

vol. [19]

REFLECTIONS

EL SHA'RAWY
الشعراوى

فواطر

المجلد [19]



*In the Name of God,
the Most Merciful,
the Dispenser of Mercy.*

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EL SHA'RAWY
الشعر اوان

فواطـر

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the chapter of

al-Ahzab

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Dispenser of Mercy

The chapter of *al-Ahzab*⁽¹⁾ (The Clans):
Allah *Glorified is He* says:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ اتَّقِ اللَّهَ وَلَا تُطِيعِ الْكَافِرِينَ وَالْمُنَافِقِينَ
إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا ﴿١﴾

**Prophet, be mindful of God and do not give in to the
disbelievers and the hypocrites: God is all knowing, all
wise[1] (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 1)**

The Word of Allah *the Almighty* ‘Prophet...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 1) is an address to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the one who is delivering that address is the True Lord *the Almighty*. ‘Messenger of Allah’ is his title, but his name is Muhammad or Ahmad as is mentioned in the Quran. When a human being is born, he is given a name which denotes him. So, when that name is mentioned, people’s attention is drawn to the one to whom that name has been given. People who are named have a particular environment in which they are known, while other people possessing the exact same names have another environment in which they are known. So the name ‘Mohamed’ of this environment is not the same as the name ‘Muhammad’ of that environment.

(1) The chapter of *al-Ahzab* is the 33rd chapter in the order of the Noble Quran. It is a chapter revealed in Medina and comprises of 73 verses. It was revealed to address the hypocrites’ criticism of Messenger Muhammad Allah’s *peace and blessings be upon him* and the harm they were inflicting upon him, the issues surrounding his marriages to women and especially his marriage to his cousin Zaynab bint Jahsh Allah be pleased with her and the correct courtesy that must be shown upon entering the apartments of Prophet Muhammad Allah’s *peace and blessings be upon him*. The chapter of *Al-Ahzab* was revealed in Medina just after chapter of *Al-Imran* and just before the chapter of *al-Mumtahana*. It was the 89th chapter to be revealed in terms of the order of revelation. See *As-Suyuti, Al-Itqan fi ‘Ulum Al-Quran*, 1/27.

A human being is identified by either his name, his *kunya* (nickname) or his *laqab*. (title). A name is what a person is called by – it is given to him to identify him and distinguish him from others. A *kunya* is a name which begins with *Abu* (Father of) or *Umm* (Mother of) such as Abu Bakr or Umm Al-Mu'minin. However, if a name such as this is given to a person right from the very beginning, then it is not a *kunya* (nickname) but a name. A *laqab* (title) is that which is used to indicate the highness or lowness of a person's status such as the poet So-and-so or the clever So-and-so and so forth.

If a number of people are given the same name making it impossible to tell them apart, then each of those people must be given a secondary descriptive name. So, for example, if a particular family loved the name Mohamed and gave all of their sons that name, it would be necessary for the parents to call them Mohamed the eldest, Mohamed the middle, Mohamed the youngest, and so on and so forth.

Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had a name, a nickname, and a title. His name was Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and it appears four times in the Holy Quran: Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Muhammad is only a Messenger before whom many messengers have been and gone...' (*Al-Imran*: 144). He *Glorified is He* also says: 'Muhammad is not the father of any one of you men; he is Allah's Messenger...' (*al-Ahzab*: 40); 'Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. Those who follow him are harsh towards the disbelievers and compassionate towards each other...' (*al-Fath*: 29) and '...and believe in what has been sent down to Muhammad—the truth from their Lord ...' (*Muhammad*: 2).

He is also mentioned in one place with the name Ahmad: Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...and bringing good news of a Messenger to follow me whose name will be Ahmad...' (*as-Saff*: 6). We have already talked about the reason for this name earlier in this *Tafsir*. His *kunya* was Abu Al-Qasim and his title was Messenger of Allah.

Thus, our master, the Messenger of Allah's full name encompassed all its three aspects – name, *kunya* and title.

A title is sometimes also bestowed upon a person by his parents or by someone else who knows him – they might give him a title indicative of high

status out of hope that he might one day become a person of substance, or a title indicative of low status. This latter form of title is usually given by parents to children when they fear that those children may one day become exposed to the evil eye. So, in order to protect them against that, they give their young children a title which indicates inferiority, debasement or some other form of lowliness.

The title of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was chosen for him by his Lord. And naturally the title given to him *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* indicated a loftiness of the highest degree, for his high rank was not just with creation but also with the Creator. When Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was born, his grandfather named him with the name that he loved the most. He said, 'I name him Muhammad so that he may become praised in both the heavens and the earth.'⁽¹⁾

When Al-Qasim was born, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was given the *kunya* of: the father of Al-Qasim, or: Abu Al-Qasim. And when Allah chose him to be the bearer of the Message and His Ambassador to creation, He *the Almighty* gave him the twin titles of 'Messenger of Allah' and 'Prophet'. If these two titles were to have been bestowed upon him by men, they would have indicated the loftiness of his station, so how much more must that be the case when they were bestowed upon him by Allah!

When you set out criteria for judging something, you set out criteria limited by the extent of your own knowledge or capacity. Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, however, is the Messenger of Allah and the Prophet of Allah according to the criteria of Allah and so he is rendered noble in your eyes and noble in the eyes of the One Who sent him. Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...But Allah knows best where to place His messages...' (*al-An'am*: 124).

So the most beloved way for us to refer to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is to say Muhammad, Abu Al-Qasim, Messenger of

(1) Ibn Hisham mentions in his *As-Sira An-Nabawiyya* (1/170) said that Amina bint Wahb, the mother of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* said that when she was pregnant with him *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* a voice came to her saying, 'You are pregnant with the master of this nation. So, when he is born, say 'I seek the protection of the One from every envier, and name him Muhammad.'

Allah or Prophet. On all the occasions that the True Lord *the Almighty* addresses His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, He never once addresses him by his name – He never once says 'O Muhammad'. Rather, He only addresses him by the title which indicates the lofty rank he holds with the True Lord *the Almighty*. So, He either says: 'Prophet...' (*al-An'am*: 65), or *Glorified is He* says: 'Messenger...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 41).

If you look at the way Allah addresses His messengers, beginning with Adam *peace be upon him*, you will find that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the only one whom Allah does not address by name. Yes, the word 'Muhammad' does appear in the Quran but never as an address. It only appears in the context of informing that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. And, indeed, even on many of the occasions that Allah does inform about him *peace and blessings be upon him* he informs about him by means of his title: Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'A Messenger has come to you from among yourselves...' (*at-Tawba*: 128).

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'The Messenger has said, "Lord, my people treat this Quran as something to be shunned..."' (*al-Furqan*: 30).

So, it is only 'O Prophet' and 'O Messenger' that is used when Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is addressed. However, when He *peace and blessings be upon him* is being informed that his actual name must be mentioned – we must say Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. If it is not mentioned then how could it be known that it is he who is the Messenger of Allah? So, when he is mentioned for the first time, both the name and the one to whom the name is applied must be mentioned together.

It is to honour Him *peace and blessings be upon him* and show him esteem that he is addressed as 'O Prophet' or 'O Messenger'. Whenever one of us addresses someone and wants to show our esteem for them, we mention their titles first before mentioning their name. So, for example, we might say, 'O lord So-and-so' or 'O your Excellency (*sheikh*) So-and-so' or 'O possessor of might' and so on.

The reason that the word *ayyuha* precedes *munada* (the vocative) here is because of the presence of the definite article *al* in the vocative – it is not possible grammatically in Arabic to directly address a word that has been

made definite with *al* except in the case of the Name of Majesty '*Allah*', for we do say '*Ya Allah*'. Thus, even when it comes to being addressed, the True Lord *the Almighty* is unique. This is in terms of addressing the singular.

The True Lord *the Almighty* addresses His Messenger with 'O Prophet' and 'O Messenger'. A Prophet or Messenger is the ambassador between Allah and His creation, sent by Him to transmit to them the program by which He wants them to lead their lives. So the Messenger is the one who transmits. The Prophet is the one who has been sent by the True Lord *the Almighty* but without bringing a new set of laws. Rather, he follows the laws of those messengers who were sent down before him. The role of the Prophet is to act as a living example for his people and thus show them how to act.

Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* embodied both these roles – he was both a Prophet and a Messenger. There were certain specific things he was commanded to do but was not commanded to transmit to others – these being those matters that were particular to his role as Prophet; and there were other matters that he was commanded to do and commanded to transmit to others.

It is well known from what scholars of the past have said that every Messenger was a Prophet but that not every Prophet was a Messenger in the technical sense of the word, even though every one of them was sent by Allah. The Arabic word for Prophet *nabi* is derived from the word *naba'* which means 'an important piece of *khabar* news. The type of news that passes from one human being to another is called *khabar* whereas when that news comes from the Creator of mankind it is *naba'*, a matter of the utmost immensity and importance. The ultimate derivation of the word *naba'* is *nabwa* which refers to a large rounded bump in the middle of a flat plain.

So, if we were to say, 'I saw So-and-so today', that would not be considered a *naba'* but would rather be a *khabar*, and that is why Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'What are they asking about? The momentous announcement' (*an-Naba'*: 1-2). This means that the disbelievers are asking about that frightening piece of news which reached all ears and which shook the entire earth and caused the throne to convulse.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says, directly addressing His Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: '...be mindful of Allah...' (*al-Ahzab*: 1). We

have previously mentioned in this *Tafsir* that there are two types of Arabic speech: *khavar* and *insha'*.

Khavar is a verbal ascription that started out as an intellectual ascription before the words were spoken and became verbal after they were spoken. If the verbal ascription makes sense and has meaning then it is an actual ascription. *Khavar* is the type of statement that can be described as being true when it corresponds to reality or being false when it does not.

Insha' is the opposite of *khavar* – it is every type of speech that cannot be described as being either true or false, such as when you say to someone, 'Stop!' Since this is an imperative, the person saying it cannot be described as saying something true or something false.

This statement of Allah *the Almighty* to His Prophet, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...be mindful of Allah...' (*al-Ahzab*: 1) is a verbal ascription from Him to His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to bring about what is meant by this command and that is fearful consciousness of Allah (*taqwa*). But does the fact that the Lord commanded Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to have fearful consciousness of Him mean that he was not God-fearing before that? Our answer to that is no; it does not necessarily follow from this that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was disobedient and so Allah commanded him to have fearful consciousness of Him. Rather, the reality of the matter is that this was something that the True Lord *the Almighty* said to His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* initially before any incidence of disobedience took place. This is comparable to a parent's instruction to his child to work and study hard even before that child has embarked upon his studies. Despite the parent's knowledge that the child is indeed hard working, it is his duty to ensure that, right from the onset, that principle is firmly embedded in his psyche.

Moreover, there are three time periods during which events take place: the past, present and future. Sometimes a person is requested to do something that he is already actually doing, such as when Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'You, who believe, believe in Allah and His Messenger...' (*al-Ahzab*: 1). Here,

Allah *the Almighty* commands them to have belief even though he describes them as having faith and addresses them as such, since the meaning of the verse is, 'You had belief before I spoke to you, but the belief that precedes my speaking to you is in the past, so I want you to take on a new belief, both now and in the future. I want you to renew your faith and to make it endure.'

So, the meaning of what Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...be mindful of Allah...' (*al-Ahzab*: 1) is 'Continue to have fearful consciousness of Allah in the present as you have done in the past and continue to have it in the future and never ever stop.'

Or, to put it another way, fearful consciousness of Allah is the quality that binds the human being to his Lord. Allah imposes certain things but then makes permissible for you other things of the type that are normally imposed.

So, when Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...be mindful of Allah...' (*al-Ahzab*: 1) to His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* it is not the same as when He *Glorified is He* says: '...be mindful of Allah...' to us. When He says it to us, He is telling us to fulfil what has been obligatory for us, but when He says it to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* He is telling him, 'Enter the station of *ihsan* and keep on renewing it, for the staircase to Allah's acceptance is never-ending and the perfections of Allah's gift are without limit.'

