the point is to be so well-prepared in every respect—morally, physically, materially, technically, and in every other way—that the threat itself prevents confrontation. This is what the Qur'an clearly and decisively prescribes to us: we must prepare for all the activities of our lives, for every aspect of our existence. There must be preparation, the acquisition of wisdom and knowledge that we will apply so that we may be as excellent and successful as possible.

The Messenger's Example

When we read the hadith of the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, we see that before the **Battle of Badr**, the Messenger himself went on reconnaissance. He prepared the terrain, looked at what his enemy was like, who he would be facing, where they came from, who they were, how well-armed they were, and so forth. He went out to scout and gather intelligence. The Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, after consulting with his companions and determining the battlefield with them, carried out these types of preparations. We then see the Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, making final preparations before the battle. After that, the Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, personally arranged and organized his men. He arranged them in rows. Those with long spears, those with swords, those with arrows—he determined each person's position according to their weapon and role. What is all of this? It is a form of preparation for what is to come.

Of course, this principle does not apply only to warfare or large matters or competitions. It is also life advice for us personally—that we prepare ourselves. That we simply do everything that is within our power, and then after that, we entrust the matter to Allah the Exalted, asking the Lord to grant us goodness in whatever we do. I think that this is something we truly lack today. Muslims, unfortunately, do not know how to prepare themselves sufficiently and thoroughly. We do not take adequate care of our souls. We need to take much better care of our souls, in the sense of preparing our souls for our return to Allah the Exalted. In the sense of persisting in our acts of worship. In the sense of being mindful of what we do, what we practice, and so forth.

Patience and Wisdom in Faith

In one hadith, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him, says that a person should understand faith in a light and accessible manner, because the path is long. The path to the Hereafter is long, and we will encounter numerous

trials along the way. Because of this, we must be mindful, as it is mentioned in that example from the Sunnah: we should not be like the rider who set out on his journey suddenly and hastily, pushing his horse to run at full speed. And then afterward, he neither reached his destination nor did he preserve his horse—he lost both his goal and the means to reach it. Unfortunately, we often encounter people like this. Because of this, the importance of preparation in all segments of life seems to me more important than ever before. Preparation for studies, preparation for exams, preparation for work, preparation for competitions. You cannot imagine any competition without preparation. In order to run five kilometers, you must first train to run three kilometers. In order to run three, you must start with one. Or, as a famous saying from the Far East goes: the journey of ten thousand steps begins with a single step. And because of this, it is best that we make that first step an adequate preparation, because that will be more than half the work.

Closing

I ask Allah the Exalted to help us in our work and our deeds, to ease everything we do, and to be pleased with us in both this world and the next. May Allah the Most High reward you. Thank you for watching, and we will see you at the next broadcast. Peace be upon you, and the mercy of Allah and His blessings.

[Qur'an 8:60](#)

[Hadith on the long path of faith and sustainable effort](#)

[Hadith on the Messenger's reconnaissance and troop arrangement at Badr](#)

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