This is the reason Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'If someone's two days are the same, then he has been duped,'⁽¹⁾ meaning that

(1) This Hadith is mentioned by Az-Zarkashi in *At-Tadhkira fi Al-Ahadith Al-Mushtahara* (p. 1238) in its full version which reads, 'If someone's two days are the same, then he has been duped; if his final days are marked by evil then he is cursed; and if he is not in increase, then he is in decrease and he would be better off dead. If he longs for paradise, then he should make haste to perform right action; if he fears hell then he should deny his appetites; if he expects death then he should turn away from worldly pleasures; and if he does without in this world, then afflictions will seem small and unimportant.' Then he, i.e. Az-Zarkashi said, 'The author of *Musnad Al-Firdaws*, Ad-Daylami, narrated its chain of narrations as being from Mohamed ibn Sawqa from Al-Harith from 'Ali from Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* but that is a weak chain of narrations.' Al-Hafidh Al-'Iraqi said in *Takhrij Ahadith Al-Ihya'* (4/335), "I do not know of this Hadith except from 'Abd Al-'Aziz ibn abu Rawwad who said, 'I saw Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* amongst the people so I said to him, "O Messenger of Allah, counsel me." Then he replied with that along with an addition at the end of it.' Al-Bayhaqi narrated it in *Az-Zuhd*.

if someone finds that his closeness to Allah has remained the same from one day to the next, then he is a loser. Why is he a loser? Because a believer's closeness to, love of and connection to Allah should increase and get stronger every single day. As Allah's blessings to him never cease then so too should his praise and thankfulness never cease.

In the same way, Allah *the Almighty* does not content himself from His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with what he has contented himself from the rest of creation. So, therefore, when we talk of the *taqwa* of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* we are talking of a *taqwa* that is not that of the rest of creation – the *taqwa* of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was vast in scope and Allah's overflowing bounty to him was constant and without end.

Therefore, know that when your Lord calls you to the prayer five times each day, the favour that He grants you is not repeated but is new each time: what He gives you for praying *Zhuhr* is not the same as what he gives you praying *'Asr* or praying *Maghrib*. In the same way, fearful consciousness of Allah is a constant and never-ending act.

It is for that reason that the people of right action warn against persevering for a time in an act of obedience and then leaving it. And it is for that reason that *Shari'a* warns us against making a vow to Allah that we will be unable to fulfil since, whenever you make a vow to Him, it becomes obligatory for you to fulfil that vow. It would be better for you to keep your acts at the supererogatory level so that when it is easy for you to perform acts of obedience you can do so, but when you are unable to do them you have done nothing wrong.

Those acts of obedience you have made obligatory upon yourself are of the same type as those which Allah himself made obligatory upon you. In other words, you have come to love obedience so much and you have come to find worship so sweet that you have gone to Allah for more. So you say, for example, 'I make a vow to Allah to pray such-and-such an amount of *rak'as*,' or 'to give such-and-such an amount of money in charity.' It is on account of the radiant lights and abundant gifts that Allah has given you in the five prayers that you have gone back to Him for more.

When the True Lord *the Almighty* calls us to the prayer, He also asks us to go quickly to the mosque. This is despite the fact that He has made the entire earth pure and the entire earth a mosque. The mosque is a place that has been set aside for prayer and so it behoves us to perform our prayers in that place. And add that to the fact that you are considered to be in the prayer for the entire time you are making your way towards the mosque to perform it. So, even if someone lives a long way from the mosque, he must still make sure that he remains in a state of dignity and calm for the duration of his trip to the prayer. And he should remain in that state of silence even if he is late and misses the *takbir* for entering into the prayer.

It has been narrated in a Hadith of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that He *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'When the *iqamat* for the prayer is called, do not come to the prayer running but walk to it calmly (and with dignity). Then pray (the part of the prayer) that you have caught and complete (the part of the prayer) that you have missed.'⁽¹⁾

Belief requires certain things of you and *ihsan* requires certain things of you. What belief requires is that you do what Allah has made obligatory upon you. We find in a Qudsi Hadith, 'My slave does not come close to Me with any action more beloved to Me than that which I have made obligatory upon him.'⁽²⁾ If you want to get closer to Allah then you must do so by doing what He loves.

The type of things that Allah has made obligatory upon you includes prayer, fasting, and giving alms. If you find these acts of worship delightful, then do more of them, above and beyond what Allah has made obligatory upon you. And when you do more, know that it is because you have felt the touch of the radiant lights within worship and have said to yourself, 'Allah is entitled to more from me than that which He has imposed upon me.' This is the station of *ihsan*.

(1) *This Hadith is transmitted by Ahmad in his Musnad (2/237, 239 & 270); by Muslim in his Sahih (602) in Kitab Al-Masajid, on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him.*

(2) *This is part of a Qudsi Hadith. It is narrated by Al-Bukhari in his Sahih (6502) on the authority of Abu Hurayra. It is also narrated by Ahmad in his Musnad (6/256) on the authority of 'A'isha. Sheikh Mohammad Mitwalli Sha'rawi examined this Hadith in great detail in his book "Al-Ahadiith Al-Qudsiyya" (1/87) It was checked by us for accuracy.*

This matter has already been discussed by us in relation to what Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'The righteous will be in Gardens with [flowing] springs. They will receive their Lord's gifts because of the good they did before: sleeping only little at night, praying at dawn for Allah's forgiveness.' (*al-Kahf*: 15-18)

Has Allah made it obligatory upon His slave to lie asleep during but a small part of the night? No, on the contrary, you have the right to pray '*Isha*' and then remain asleep until *Fajr*.

And the same is true with respect to asking forgiveness *istighfar* – those who sleep for only a small part of the night and get up before *Fajr* in order to ask their Lord's forgiveness must take delight in worship and standing in His Presence. They have entered the station of *ihsan*.

Ihsan is of two types: the *ihsan* of how much and the *ihsan* of how. The *ihsan* of how much is doing more than that which has been made obligatory upon you, so you pray more prayers than is obligatory and give more alms than is obligatory. The *ihsan* of how is being truly sincere in your worship of Allah –it is that you worship Allah as if you see Him, for even if you do not see Him, He sees you,⁽¹⁾ meaning, if you do not experience the illumination or transparency that enables you to see Allah, then the least you can do is worship Him in the knowledge that He sees you.

Once you have reached the station of *ihsan*, you are free to do as much *ihsan* as you want. As Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...there is no reason to reproach those who do good...' (*al-Ahzab*: 1). So you are free to do as many acts of obedience as you find easy, be that praying five *rak'ats* or praying ten *rak'as*, giving five per cent of your wealth in alms or ten per cent – however much you want to do, you are free.

(1) *This is from the famous Hadith of Gabriel peace be upon him which was narrated by Al-Bukhari in his Sahih (50) as well as by Muslim in his Sahih (8) on the authority of 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab Allah be pleased with him that while Messenger Muhammad peace and blessings of Allah be upon him was in the company of his Companions, Gabriel peace be upon him, came to him in the form of a man whose clothes were exceedingly white, whose hair was exceedingly black, upon whom no trace of travel could be seen and whom none of us knew and began to ask Him peace and blessings of Allah be upon him about Islam, faith and ihsan, so Messenger Muhammad peace and blessings of Allah be upon him answered him.*

Do you not see that when the True Lord *the Almighty* talks about this station He *Glorified is He* says: 'giving a rightful share of their wealth to the beggar and the deprived.' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 19), but when he talks about the obligatory alms He *Glorified is He* says: 'who give a due share of their wealth...' (*al-Ma'arij*: 24).

So, Allah's saying, 'Prophet, be mindful of Allah...' (*al-Ahzab*: 1) means to 'Remain conscious of Allah with a *taqwa* that befits your station with your Lord'; since Allah's Perfections have no limit and His Gifts have no end. And it was because of this that our master, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* used to stand in prayer during the night for so long that his feet would split open. 'When 'A'isha Allah be pleased with her asked him about that, saying, 'Why do you do that when Allah has forgiven you all your past wrong actions?' He *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, 'Should I not be a grateful slave?'⁽¹⁾ In other words, worship is not only done for reward or forgiveness, there are other higher levels of worship.

Taqwa, as we have said, is to place a barrier between yourself and that which might cause you harm. But how can one place a barrier between oneself and one's Lord when the whole point of *taqwa* is to enable us to fully be with Allah? And by this, we are referring to the one who gains complete control over his self and makes it follow the program Allah has laid out for it.

The answer to this is that Allah *the Almighty* has two types of attributes: those of majesty and those of beauty, each one of these coming into effect when required. Allah *the Almighty* as well as being the Much-Forgiving and Dispenser of Mercy, is also the All-Dominant, the All-Compelling and the Lord of Retribution. He is both the Inflictor of Harm and the Bestower of Benefit. Thus, the attributes of beauty are those which provide man with the good things that he loves and the attributes of majesty are those which overwhelm those who go against Allah. So every slave of Allah should spend his life in a constant state of fear of the attributes of majesty and in a constant state of hope for the attributes of beauty.

(1) It is transmitted by Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* (4837) as well as by Muslim in his *Sahih* (2819) on the authority of 'A'isha Allah be pleased with her.

So, *taqwa* of Allah *the Almighty* is that placing a barrier between oneself and the attributes of majesty, since a human being is incapable of standing in the face of these attributes. Indeed he is incapable of standing even the smallest touch of the Fire and that is but a single one of Allah's soldiers, so take care and be warned!

When it comes to the issue of intercession, we know that both fasting and the Quran will act as intercessors, that Allah will make some of the believers intercessors, that He will make the Prophets and Angels intercessors, and that He Himself, the Most Merciful of the merciful, will be the final intercessor. But how does Allah intercede with Allah?⁽¹⁾

Their answer is that Allah's attributes of beauty intercede for us with His attributes of majesty. So when a slave of Allah does a wrong action that entails a punishment and places him under the sway of Allah's attributes of majesty, the attributes of beauty get in their way and intercede with them to relinquish their claim over him.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says: addressing Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him*: '...and do not give in to the disbelievers and the hypocrites...' (*al-Ahzab*: 1). Should Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as part of his fearful consciousness of his Lord, defer to the deniers of truth and the hypocrites? Their answer is that the Quran brings together the command to have *taqwa* and the prohibition against deferring to the deniers of truth and the hypocrites out of necessity. As saying, 'Honour so-and-so as well as so-and-so,' is not the same as saying, 'only honour so-and-

(1) *Abu Bakr As-Siddiq peace be upon him* narrated as part of a long Hadith that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* said, "I have been shown what will be in this world and the Hereafter. The earlier and the later peoples will all be gathered in a single plain..." Then he *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* said, "Then it will be said, 'Call forth the true,' and they will come and intercede. Then it will be said, 'Call forth the Prophets' and then every Prophet will come forward, some accompanied by a large group of people, some by five or six and some by none. Then it will be said, Call forth the martyrs,' and they will come and intercede for whoever they want. Then, when the martyrs have done that, Allah the Almighty will say, 'I am the Most Merciful of the merciful. Anyone who did not associate anything with Me may enter Paradise.' And they will enter Paradise." This Hadith was narrated by Ahmad in his *Musnad* (1/4); *Al-Haythami in Al-Mujma'* (10/374), and *As-Suyuti in Al-Budur As-Safira fi 'Umur Al-'khira* p. 119.

so', it makes it necessary to add. Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...and do not give in to the disbelievers and the hypocrites...' (*al-Ahzab*: 1).

When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came, he came following the system of existence that Allah *the Almighty* had set out for His creation. For, when Allah created His creation, He made a covenant with every single member of the human race from the time of Adam *peace be upon him* until the coming of the Final Hour: He made a covenant with them when Allah *Glorified is He* says to them: '...He said, 'Am I not your Lord?' and they replied...' (*al-A'raf*: 172). Thus, mankind bore witness to Allah *the Almighty* before they were forbidden from committing acts of disobedience or following their appetites.

Then, whenever mankind forgot this pledge, Allah *the Almighty* sent them a Messenger to remind them. And that is why Allah *Glorified is He* addressed Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* with the words, '...But you are only there to give warning...' (*ar-Ra'd*: 7).

And that is why Allah *Glorified is He* says about the Messengers: 'They were messengers bearing good news and warning...' (*an-Nisa'*: 165) meaning that it is not them who bring obedience or *taqwa* into existence; they merely remind us of a matter that every one of us knew about before in the time before creation, bringing us the good news of a reward for those who obey and warning us of a punishment for those who disobey. Allah *the Almighty* wants His slaves to remember this reality at every moment and never forget it for even an instant.

Forgetfulness is caused by either the self's appetites or by its laziness and reluctance to perform acts of worship which it finds difficult, or it is caused by the whispering of another disobedient being, whether that be a Satan from amongst the jinn or from amongst men. This is confirmed by Allah *the Almighty* when He *Glorified is He* says: '...They suggest alluring words to one another...' (*al-An'am*: 112).

We say that deviant people envy right-acting people their right action but because they find themselves unable to do those acts of obedience, they try to pull the right-acting people down to their level by whispering to them to get

them to abandon that attribute of perfection with which they had previously been endowed. Therefore, the first thing you should realise when a companion of yours whispers some act of disobedience to Allah in your ear, is that he hates you and does not want you to get any good that he feels himself unable to get – he does not want you to have any quality that makes you superior to him.

So, because the unbelievers and hypocrites who fight against the call of Islam are unable themselves to handle the burden of following Allah's program or to keep to it in the way that the believers do, they try to prevent the believers from implementing the new program brought by Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

We also say that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* only came because it was an absolute necessity, a necessity brought about by the disappearance of all traces of the Divine Program amongst those people to whom he had been sent, and by their lack of any personal or social inhibition. When someone forgets, his self-reproaching self-reminds him and dissuades him against committing acts of disobedience. However, when the power of that type of self grows weak, then the self that commands to evil takes him over and turns him away from all that is good, leaving him with only one remaining inhibition, a social one whose role is that of enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong. And it is this quality that set this nation apart and made it better than those that came before. And, for that reason, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '[Believers], you are the best community singled out for people: you order what is right, forbid what is wrong, and believe in Allah...' (*Al- 'Imran*: 110).

When this principle also disappears from a society so that no one remains who enjoins the right or forbids the wrong, it becomes necessary for heaven to once again intervene by sending a new Messenger with a fresh reminder. However, by way of honouring the followers of Muhammad and honouring their Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Allah *the Almighty* has granted them these distinctions of being the best by guaranteeing that there will never come a time when it lacks for people enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong. And because of the fact that his *ummah* is protected in this way, there will not be another messenger after Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

However, even when an *ummah* is imbued with this social strength whereby right is enjoined and wrong is forbidden, it must still understand the task well and be fully aware of its implications with respect to belief. There is a narration from our, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in which he reminds of this matter and explains it with full clarity. He Muhammad *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* said, ‘If you see a wrong then change it with your hand. If you are unable (to do that then change it) with your tongue, and if you are unable (to do that then change it) with your heart, but that is the weakest form of belief.’⁽¹⁾

So, the whole matter is based on the extent of a person’s lack of ability to act, and this is true of every instance of enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong. However, when should I change a wrong with my hand? When should I change it with my tongue? And when should I change it with my heart?

I should change it with my hand when the transgressor is someone over whom I have authority thereby giving me the capacity to bring about that change. If the wrong is done by someone over whom I do not have authority, however, then I should change it with my tongue making sure that, in light of what Allah *Glorified is He* says: '[Prophet], call [people] to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good teaching. Argue with them in the most courteous way...' (*an-Nahl*: 125). I do so with kindness and courtesy.

Despite all this, we find some Islamic preachers calling on others without proper discernment. They neglect the condition of ability; leave no room for man's inability. They look forward to amending every wrong situation with their hands directly. This goes against the command of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

If you expect that you might be harmed, then change the wrong with your heart, since the ultimate goal is to bring the wrongdoer back to the Straight Path. This will only be achieved with tenderness and compassion, not with harsh words. This is in order not to put double shares of difficulty on him,

(1) *It is transmitted by Ahmad in his Musnad (3/10, 52); Ibn Majah in his Sunnan (1275, 4013); and by Abu Dawud in his Sunnan (1140) on the authority of Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri with the wording, 'If you see a wrong you are able to right with your hand then change it with your hand. If you are unable [to do that then change it] with your tongue, and if you are unable [to do that then change it] with your heart, but that is the weakest form of belief.'*

that is, to ask him to leave and get rid of his beliefs and to do that in a difficult and harsh manner.

This concept of changing the wrong with the heart is misunderstood by many people. They think that it is simple to say, 'O Allah this is a wrong with which You are not pleased so I reject it.' In fact, this is nothing more than a rejection by the tongue. It is not an utterance issuing from their mouths that Allah *the Almighty* wants. No, He wants the heart to act in a way that leads to physical action; He wants your body to follow your heart in rejecting the wrong.

When you see someone deeply engaged in disobedience or tyranny, while you are powerless to confront him or stop him by means of words or actions, then you must condemn his action in your heart and turn away from him. You must leave that person alone, neither providing him with words of comfort in times of sadness nor words of congratulation in times of joy, nor help in times of need, etc.

You must isolate him and keep him alone from the rest of society. If everyone else in the society acts in the same way towards him, then he will be left completely alone, thus prevents himself from doing the wrong he was doing.

This is why Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* never established a prison to hold those who were disobedient. Rather, their prison was in the way that the wider community of believers would isolate them, imprisoning themselves off from them and not communicating or interacting with them with any way. Indeed, the *Shari'a* of Islam is so strict in this regard that it isolates a wife from her husband, not allowing him to touch her until his affairs have been set straight with his Lord.

Do you recall the story⁽¹⁾ of Ka'b ibn Malik⁽²⁾ and the way in which he was isolated by the rest of the Companions? He was one of the three

(1) *The story of Ka'b ibn Malik and the three who defaulted from the battle of Tabuk.*

(2) *He was Ka'b ibn Malik Al-Ansari, the poet of Messenger Muhammad Allah's peace and blessings be upon him. His mother was Layla bint Zayd from the Banu Salama. His (kunya) was Abu 'Abd Ar-Rahhman. He was one of the Ansar who pledged allegiance to Prophet Muhammad Allah's peace and blessings be upon him at Al-'Aqaba and took part in the battles of Uhud and the Ditch as well as all the other battles except for that of Tabuk during which he remained behind in Medina. Allah the Almighty however, forgave him for that. He became blind towards the end of his life and died at the age of 77 in 50 AH during the Caliphate of Mu'awiya.*

men⁽¹⁾ who remained behind when Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* led the believers on the expedition of Tabuk, and even those who were the closest to him cut him off completely. When he scaled the wall of an orchard belonging to his nephew and said to him, 'Do you not know that I love Messenger Muhammad?' his nephew was silent and did not reply to him.

When the wife⁽²⁾ of Hilal, one of the three, went to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and said, 'O Messenger of Allah, Hilal is a very old man and does not have (the normal desires) that men have for women', he *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, 'Serve him, but do not let him come close to you.'

These three remained in their state of isolation until a verse of the Quran came down about them saying, '...until in the end – after the earth, despite all its vastness, had become [too] narrow for them and their souls had become [utterly] constricted – they came to know with certainty that there is no refuge from Allah *the Almighty* other than [a return] unto Him...' (*at-Tawba*: 11).

In this way, the early Muslims held firm to the Law of Allah *the Almighty*. They were able to do so not by imprisoning the wrongdoers, but by cutting off the wider community from them. This is the same matter which has brought the crisis from which our country suffers today: are those not criminals who pass amongst us known to those who inhabit the houses, or even the streets and districts, in which they live? Have any traders refused to trade with them when they ask to be served? Or have any of us ignored their greetings and turned away when they greet us?

(1) *The three who remained behind were Ka'b ibn Malik, Hilal ibn Umayya and Marara ibn Rabi'a.*

(2) *She was Khawla bint 'Asim, the wife of Hilal ibn Umayya (this what Ibn Hajr said in Al-Fath (8/121). It is narrated by Muslim in his Sahih (2769) and Al-Bukhari in his Sahih (4418) 'that his wife came to Messenger Muhammad and said, 'O Messenger of Allah the Almighty Hilal ibn Umayya is a poor old man who has no servants. Do you dislike for me to serve him?' He replied, 'No, but do not let him come close to you.' Then she said, 'By Allah the Almighty he has not made any move towards doing anything. By Allah the Almighty he has continued to weep from the day that that happened to him right up until the present day.'*

So then, we can see that the society is responsible. It is the entire society that bears the weight of their sin since it provides shelter for them. Indeed, we could almost say that society is a bigger criminal than the criminals themselves.

However, before talking about criminals, we should first speak with them. Before cutting them off, we should first engage with them in conversation, give them good counsel and treat them well. This is what we understand from the words of our Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'the greatest form of (*jihad*) is to give a word of truth in front of a tyrannical ruler⁽¹⁾, since he did not say 'against a tyrannical ruler'. Therefore, before exposing a person's faults or denouncing him, you must first speak with him and give him good counsel. That way, he will know that you only want good for him and want him to return to the fold. That way, he might accept your words or, at the very least, not harm you. The fact that we automatically denounce criminals is one of the banes of our society. Indeed, such is our eagerness to do so that, for every crime they have actually committed, we additionally accuse them of a thousand that they have not.

So, changing something with the heart means ensuring that one's outward is in harmony with his inward. Doing these costs, you nothing, unlike when you change something with your hand or tongue, which is why it is described by Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as the weakest form of belief. In other words, it is something that any weak person can do.

When a society cuts its criminals adrift, the incidence of crime comes to a halt. Crime only escalates and becomes unmanageable when a group of people fears the criminals within their midst and so try to ingratiate themselves with them in order to avoid incurring their wrath or displeasure. In such circumstances, why should a criminal not embark upon ever-greater crimes?

This is the reason why the All-Wise Lawgiver does not, in the case of accidental killing, make the killer alone liable for the payment of the blood money, but calls on his '*aqila* (entire family) to pay it. This is because the family are the ones who are responsible for disciplining those who have gone

(1) *It is transmitted by Ahmad in Musnad (3/19, 61); At-Tirmidhi in Sunnan (2174) and he classified it as Hasan; Abu Dawud in Sunnan (4344) on the authority of Abu Sa'id Al-Khudari. The wording in the version of At-Tirmidhi is as follows, 'One of the greatest forms of (jihad) is speaking a word of justice in front of a tyrannical ruler.'*

astray amongst them and setting them aright, since it is they who will ultimately have to endure the consequences of their actions. It is this process that brings balance to society.

When the True Lord set out a Divine Way of Guidance to regulate the lives of His creation, He did so for their own good. He is the source of good but does not Himself derive any benefit from it. If every person in creation were to have a heart the like of that of the most Allah-fearing person amongst them, that would not increase Allah's kingdom in any way whatsoever.⁽¹⁾

Then He created mankind, assigned them their life's purpose, and gave them laws to protect them and keep them safe. He is just like the toolmaker who constructs a tool with a particular purpose in mind and then provides instructions and rules on how to keep it in good working order. Like, for example, someone who makes washing machines who, having seen how exhausting it can be for women to wash clothes by hand produced a machine to perform that task for them. Tools or machines are always made to fulfil a predetermined purpose, not aimlessly. You will not find any toolmaker who makes a tool without a purpose in mind and then asks people to find out some way of utilising it after it has already been made.

Therefore, world's failure lies in human beings relying on themselves to work out what it is they should be doing and with what laws they should be governed, forgetting that both they themselves and the world are the constructs of Allah *the Almighty* and that it is always the Constructor who decides for what His constructs are.

The True Lord assigned us a task before even calling upon us to fulfil it. If you want proof, then look to the words of your Lord: 'The Most Gracious has imparted this Quran [unto man]. He has created man.' (*ar-Rahman*: 1-3)

(1) *This is a part of a long Qudsi Hadith . It is narrated by Muslim in his Sahih (2577) in Kitab Al-Birr wa As-Sila; by Ahmad in Musnad (5/154, 177) on the authority of Abu Dharr. The wording of the (Hadith) is as follows, 'O my slaves, if the first of you and the last of you, the jinn amongst you and the men, were all to have a heart the like of that of the most Allah-fearing person amongst you, that would not increase my kingdom in any way whatsoever. O my slaves, if the first of you and the last of you, the jinn amongst you and the men, were all to have a heart the like of that of the most immoral person amongst you, that would not decrease from my kingdom in any way.'*

The True Lord, before even creating man, laid out a Divine Way of Guidance for him in the Noble Quran, assigning him his task and setting out the laws by which he would be protected, as is the case with any other creator who assigns a purpose to his machine before embarking upon its construction. If, however, something were to go wrong with the machine, then we would have to either return it to its maker or closely follow the instructions for using it properly and safely. Since Allah *the Almighty* is the Ultimate Creator, He is also the One Who knows what is right for creation and how its well-being may be preserved. Read His words: 'How could it be that He who has created [all] should not know [all]? Yea, He alone is unfathomable [in His wisdom], all-aware!' (*al-Mulk*: 14) and His Words: '...and if you are at variance over any matter, refer it unto Allah and the Apostle...' (*an-Nisa*': 59).

So, the bane of human society lies first in the fact that it wants to assign a task to what has been created by Allah *the Almighty* trying to interfere in a creation that was not its own; and second is the fact that when its societies go corrupt, it tries to come up with its own laws to reform them. Do we think that Allah *the Almighty* has left us without a Divine Way of Guidance or that He has left us without the necessary laws to ensure our well-being?

In the same way, we, when something goes wrong with one of our machines, we run straight to the engineer or mechanic to get him to fix the fault, our exemplar, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* when he found himself in difficulty, would run straight to his Lord and stand before Him in prayer.

The mechanic uses something material to fix its material fault. As for the True Lord, He is unseen and so when He fixes you, He fixes you using the law of the unseen, meaning that you do not know exactly how He has fixed you. The important thing for you is that when you have gone before your Lord and Creator, you come back content, light of heart and in good spirits.

The True Lord says to His Messenger: '...and defer not to the deniers of the truth and the hypocrites...' (*al-Ahzab*: 1) because they are the people who practise immorality and benefit from corruption, bringing them of necessity into direct conflict with the Truth and the Divine Way of Guidance. The basis

of all corruption in existence is man's desire to take away good from someone else and to build his fortune on the backs of others. Then, whenever anyone comes along striving to redress the balance, they lie in ambush for him in order to stop him since what he is calling for goes against their best interests.

Allah *the Almighty* makes it clear that in the course of the procession of Messengers that came throughout the ages, no Messenger was ever sent without enemies or people who resisted and denied him. He *the Almighty* however, did make it in His Destiny that His Messengers always have the final victory, as He says in the Quran: '...for, long ago has Our word gone forth unto Our servants, the message-bearers, that, verily, they – they indeed – would be succoured, and that, verily, Our hosts – they indeed – would [in the end] be victorious!' (*as-Saffat*: 171-173)

So then, He *the Almighty* wants us to go straight along His Path and implement His Divine Way of Guidance while the people of immorality and corruption want us to deviate from and go astray. Read Allah's Words: 'And [know] that this is the way leading straight unto Me...' (*al-An'am*: 153) meaning that the way is completely and absolutely straight so, is there anyone amongst you who can find even the slightest curve or bend in it? He *the Almighty* also says: '...follow it, then, and follow not other ways, lest they cause you to deviate from His way.' (*al-An'am*: 153)

There is only one straight path. Truth has only one way, while falsehood and corruption have many. Our Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* alerted⁽¹⁾ us to this fact when he drew a single straight line for his Companions on either side of which he drew other lines and then recited the verse: 'And [know] that this is the way leading straight unto Me: follow it, then, and follow not other ways, lest they cause you to deviate from His way...' (*al-An'am*: 153).

(1) 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud narrated that Messenger Muhammad Allah's peace and blessings be upon him drew a line in the ground with his hand and then said, 'This is the Way of Allah which is straight.' Then he drew (lines) to the right and left of it and said, 'Every single one of these ways has a devil which calls people to it.' Then he recited, 'And [knows] that this is the way leading straight unto Me...' (*al-An'am*: 153). It is narrated by Ahmad in Musnad (1/465) and by Al-Hakim in Al-Mustadrak (2/318) and he classified it as authentic.

In Geometry, a straight line is the shortest distance between two points. So, for example, if an engineer, when making a straight road between two cities, were to deviate at the beginning of the road by only a few centimetres from the right direction, he would end up at a point many miles away from his intended destination.

A single straight path shortens the distance and makes your journey easy, whereas many little paths thwart all your efforts and make your journey long and difficult. That is why people say to each other in Egyptian dialect (*ta'al dughri*) which literally means 'Come by the straightest route' and (*balash laff wa dawaran*) or 'Say it without detours and evasions'. That is also why your Lord says to you: 'And [know] that this is the way leading straight unto Me: follow it, then, and follow not other ways...' (*al-An'am*: 153)

If the path of truth is one, then the paths of misguidance are many: some made corrupt by money, some by women and some by power and influence, etc.

So whenever a Messenger is sent by Allah *the Almighty* to curb their excesses, these people automatically rise up against him. That is why the True Lord alerts His Prophet to the fact that the first stage of piety (*taqwa*) is being fearfully conscious of Allah *the Almighty* Alone and then not deferring to the deniers of the truth and the hypocrites, since they are the ones who want to take you to evil while Allah *the Almighty* only wants good for you.

The fact that Allah *the Almighty* says, '...and defer not to the deniers of the truth and the hypocrites...' (*al-Ahzab*: 1) also implies that there is nothing with deferring to other than them. So it is fine to follow the opinion or counsel of another believer in any matter for which a direct order from Allah *the Almighty* has not come down. This was why when Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* took up his position on the battlefield at *Badr*, he did so based on the opinion of the great Companion Al-Hubab ibn Al-Mundhir.⁽¹⁾

(1) *He was Al-Hubab ibn Al-Mundhir ibn Al-Jamuh Al-Ansari As-Sulami. Ibn Sa'd and others said of him, 'He was present at Badr and his (kunya) was Abu 'Umar.' Ibn Sa'd said, 'He died during the Caliphate of 'Umar when he was more than 50 years old.' See Al-I'saba, 1/316.*

When he *peace and blessings be upon him* had halted earlier in a different place, Al-Hubab had said to him, 'O Messenger of Allah! Is this field where we are now a field that Allah *the Almighty* has revealed to you, or is it a matter of strategy in war?' And then, when Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had confirmed that it was a matter of strategy in war, Al-Hubab told him that where they were was not the place to stay and that they should move to another more strategic place.⁽¹⁾

On another occasion, when Salman Al-Farisi⁽²⁾ *Allah be pleased with him* suggested to the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* that he should dig a trench, he *peace and blessings be upon him*, acted upon his suggestion. The legal principle states that it is not permissible to use opinion in a matter for which there is an existing text. If, however, there is no existing text regarding the matter, then there is nothing to prevent you taking the advice of believers who counsel you to what is good. Even Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* himself was not forbidden or prevented from accepting the advice of other Muslims or from asking them their opinion.

People, however, do differ about whether the advice received by a ruler in consultation is binding upon him or not. The answer may be found in the words of Allah *the Almighty* : '...And take counsel with them in all matters of public concern; then, when you have decided upon a course of action, place your trust in Allah *the Almighty* ...' (*Al-Imran*: 159).

(1) Ibn Hisham narrated this in his *Sira* (2/259) and attributed it to Ibn Ishaq. The complete version is as follows: 'Al-Hubab ibn Al-Mundhir said, 'O Messenger of Allah, this is not the place to stop. Take us on until we reach that well which is closest to the enemy. Then let us halt there, stop the wells that lie beyond that point, and build a cistern which we will fill up with water. Then, when we fight the enemy, we will have water to drink and they will have none.' Then the Messenger said Allah's *peace and blessings be upon him* 'I made the decision based on opinion.'"

(2) Salman Al-Farisi *Allah be pleased with him* was one of the foremost Companions: he originally came from a family of Magians in Isfahan and lived for a very long time. He wandered the land in search of the truth and read the books of the Persians, Byzantines, and Jews. Then he became Muslim and believed in Messenger Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* who said about him, 'Salman is one of us, the household of Prophet Muhammad.' He was made governor over Al-Mada'in and lived there until he died in 36 AH. He used to weave together palm leaves and eat barley bread bought with money he had earned. See Az-Zirikli, *Al-ALam*, 3/112.

The ruler may listen to advice and weigh up and compare the views of his advisers, but in the end he alone must make the final decision; Allah says, '...When you have decided upon a course of action...' (*Al-Imran*: 159) i.e. when you have decided on your own.

Today, in the modern world, we see many organisations asking people to give them their opinions on a particular topic. However, when they come to make their final decisions, they do not give precedence to the side chosen by their president. This is completely wrong.

The different opinions are only there to light the way for the president, to give him as clear a perspective as possible. Then he must make the final decision and that is only logical considering the fact that, by voting him in, you have already borne witness to his superiority in that regard. Thus, it is the president's support that gives one view a greater weight than another.

There is a difference between the processes of consultation and authorisation. When a president authorises a particular person or committee to look into a particular matter or come to a decision, then it is they who make the decision and the president merely rubberstamps what they have decided, they make the decision because the president has delegated his authority to them. So the process of authorisation permits you to make the decision yourself, whereas the process of consultation only permits you to relay your point of view to the person in charge.

On the occasion of the battle of Uhud, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not want to go out to battle. But when he consulted with his Companions, they indicated to him their desire to go out to the battle because of their might and burning desire to see Allah's Religion victorious. The Companions continued to advise him *peace and blessings be upon him* to fight until he donned the garb of battle and got himself ready for war at which point they changed their minds and told him *peace and blessings be upon him* that he had been right in the first place when he said that they should not go out to war. So he *peace and blessings be upon him* said to them, 'It is not for any Prophet who has donned the garb of war...' ⁽¹⁾ then whatever

(1) It is narrated on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas that when the idolaters came to (fight) Messenger Muhammad Allah's *peace and blessings be upon him* on the day of Uhud, it =

happened at Uhud was by the Will of Allah and the Muslims ended up not being victorious.

As for Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* he ignored the advice of his counsellors during the *Ridda* wars (wars of apostasy) and decided against them⁽¹⁾ saying, 'By Allah I will fight them even if (they withhold from me) but a single atom they used to give Messenger Muhammad.'

Then he fought and was victorious, and the credit was all his for saving Allah's Religion from the strife that had all but destroyed it.

The fact that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was chosen by Allah meant that it was his opinion that swayed the decision one way or the other. So, he *peace and blessings be upon him* would listen to other people's opinions and advice and then do that which seemed right to him.

Know too that there is a difference between disbelievers/deniers of the truth and hypocrites. There are certain terms that each one of us should know and understand what they refer to: they are *iman* (belief), *kuf'r* (disbelief), *nifaq* (hypocrisy) and *jahd* (denial).

Belief: Every one of us has a heart wherein his intentions are made, and a body whereby those intentions are expressed in words or actions. It is as a poet once said:

= was his opinion that they, i.e. Muslims should stay in Medina and fight them there. However, the people who had not been present at Badr said to him, 'Go out with us, Messenger of Allah and let us fight them at Uhud' wanting to get something of the reward that the people of Badr had received. They continued to plead with Messenger Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* until he donned the garb of war whereupon they repented and said, 'Messenger of Allah, remain here. You were right in your opinion.' But he *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* replied, 'After a Prophet dons the garb of war, he should not take it off until after Allah the Almighty has decided the outcome between him and his enemies.' It is narrated by Al-Hakim in *Al-Mustadrak* (2/129) and he said about it, 'Its chain of narrated is (Sahih) although neither of them Al-Bukhari and Muslim had narrated it.'

- (1) Al-Bukhari said in his *Sahih*; *Kitab Al-'I'tisam*; chapter on Allah's Words, '...And take counsel with them in all matters of public concern...' (Al-'Imran: 159). Fath Al-Bari, 13/338, Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* paid no regard to their counsel because of a legal judgment he had heard directly from Messenger Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* about those who separate prayer from zakat and alter the rulings of the religion. Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'If someone changes his religion then kill him.'

The place of speech is the heart,

The tongue was only created to give expression to what lies therein.

So when there is truth in the heart and a person's tongue and limbs speak and act in accordance with that truth, then that is belief.

But when it is upon falsehood that a person's heart and tongue agree, then that is disbelief. That is why we say that the disbelief of a disbeliever is perfectly logical from his point of view since he is merely giving voice to what is in his heart, but is completely illogical with respect to the truth, since he is denying it with both his heart and tongue. Therefore, there is no difference between what is in his heart and what comes out of his mouth.

Hypocrisy, on the other hand, is when a person holds disbelief in the heart, but keeps that secret and proclaims belief with his tongue. In other words, the hypocrite is the one whose words are not compatible with what is in his heart. The hypocrite is neither logical with respect of view of himself nor with respect of view to the truth, and that is why he is considered worse than the disbeliever and is in the lowest level of the fire. This is the reason that, when our master, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* asked his people to say, 'There is no god but Allah', only a small group of believers said it and the vast majority of people refused. They refused because they knew what it meant. Otherwise they would have simply uttered those words and there would never have been any confrontation between belief and disbelief. The fact that they refused proves that they understood the true significance of the words and knew what would become required of them upon uttering them.

Denial (*jahd*) is the complete opposite of hypocrisy. It is when a person accepts the truth in his heart and has belief, but finds himself unable to affirm that truth with his tongue. It is to these people that Allah *the Almighty* is referring when He says, 'and in their wickedness and self-exaltation they rejected them, although their minds were convinced of their truth...' (*an-Naml*: 14).

Then, after a long and hard debate with Messenger Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* they said, '...O Allah! If this be indeed the truth from Thee, then rain down upon us stones from the skies, or inflict [some other] grievous suffering on us!' (*al-Anfal*: 32) rather than asking Allah *the Almighty* to guide them to the truth, showing that they already knew it.

Then, after they had made their allegations that the Quran was nothing but sorcery, myths, legends and so on and so forth, their falsehood vanished, and their denial was exposed by their own words. Allah *the Almighty* quotes what they had to say in the Quran, 'And they say, too, "Why was not this Quran bestowed from on high on some great man of the two cities?"' (*az-Zukhruf*: 31)

What they are saying is that the Quran is incontrovertible – it is the truth. We would have believed in it if it had not been revealed to this man, but had rather been revealed to one of the great men of Mecca or Medina. This proves that they believed in the Quran, which necessitates believing in Prophet Muhammad.

It is well known in whose ears the first call to Islam was given – it was to the disbelievers of Mecca, the leaders of Quraysh and of all the other tribes of the Arabian Peninsula. Quraysh were held in high esteem by all of the Arabs and their words were respected on account of the way they served and looked after the pilgrims on the *Hajj*, and on account of the location of their city, slap bang in the middle of the great trade routes of the north and south.

So then, Islam did not choose a weak people to direct its first call towards but chose the leaders and rulers. Despite that fact, however, Allah *the Almighty* did not want Islam to be victorious in Mecca because, if it had been victorious then and there, then people could have said that Islam was just a pretext for Quraysh to form a group around one of its own which might enable it to rule over the world, not just the Arab peninsula.

This is why Quraysh hastened to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* when he first invited them to enter Islam and said, 'Muhammad, if it is a kingdom that you want, then we will make you our king. If it is money that you want, then we will collect enough money for you to make you the richest person amongst us...' He *peace and blessings be upon him* gave them his famous reply, 'By Allah even if you were to place the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left in exchange for my abandoning this affair before Allah *the Almighty* Himself has brought it victory or I have perished in the attempt, I would not abandon it.'⁽¹⁾

(1) *Ibn Hisham attributed this in his Sira (1/266), to Ibn Ishaq. He narrated that Quraysh came to Abu Taleb and said, 'O Abu Taleb, you are one of our elders and hold a =*

So, although Allah *the Almighty* wanted the people of power and influence in Mecca to be those who heard the first call of Islam, by making Medina the place in which He gave victory to His religion, He was able to show the entire world that it was belief in Muhammad that created the strong partisanship that built up around him and not strong partisanship around Muhammad that led to belief in him.

There is another meaning that we may understand from Allah's words, '...and defer not to the deniers of the truth and the hypocrites...' (*al-Ahzab*: 1). It means that there is no obedience due to those who are neither disbelievers nor hypocrites when they issue a command contradicting one already given by Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Anyone who believes in Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* will take from him.

This is why it is such a huge mistake for you to say, 'How could Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* have done such-and-such?' That is you are finding fault with his actions and seeking to put them right. What right do you have to pass judgement on Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*? How can you, a believer, set yourself up as the yardstick against which the actions of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* are measured?

Like those, for example, who object to Messenger Muhammad taking more than one wife, even going so far as to criticise him. It is as if they were instigating legal proceedings against him! How can we remonstrate with Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* for doing this when Allah *the Almighty* Himself neither remonstrated with him nor stripped him of his Mission? No, on the contrary, Allah *the Almighty* approved of the action of His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* and gave it His blessing, so

= position of honour amongst us. We have already asked you to ask your nephew to desist, but you have not done so; by Allah *the Almighty* we can no longer bear the insults to our fathers, the mocking of our dreams and the dishonoring of our gods, so make him stop or we will fight both of you until one of us is destroyed. So Abu Taleb sent for Messenger Muhammad Allah's *peace and blessings be upon him* and said to him, 'Nephew, your people came and said such-and-such to me. So spare me and yourself and do not make me carry a burden that I am unable to bear.' Whereupon the Messenger Allah's *peace and blessings be upon him* gave the response mentioned above.

do not make yourself the standard against which you measure Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. It is Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who is the standard and yardstick against which we must measure our own actions. The first thing we must ask ourselves before embarking upon an action is, 'Did Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* do this thing or not?' If the answer is that he did do it, then we do it as well.

It was because of this that Abu Bakr As-Siddiq *Allah be pleased with him* came to be called As-Siddiq 'the Truthful One': when the people of Quraysh told him that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said that he had travelled to the *Bayt Al-Maqdis* in Jerusalem and back in a single night, Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* replied, 'If that is what he says then he is speaking the truth.'⁽¹⁾

Another reason the True Lord forbade His Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* from deferring to the deniers of truth and the hypocrites was that he might be fully aware of their true nature and the enmity which they held towards him. Allah *the Almighty* was telling his Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* that their advice could not be trusted and that he must treat with suspicion anything which they told him to do or not to do. How could we even think that such a people could be sincere in the advice they gave to a man who had come to strip away their power and destroy their religion?

Even supposing that these people were sincere in their advice towards you because you were from Quraysh and they wanted to see you succeed, still their advice would be lacking in knowledge or wisdom, while Allah *the Almighty* is Wise and All Knowing. So, no matter how sincere they are with you, avoid drawing any parallels between being obedient to them and being obedient to Allah *the Almighty*.

Likewise, we note that when the people actually did ask Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* for something, it was as if Allah

(1) This story is mentioned by Al-Qurtubi in his *Tafsir* (5/4012). The completion of the story is as follows, 'Then he was asked, 'Do you believe him before even hearing him yourself?' so he replied, 'Where are your brains! I believe him when he tells me of heaven so how could I not believe him when he tells of Jerusalem? Heaven is much further away.'

the Almighty had already alerted him to the disobedience and contradiction inherent in their requests before they had actually made them. Obedience requires that there be someone who obeys and someone who is obeyed.

They wanted themselves to be the ones obeyed and Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to be the obedient one, the one who followed their orders. But this is the reverse of how things should be – how could it be like this when Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* only came to legislate laws for people that they then obey? He *peace and blessings be upon him* should be the one giving the orders and he should be the one who is obeyed.

It was as if Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* were saying to these people, 'How could I place you on the same level as Allah *the Almighty*?' And that is proved by the following account: Having been given safe passage by Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* Abu Sufyan, 'Ikrima ibn abu Jahl, Al-Walid ibn Al-Mughira, Al-A'war As-Sulami and a delegation from Thaqif came to Medina and met with 'Abdullah ibn 'Ubayy and 'Abdullah ibn Sa'ad ibn abu As-Sarh. Then they came before the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* and said to him, 'Muhammad, leave our gods, *al-Lat*, *al-'Uzza* and *Manat* alone and bear witness that their intercession on our behalf is accepted by Allah *the Almighty*. We want to maintain our position of nobility and dignity among the Arabs, so if you leave us our gods for a year and acknowledge them, we will leave you be with your Lord.'⁽¹⁾

But Allah forbade him from that, saying, '...defer not to the deniers of the truth and the hypocrites...' (*al-Ahzab*: 1) since you should never back down in their presence or fall back into their ways. If you were to have deferred to them then you would be submitting to their illusory authority and giving them

(1) *It is transmitted by Al-Wahidi in Asbab An-Nuzuul (p. 26) that the words of Allah: 'Say: 'O you who deny the truth! [1] I do not worship that which you worship [2]' (al-Kafirun: 1-2) were revealed about a group of men from Quraysh who said to Messenger Muhammad: 'O Muhammad, come! If you follow our religion then we will follow yours. Worship our gods for a year and then we will worship yours for a year. Then, if what you have brought is better than what we have, we will have got some share of it along with you; and if what we have is better than what you have brought, you will have got some share of it along with us.' Messenger Muhammad Allah's peace and blessings be upon him replied, 'Allah forbid that I associate anyone with Him!'*

the chance to tell everyone that Muhammad obeys their commands, thereby making them those who guide and you the guided.'

Given that this command from Allah *the Almighty* to His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* that he not defer to these people came at a time when they were the leaders and rulers of the land and Islam was still new and in need of truces with its enemies. Some people might ask, 'Why did Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* not conclude a truce with these people thereby making the call of Islam more robust? Were they not the leaders of the people, holding a position of power and influence amongst them?' He did not do so because such a truce would be completely at odds with the logic of reason and truth – it is not acceptable for Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to depend on anyone but Allah *the Almighty* for help. This is why Allah *the Almighty* addresses him in one of the verses following this one, saying: 'And place thy trust in Allah *the Almighty* [alone]: for none is as worthy of trust as Allah *the Almighty*.' (*al-Ahzab*: 3)

Then He says: '...for Allah *the Almighty* is truly all knowing, wise.' (*al-Ahzab*: 1) Knowledge is not the same as wisdom: knowledge is knowing the issues whereas wisdom is knowing where and when to apply them. So knowledge on its own is not enough. These two attributes are complementary and inseparable from one another as is shown by Allah's words: '...the best [man] that you could hire is one who is [as] strong and worthy of trust [as he]!' (*al-Qasas*: 26)

A strong person will not protect you if he is unworthy of trust, while the trustworthiness of the trustworthy person will be of no use to you if he is weak. It was this fact that led a Commander of the Faithful to complain to one of his confidantes from Iraq about the people of Iraq, saying, 'If I were to put a strong man over them, they would go against him, forcing him to act like a tyrant and take away their rights; and if I were to put a weak man over them, they would treat him with scorn and contempt.' The man replied, 'If you were to put a strong man over them, then his strength would weigh for you in the balance, while his tyranny and corruption would only weigh against him.' So the Commander of the Faithful said, 'For as long as you remain aware of this, you will be the only one I place in authority over them.' So knowledge marks

all the good matters, while wisdom is putting things where they belong and using matters in the situations where they fit best.

Then the True Lord says:

وَاتَّبِعْ مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيْكَ مِن رَّبِّكَ ۚ إِنَّكَ أَنتَ اللَّهُكَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا ﴿٢﴾

**Follow what your Lord reveals to you:
God is well aware of all your actions [2]
(The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 2)**

Here we notice that Allah *the Almighty* has placed a prohibition in the midst of two commands. So, between the two commands 'O Prophet? Remain conscious of Allah...' (*al-Ahzab*: 1) and 'Follow what your Lord reveals to you...' (*al-Ahzab*: 2). Allah *the Almighty* places the prohibition, '...and defer not to the deniers of the truth and the hypocrites...' (*al-Ahzab*: 1). It is completely natural for this prohibition to fall between these two commands. By remaining fearfully conscious of Allah *the Almighty* you champion the cause of truth causing pain and consternation to the people whose power derives from falsehood and corruption. It is inevitable that they will then come to you and whisper in your ear to make you turn aside from the revelation given to you by your Lord, so you must go back to what has come to you through revelation and follow but that.

Revelation or inspiration is informing about a matter which is hidden and unknown: if the matter had been public knowledge, then informing about it would not be termed revelation. There are many ways in which Allah *the Almighty* communicates with his creation by means of revelation, including the following: Revealing things to the inanimate objects of the World and inspiring them, since it is within Allah's power to speak directly to them such as when He said about the earth, 'on that Day will she recount all her tidings, as your Lord will have inspired her to do.' (*az-Zalzala*: 4-5)

Revealing things to animals such as when He said about the bees: 'And [consider how] your Lord has inspired the bee: "Prepare for thyself dwellings in mountains and in trees, and in what [men] may build [for thee by way of hives].'" (*an-Nahl*: 68)

Revealing things to human beings, who are neither Prophets nor Messengers, such as when He said, 'and [remember the time] when I inspired the white-garbed ones: 'Believe in Me and in My Apostle!' (*al-Ma'ida*: 111) and when He said, 'And so, [when he was born,] We inspired [thus] the mother of Moses: 'Suckle him [for a time]...' (*al-Qasas*: 7).

This is revelation in the wider sense of the word. As for revelation in its specific sense, that is limited to the Messengers whom Allah *the Almighty* sent from Himself to creation and there are a number of ways in which it occurs. Sometimes it is by means of an inspiration that comes directly to the heart, sometimes by means of incorporeal voice from an unknown source and sometimes by means of a messenger coming down from among the angels. Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And it is not given to mortal man that Allah should speak unto him otherwise than through sudden inspiration, or [by a voice, as it were,] from behind a veil, or by sending an apostle...' (*ash-Shura*: 51).

As for the Noble Quran, it did not come to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by means of sudden inspiration or a voice speaking to him from behind a veil. No, the Quran was brought down to him by an angel and it is thus that the entire Quran was revealed.

This form of revelation inevitably requires the human messenger to be in close proximity to the angelic messenger. As both types of beings have their own unique natural forms, it becomes necessary for one of two things to happen when they meet: the human must either be brought up to the level of the angel so that he can receive the message directly or the angel must be brought down to the level the human so that he can dictate it to him.

That is why, in the *Hadith*, when Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* visited Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in his assembly, he took on the form of a man in order to teach the people the matters of their religion.⁽¹⁾

(1) *This Hadith is narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim on the authority of 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab Allah be pleased with him that, while Messenger Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him was in the company of his Companions, Jibril (Gabriel) peace be upon him came to him in the form of a man whose clothes were exceedingly white, whose hair was exceedingly black, upon whom no trace of travel could be seen and whom none of us knew.*

This is why, whenever Jibril *peace be upon him* brought the revelation to the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* He *peace and blessings be upon him* would start to tremble and shake, and sweat would drip from his forehead, as soon as the revelation came over him, a necessary side-effect of the encounter between the angelic and human forms. The process was so exhausting for Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that he used to cry out to his wife Khadija *Allah be pleased with her* 'Wrap me up! Wrap me up!' and 'Cover me! Cover me!'

If revelation came to the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* while he was next to one of his Companions, with his knee resting upon his, the Companion would feel as if the weight of an entire mountain were pressing down upon his knee.⁽¹⁾ If it came to him while he was riding upon his camel, it would let out a groan of protest at the weight it suddenly had to bear.⁽²⁾ This is why, after each period of revelation, there would a period without revelation to give Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* time to recover from his exertions. When his tiredness went, only the sweetness of the revelation would remain, making him long for it to come to him once again.

After that, his Lord addressed him, saying: 'Have we not opened up thy heart, and lifted from thee the burden, that had weighed so heavily on thy back? And [have We not] raised thee high in dignity?' (*ash-Sharh*: 1-4)

When a goal is one which is lofty and exalted, then no effort or exertion seems too great to bring it about. Then, after his longing for it has been aroused, the revelation came back to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. His Lord addressed him, saying: '...for, indeed, the life to come will be better for thee than this earlier part [of thy life]! And, indeed, in time will thy Lord grant thee [what thy heart desires], and thou shalt be well pleased.' (*ad-Duha*: 4-5)

(1) *Zayd ibn Thabit* said, 'Allah the Almighty sent down the revelation to his Messenger Allah's *peace and blessings be upon him*, while his thigh was resting upon mine, whereupon his thigh became so heavy that I was afraid that it might crush my own.' It is transmitted by Al-Bukhari without a chain of narrations.

(2) Asma' bint *Zayd* is narrated to have said, 'I was holding on to the reins of *Al-'Adba*', the she-camel of Messenger Muhammad Allah's *peace and blessings be upon him* when the whole of *Al-Ma'ida* chapter was revealed to him and was so heavy that it almost caused the forelegs of the camel to buckle.' It is narrated by Imam Ahmad in his *Musnad* (6/455).

So, it has been established that the Quran was revealed by means of an angelic messenger, not by means of an inspiration coming upon to the heart or a voice from behind a veil. Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And thus, too, [O Muhammad,] have We revealed to you a life-giving message, [coming] at Our behest. [Ere this message came unto thee,] you did not know what revelation is or what faith [implies] (*ash-Shura*: 52)

But the revelation mentioned in the verse: 'Follow what your Lord reveals to you...' (*al-Ahzab*: 2) is from whom? It is '...your Lord...' (*al-Ahzab*: 2). Allah *the Almighty* did not say, for example, that revelation is from the Lord of creation, even though He is indeed the Lord of all creation. But since Muhammad is the master of creation, it is all the more appropriate that the One Who is his Lord be the Lord of all the rest of creation as well. The words 'your Lord' (*rabbuka*) indicate to love and concern that Allah *the Almighty* has for his Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*. He will never disappoint him, shows that the connection He has with His Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* is for the good of him and his community.

Then He says: '...Allah is well aware of all your actions.' (*al-Ahzab*: 2) Truly aware is the one whose knowledge of something extends even to its most minute details, the expert in other words. That is why we say, 'Ask the people of expertise', in other words, 'Do not ask the people of superficial knowledge.' The 'truly Aware' is the One from whom absolutely nothing is hidden.

You will notice that Allah *the Almighty* finished the previous verse with the words: '...for Allah *the Almighty* is truly all-knowing, wise' (*al-Ahzab*: 1) meaning that He has full knowledge of all the laws He laid down for you and the wisdom to put every matter in its rightful place; and finished this one with the Words: '... Allah is well aware of all your actions.' (*al-Ahzab*: 2) meaning He is fully aware of how you responded to the laws He laid down for you, whether with acceptance or rejection. So, your Lord does not lay down laws for you and then leave you be unmonitored, but remains fully aware of everything you do and even of every intention that comes to your heart.

'Awareness' refers to utmost knowledge, to knowledge that is broad and wide-ranging. this meaning of awareness is clear from what Allah *the Almighty*

says in the story of Luqman *peace be upon him*: ““O my dear son,” [continued Luqman,] “verily, though there be aught of but the weight of a mustard-seed, and though it be [hidden] in a rock, or in the skies, or in the earth, Allah will bring it to light: for, behold, Allah is unfathomable [in His wisdom], all-aware.” Allah is well aware of all your actions.’ (*Luqman*: 16)

So ‘All-awareness’ indicates knowledge that is so wide-ranging that it does not overlook even the smallest detail, while *lutf* ‘unfathomable’ is penetrating deep into the heart of things no matter how slight or insignificant, and that is why we say that the smaller something is *latufa*, the greater its capacity for violence.

It is as if the True Lord is saying to His Messenger, ‘Set your heart at rest and know that, no matter how much you suffer at the hands of your enemies and no matter how much they plot and conspire against you, your Lord will always be with you and will never ever abandon you. Your enemies are part of my creation –it is I who gave them their capacity to think and their capacity to plot. It is I who will ensure that the victory is yours at every stage in their plotting against you. That is why they never got the better of you in any debate and that is why they failed in the attempt when they made up their minds to kill you and act as one single man, all of them striking you down together thereby ensuring that the responsibility for your death be divided up amongst all the tribes. You walked away from them safely, leaving them far behind. Then, when they tried to use magic and jinn against you, I informed you of their plans and did not abandon you to their plots.’

Then the True Lord says:

وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا ﴿٣﴾

Put your trust in God: God is enough to trust [3]
(The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 3)

Beware of thinking that any of these people can help you or bring you benefit or harm. Do not have a good opinion of their commands or prohibitions and do not place any trust in them whatsoever. Rather, only place your trust in Allah *the Almighty*. However, here we must, draw a distinction between two

words: *Tawakkul* and *Tawakul*. *Tawakkul* is when you, acknowledging your incapacity to do something, go to someone who is more capable and rely on him to do it for you. It is an important condition of *Tawakkul* however that you try every means available to you before acknowledging your incapacity. *Tawakkul*, then, is that combination of outward action and inward trust.

Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* gave us a good example of this when He Allah's *peace and blessings be upon him* drew a parallel between the one who places his trust in Allah *the Almighty* and the bird. He *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'If you were to place your trust in Allah *the Almighty* with the trust due to Him, then He would provide for you in the way that He provides for the birds – they leave their nests in the morning with an empty stomach and come back in the evening with a full one.'⁽¹⁾

Tawakul, on the other hand, is when you do nothing, rejecting the means granted to you by Allah *the Almighty* making no use of them and saying that you are 'placing your trust in Allah *the Almighty*'. That is not placing your trust in Allah *the Almighty* – you must first try out all the means that your Lord has opened up to you. If those means prove insufficient to carry out the task, then do not despair. Keep in mind that you have a Lord who is more powerful than those means since it was He who created them. That is why we say to the many people who complain that Allah *the Almighty* did not answer their supplications, 'Yes, what you say is true. But what Allah *the Almighty* said to you is also true since it was He who granted you the means to do what you ask of Him and you ignored them. Be confident, however, that as soon as you exhaust all the means available to you and then seek refuge in your Lord, He will answer you.'

Read what Allah *the Almighty* says: '...who is it that responds to the distressed when he calls out to Him, and who removes the ill [that caused the distress]...' (*an-Naml*: 62).

The 'distressed' man is the one whose means prove insufficient to the task and do not let him carry out what it is he is trying to carry out.

(1) It is transmitted by Ahmad in *Musnad* (1/30, 52), Ibn Majah in *Sunnan* (4164), At-Tirmidhi in his *Sunnan* (2344), classified it as good and authentic, on the authority of 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab Allah be pleased with him.

This is like what happened to Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and his people when they were surrounded by Pharaoh and his troops. The people of Musa *peace be upon him* said to him, '...‘Behold, we shall certainly be overtaken [and defeated]!’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 61) Yes, they were about to be caught because they had the sea in front of them, stopping them from going forward, while the enemy behind them. This was what the people thought and this was the reality of their situation. Musa *peace be upon him*, however, had access to another way out and so he said, '...Nay indeed!' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 62), they shall not overtake us. '...My Lord is with me, [and] He will guide me!' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 62) Musa *peace be upon him* said this out of an unswerving belief and confidence that Allah *the Almighty* would answer his supplication.

To those people who complain that Allah *the Almighty* did not answer their supplications even though they had first used up every means at their disposal, we say, 'Yes, but you were not distressed or in absolute need. Rather, you made your supplication when you were already living in a state of ease, like someone who asks to live in a palace when he is already living in a flat. When your circumstances are such then you are not truly ‘distressed’.'

Then the True Lord mentions the essential thing that must be understood with respect to *tawakkul*, saying: '...for none is as worthy of trust as Allah *the Almighty*' (*al-Ahzab*: 3) In other words, it is enough for you to place your trust in Allah *the Almighty* since nothing can withstand Him and nothing is impossible for Him.

Let me tell you a true story⁽¹⁾ of something that actually happened to me. A group of us were walking along when we saw a blind man trying to cross the road, so we told one of those who were with us to go and take him by the hand and help him cross the road. Then, after he had helped him cross the road, our companion asked the blind man where he was going. He replied that he was going to number such-and-such in that street, so our companion took out ten pounds from his pocket and placed in the man's hand. When the man felt the paper of the ten-pound note in his hand, rather than turning towards the one who had given it to him, he raised his face towards the sky and exclaimed, 'Nothing is ever impossible for You.' Then he said to our companion,

(1) The story of Ash-Sheikh Ash-Sha'rawi may Allah rest his soul with the blind man.

'My boy! Take me back to the place you found me in.' The need which had driven him to make his journey had been fulfilled!

Yes, indeed! '...Allah is enough to trust.' (*al-Ahzab*: 3), since He is not reliant on means and nothing can turn him aside from what He has willed '...all that is with you is bound to come to an end, whereas that which is with Allah *the Almighty* is everlasting...' (*an-Nahl*: 96).

There is something else that you should take note of when it comes to *Tawakkul*. This is if you are going to rely absolutely on someone else to do something for you, you have to be able to guarantee that he will remain alive long enough to do it. With people, that is not possible – how can you place all your hopes and trust in a person when that person might be dead the next morning?

No, you should place your trust in no one but Allah *the Almighty* since only He is Ever Living and will never die: 'Hence, place thy trust in the Living One Who dies not, and extol His limitless glory and praise...' (*al-Furqan*: 58), by placing your trust in Him, dispense with your need of placing your trust in anyone else: '...Allah is enough to trust.' (*al-Ahzab*: 3)

Then the True Lord says:

مَا جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لِرَجُلٍ مِّنْ قَلْبَيْنِ فِيْ جَوْفِهِۦٓ وَمَا جَعَلَ أَزْوَاجَكُمُ النَّسِیِّ
تُظَاهِرُونَ مِنْهُنَّ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ وَمَا جَعَلَ أَدْعِيَاءَكُمْ أَبْنَاءَكُمْ ذَٰلِكُمْ قَوْلُكُمْ
بِأَفْوَاهِكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَقُولُ الْحَقَّ وَهُوَ يَهْدِي السَّبِيلَ ﴿٤﴾

God does not put two hearts within a man's breast. He does not turn the wives you reject and liken to your mothers' backs into your real mothers; nor does He make your adopted sons into real sons. These are only words from your mouths, while God speaks the truth and guides people to the right path [4] (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 4)

This verse is linked with those came before it since, in them, Allah *the Almighty* mentions two camps: one camp that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is commanded to obey as represented by Allah's words, 'O Prophet! Remain conscious of Allah...' (*al-Ahzab*: 1) and His Words, 'And

follow [but] that which comes unto thee through revelation from your Lord...' (*al-Ahzab*: 2). One camp that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is forbidden from obeying as represented by Allah's words, '...and defer not to the deniers of the truth and the hypocrites...' (*al-Ahzab*: 1).

So, here we stand before two camps, one representing the truth in its clearest possible form and the other representing the false. This is when our heart must make an unequivocal choice: it must either align itself fully with the side of truth or align itself fully with the side of falsehood – there is no third option. As long as you are faced with two contradictory matters that can never come together in a single place, you must give priority to the truth since 'Allah does not put two hearts within a man's breast...' (*al-Ahzab*: 4). The choice is stark and unambiguous – either truth or falsehood. It is not possible to both be fearfully consciousness of Allah *the Almighty* and to defer to the disbelievers and hypocrites since you have but one heart in your breast.

It is well known that the heart is the most important organ in the entire human body and this is clearly demonstrated if we look at the way doctors treat ill people. If the patient is suffering from a mild illness then the doctor prescribes a remedy to take orally. However, the effect of such a remedy is not immediate since it must first be assimilated into the body by means of the digestive process. If the illness is more severe, then the doctor prescribes a remedy that is injected straight into the muscle so that its effect is felt immediately; and if the illness is really bad, then he prescribes a remedy that is injected straight into the vein. Why does he do that, you might ask? He does that so that the remedy in a ready form may be inserted straight into the blood which is then pumped around the entire body by the heart, ensuring that the remedy reaches every organ in the body in the quickest possible time. So, the blood is the vehicle that carries healing properties around the body and the heart is the motor that powers it. That is why you must keep it healthy by ensuring that it is filled with truth and not corrupted by falsehood.

We have previously made it clear that it is not possible for a single space to contain two things at the same time, let alone two things that are mutually contradictory! We gave the example of an empty glass – if you want to fill

that glass with water, then you must remove the air so that the water can take its place.

The same is true in the world of meaning – it is not possible for truth and falsehood to ever come together in a single heart. It is not possible for you to dedicate one heart to truth and another to falsehood since your Creator has only given you a single heart, and has limited that heart in such a way that there is no room in it for anything but belief in Him.

It is narrated⁽¹⁾ that, among the Arabs, there lived a man by the name of Jamil ibn Asad al-Fihri ⁽²⁾ who was famed for his eloquence and intelligence and who used to boast about himself, saying, ‘I have two hearts each of which gives me an understanding of things the like of that of Muhammad.’ Henceforth, it was willed by Allah *the Almighty* that Abu Sufyan should see this man making his way home after suffering defeat at the battle of Badr. So Abu Sufyan approached him and said, ‘Jamil, how did our people do?’ (Jamil) replied, ‘Some of them were killed and some ran away.’ Then Abu Sufyan said, ‘Why is it that I see you in such a state?’ so (Jamil) replied, ‘What state are you talking about?’ Abu Sufyan said, ‘You are carrying one of your sandals in your hand and wearing the other on your foot.’ (Jamil) replied, ‘By Allah *the Almighty* I thought that both of them were on my feet!’ When he heard that, Abu Sufyan laughed out loud and said to him, ‘Where then are your two hearts?’

The heart is the pump by which blood is pumped around the body. So, if the heart is physically healthy, then nutrients and healing properties will be carried by the blood to every limb and organ in the body. Likewise, if the heart is spiritually healthy and filled with the sound doctrines of belief, then those doctrines will also be carried by the blood to every limb and organ in

(1) *The story of Jamil ibn Asad Al-Fihri who claimed to have two hearts.*

(2) *Ibn Hajr Al-'Asqalani mentioned this story in his 'Al-'Isaba fi Tamyiz As-Sahaba' (1/255) in his biography of Jamil ibn 'Asad Al-Fihri, who had the Kunya Abu Ma'mir and the nickname 'the two-hearted'. He also mentioned this story in his biography of Wahb ibn 'Umayr Al-Jumhi (6: 327). Then he said, 'Ath-Tha'labi mentioned that this story was about someone called Jamil ibn Ma'mir and that Abu Sufyan was the one who met him and asked him about his state. Ibn Al-Kalbi, on the other hand, said that the man's name was of Jamil ibn Asad, relating the story in his Tafsir with a chain of narrations from Abu Saleh from Ibn 'Abbas.'*

the body causing them to act only out of obedience to Allah *the Almighty*. Hence, the legs will only walk towards that in which there is good, the eyes will only look at that which is lawful, the ears will only listen to the best of what is said, and the tongue will only speak the truth. Every limb exudes the quality of truth that it has absorbed from the good energies found in the heart.

This is the lesson Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was trying to teach us when he said, 'In the body there is a lump of flesh which when sound the whole body is sound, and when corrupt the whole body is corrupt. (That lump of flesh) is the heart.'⁽¹⁾

Then the True Lord uses this topic of two contradictory things coming together in a single heart as a means to introduce a wider discussion about certain contradictory practices that had become prevalent amongst the Arabs. He says: 'Allah does not put two hearts within a man's breast. He does not turn the wives you reject and liken to your mothers' backs into your real mothers...' (*al-Ahzab*: 4). In the time of ignorance before Islam, it had become commonplace amongst the Arabs for men who despised their wives to say to them, 'For me, your body is like that of my mother's.' It is well known that, in terms of sexual intercourse, a mother is forbidden to her son forever. So the Arabs used to consider such pronouncements, when uttered by a husband to his wife, as being tantamount to divorce.

Then Islam came and ruled that those who performed this practice were not divorced, but did have to carry out the expiation for lying, since it is a lie to equate one's wife to one's mother. This expiation consists of doing one of three things: freeing a slave, feeding sixty poor people or fasting sixty days.⁽²⁾

(1) *This Hadith is narrated by the two Imams Al-Bukhari and Muslim, on the authority of An-Nu'man ibn Bashir Allah be pleased with him.*

(2) Allah *the Almighty* says about the expiation for (*zihar*) (equating one's wife to one's mother): '...hence, as for those who would separate themselves from their wives by saying, "Thou are as unlawful to me as my mother," and thereafter would go back on what they have said, [their atonement] shall be the freeing of a human being from bondage before the couple may touch one another again: this you are [hereby] exhorted to do - for Allah *the Almighty* is fully aware of all that you do. [3] However, he who does not have the wherewithal shall fast [instead] for two consecutive months before the couple may touch one another again; and he who is unable to do it shall feed sixty=

This topic is dealt with in the chapter of *Al-Mujadala*: 'As for those of you who [henceforth] separate themselves from their wives by saying, "Though are as unlawful to me as my mother," [let them bear in mind that] they can never be [as] their mothers: none are their mothers save those who gave them birth: and so, behold, they but utter a saying that runs counter to reason, and is [therefore] false...' (*al-Mujadala*: 2) i.e. it is a lie since one's wife is not one's mother.

The True Lord brought up one matter that was inherently contradictory and then used it, by association, to indicate the inherent contradiction in another matter. So, in the same way that it is not possible for obedience to Allah *the Almighty* and obedience to the disbelievers and hypocrites to come together in a single heart, it is also not possible for one's wife to be one's mother – she is either one's mother or one's wife, not both.

Another inherently contradictory practice that was prevalent amongst the Arabs of the time was that of adoption. If a man found a child who possessed admirable or noble qualities, he would adopt him and make him his son. He would allow him to intermingle freely with his household, receive the same share of inheritance, and enjoy all the rights of his actual biological children. This practice is just as contradictory as those that preceded it. In the same that a man may not have two hearts and one's wife may also not be one's mother, so too may an adopted boy not be a son. That is why Allah *the Almighty* says: '... nor does He make your adopted sons into real sons...' (*al-Ahzab*: 4). The Arabic word used for adopted son, *da'iy*, indicates one who is called 'Son of So-and-so' without actually being his son. Allah *the Almighty* wanted to bring an end to this practice as well as that of the practice of *zhihar* 'equating one's wife to one's mother', so he abolished them both in the Quran, telling us that we must always place things in their rightful places and imposed an expiation upon the practitioners of *zhihar* and prohibited people from adopting in the manner mentioned above.

= needy ones: this, so that you might prove your faith in Allah *the Almighty* and His Apostle. Now these are the bounds set by Allah *the Almighty* and grievous suffering [in the life to come] awaits all who deny the truth.[4]' (*al-Mujadala*: 3-4)

Whenever the True Lord wanted to abolish a practice, He would put the one entrusted with the call to Islam forward first to show people what He wanted them to do. This is why He made Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the first one to openly renounce the adoption that he himself had carried out.

As you well know, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was married to Khadija *Allah be pleased with her* a lady whom he held in great esteem. One day, Hakim ibn Hizam⁽¹⁾ bought Khadija *Allah be pleased with her* a slave called Zayd ibn Haritha⁽²⁾ *Allah be pleased with him* a man from Banu Kalb. He had been stolen away from his family by a gang of thieves and sold by them into slavery markets. Then Khadija *Allah be pleased with her* granted Zayd to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who made him his servant. Zayd, then, served Prophet Muhammad for many years. What an extraordinary honour that was to serve him *peace and blessings be upon him*!

'Zayd loved Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* deeply and adored serving him. Indeed, he said about the way the Messenger treated him, 'I served Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* for ten years and never once in that time did he ask me why I did one thing or did not do something else.'⁽³⁾

One day, a man from the Banu Kalb tribe saw Zayd *Allah be pleased with him* walking through the streets of Mecca. The man went back to his family and told them about him. So Zayd's father hurried to Mecca to search for his son and was directed to the house of Prophet Muhammad. When he came to his *peace and blessings be upon him* house, he told him about what had befallen his son and asked that he be allowed to return with him to Banu Kalb.

(1) *He is Hakim ibn Hizam ibn Khuwaylyd Al-A'sadi – Khadija bint Khuwaylid was his paternal aunt. He was born 13 years before the Year of the Elephant and was one of the leaders of Quraysh. He was a friend of Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him before his Mission and continued to have great love for him after his Mission had begun. However, he delayed embracing Islam until the Year of the Conquest of Mecca. As for the year of his death, scholars differed on appointing it. However, it is known that he was 120 years old when he died. See Al-Isaba fi Tamyiz As-Sahaba, 2/33.*

(2) *The story of Zayd ibn Haritha with the Prophet Allah's peace and blessings be upon him.*

(3) *See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 6038; a At-Tirmidhi, Sunnan, Hadith no. 2015, on the authority of A'nas ibn Malik Allah be pleased with him.*

However, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was not going to relinquish a servant who loved him as deeply as that so easily, so he asked his father to give Zayd *Allah be pleased with him* the option to choose where to go. He said, 'If Zayd chooses you, then take him, but if he chooses me, then I will be his father.' Then, when they left the matter to Zayd, he said, 'By Allah, I would not choose anyone but Prophet Muhammad.'

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* wanted to recompense Zayd for his action and devoted service, so he adopted him in the manner practised by the Arabs, thus called him 'Zayd, son of Muhammad'.⁽¹⁾

Thus, when the True Lord *the Almighty* came to abolish this practice of adoption, He began by abolishing the adoption carried out by Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* so that he might be an example for others when it came to this matter. But how did Allah actually go about doing that?

Our Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had married Zayd *Allah be pleased with him* to his cousin, Zaynab bint Jahsh *Allah be pleased with her* the sister of 'Abdullah ibn Jahsh. It had taken great pains to get Zayd and Zaynab to agree to the marriage since Zaynab ⁽²⁾ *Allah be pleased with her* had initially rejected it, saying, 'How can I marry Zayd when he is a slave and I am one of the noblewomen of Quraysh?'

Then Zaynab married him in order to please Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and to ensure that her actions accorded with Allah's saying: 'Now whenever Allah and His Apostle have decided a matter, it is not for a believing man or a believing woman to claim freedom of choice insofar as they themselves are concerned...' (*al-Ahzab*: 36).

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- (1) It is narrated by Ibn Sa'ad in *At-Tabaqat Al-Kubra* (3/40); Ibn Al-A'thir in *Usdu Al-Ghaba* (2/282); Ibn Hajar Al-'Asqalani in *Al-Isaba* (2/599). In their account, Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'When Zayd chose him instead of his father and paternal uncle, I ask those present to bear witness that Zayd is my son – he is my heir and I am his.' When his father and paternal uncle saw that, they felt glad at how things had turned out and went home.
- (2) It is narrated by Ibn Sa'd in *At-Tabaqat Al-Kubra* (10/98) that Zaynab bint Jahsh *Allah be pleased with her* said to Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* 'Messenger of Allah, I am not satisfied with him for myself since I am a widow of Quraysh.' The Messenger *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* replied, 'But I am satisfied with him for you.' Then Zayd ibn Haritha married her.'

However, after the marriage, she continued to despise him, constantly telling him that she was a noblewoman of Quraysh and he was just a slave. Zayd *Allah be pleased with him* disliked the way she treated him and found it difficult to bear, thus felt a strong desire to divorce her. So he went to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* complained to him that Zaynab was treating him badly and that he wanted to end their marriage. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* however, told him to hold onto his wife. Zayd repeated the compliant for the second time, yet received the same answer.

But when he *Allah be pleased with him* came to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* for a third time, he *peace and blessings be upon him* knew that the desire of him and his wife for divorce is a pre-ordained matter. He knew that there must be wisdom in the aversion that Allah had created between Zayd and his wife *Allah be pleased with them*—aversion that, on her part, came about as a result of her looking down upon him, and, on his part, as a result of the feelings of hurting his pride.

In order to show that Prophet Muhammad's adoption of Zayd was not valid, Allah *the Almighty* decreed that he *peace and blessings be upon him* would marry Zaynab *Allah be pleased with her* after her divorce from Zayd. It is well-known that it is forbidden for a man to marry any woman who has been previously married to his son, so the fact that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did marry Zaynab *Allah be pleased with her* meant that Zayd *Allah be pleased with him* was not really his son and so showed the whole practice of adoption to be invalid since it did not entail any of the same things that a true father/son relationship would.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* felt a little uncomfortable about marrying Zaynab *Allah be pleased with her*. He was hesitant about doing so since he was frightened that people might say that it was he who instructed Zayd to divorce Zaynab because he secretly loved her and wanted her for himself, as some orientalist say today. These are blatant lies against Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Any man who loves a woman does not tire himself out trying to get her to marry another man, nor does he tell this woman's husband, when he wants to divorce her, 'Hold onto your wife.'

Furthermore, it is not our place to guess what Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* hid within himself, falsely claiming things like he loved

her. Rather, we must only look at what Allah *the Almighty* brought to light since what he *peace and blessings be upon him* hid and what Allah *the Almighty* brought to light were one and the same, a fact which is proved by Allah's saying: 'And [thus] would you hide within yourself something that Allah was about to bring to light – for you did stand in awe of [what] people [might think], whereas it was Allah alone of whom thou should have stood in awe!' (*al-Ahzab*: 37)

So, from this, we know that what Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* hid within himself was his fear of what the Arabs might think of him, his fear that they might interpret the affair in a matter unbefitting to it.

Allah *the Almighty* says: '... [But] then, when Zayd had come to the end of his union with her,⁽¹⁾ We gave her to thee in marriage...' (*al-Ahzab*: 37). Why did Allah *the Almighty* do this? The answer is provided in the following part of the verse, '...so that [in future] no blame should attach to the believers for [marrying] the spouses of their adopted children...' (*al-Ahzab*: 37). In this way, the True Lord *the Almighty* established the principle of the invalidity of adoption through the person of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* himself.

He *the Almighty* invalidated the practice of adoption because it is a blameworthy one since it destroys the whole foundation upon which families are built. In addition, it leads to uncertainty with regards to paternity and the loss of rights. An adopted son interacts with a man's household as if he were actually his son, so we find his wife acting towards him as she would towards an actual son and his daughter acting towards him as if he were an actual brother, even though, in reality, he is nothing of the sort. No one can fail to see the levels of corruption to which this situation might lead.

It does not end there. Allah *the Almighty* made your father the direct cause of your existence, so how can you reject that causality and give it over to another to whom it does not truly belong? If you reject your father's causal

(1) *The Arabic word used for union here is (watar) which literally means desire or need. In other words, after Zayd had finished with her and left her, we gave her to you, O Prophet Muhammad, in marriage. See Ibn Kathir, Tafsir 3/491. In Al-Qamus Al-Qawim (2/343), Al-Watar is a need with which people concern themselves. Then, when they meet that need, they are said to have fulfilled their watar. In other words, they have satisfied their desire. It is also said that fulfilling one's watar with one's wife means divorcing her.*

link to you, then it becomes easy for you to also reject the initial causer, your Creator. Why would that not be the case when you have had the audacity to reject the favour He has bestowed upon you?

Furthermore, by rejecting the causal link between you and your father, you are guilty of misattribution, of making a link where one does not exist. So you link your worship to someone other than the One Worthy of worship, and ascribe creation to someone other than the Creator.

If this were not the case, then why does the True Lord *the Almighty* urge us constantly to act well towards our parents? And why does He *the Almighty* directly link worship of Him to kindness towards ones' parents more than once in His Mighty Book? He *the Almighty* says: 'And worship Allah [alone], and do not ascribe divinity, in any way, to aught beside Him. And do The good unto your parents...' (*an-Nisa*: 36) and He says: '...for your Lord has ordained that you shall worship none but Him. Do good unto [your] parents...' (*al-Isra*: 23).

They say that the reason Allah *the Almighty* does this is to show clearly that your father is the direct cause of your existence – without him you would not be here. So, when you do not treat him well, but reject his paternity over you and rebel against him, it is as if you are also rebelling against the primal cause of all existence: our Creator. Therefore, even when your parents are disbelievers, they have a right to your kindness and good treatment.

That is why, when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was asked whether a man steals while he is a believer? He replied, 'Yes', and when he was asked whether a man fornicates while he is a believer? He replied, 'Yes', but when he was asked whether a believer lies? He replied, 'No.'⁽¹⁾ The fact that crimes have been assigned *Hadd* 'legal fixed penalties' within the Islamic Law indicates that such crimes will happen within an Islamic society. Lying, however, despite the fact that it is worse than fornication, has never been assigned a *Hadd* in Islamic Law, Why is that, you might ask? That is because, according to some scholars, it is inconceivable for a Muslim to lie. No Muslim would have the effrontery to do so since, if he were known for telling lies, people might even say that his declaration of faith was a lie and consider him outside the fold of Islam.

(1) See Malik ibn Anas, *Muwatta'*, p. 990, on the authority of Safwaan ibn Salim.

Then the saying of Allah *the Almighty* '...these are...' (*al-Ahzab*: 4) refers to the aforementioned practices of equating one's wife with one's mother or calling an adopted child a son. Your wife can never be your mother since your mother is the one who gave birth to you. Similarly, no child can have more than one father; Allah says these '... are only words from your mouths...' (*al-Ahzab*: 4). Can words come from anywhere else apart from the mouth? If not, then why did Allah *the Almighty* include the words 'your mouths' in this verse? The answer is that speech is uttered by the mouth, but it originates in the heart. The tongue is nothing but an indication of what is in the heart. It is as the poet says:

The place of speech is the heart,

The tongue was only created to give an indication of what lies therein.

Speech must start out in the heart that and then uttered by the tongue. But is there any reality to that which you are saying? Is one's wife one's mother? Or is an adopted son a son? No, these are only figures of speech uttered by mouths since they do not correspond to what is in the heart nor to reality. Speech of this sort, then, is false, while truth is what the True Lord *the Almighty* himself says: '... while Allah speaks the truth and guides people to the right path...' (*al-Ahzab*: 4). The truth is established when the heart's beliefs correspond to reality.

It is possible for a person to believe something to be true in his heart even though it is not. If he then says that to someone else, the person himself is not termed a liar even though his statement was, in fact, a lie. That is because the statement corresponded to his personal belief. Therefore, there is a difference between an untrue statement and a person who himself tells lie.

The True Lord *the Almighty* deals with us according to what we believe in our hearts: if what the heart believes corresponds to reality, then the statement is true as is the speaker, but if what the heart believes does not correspond to reality, then the statement is a lie, while the speaker himself is truthful.

So, when the belief corresponds to reality, then it is true, otherwise it is a lie. However, if your heart does not believe something to be the case, then saying it is no more than uttering words with your mouths. That is a lower form of lying than saying something false which you believe to be the truth.

'The truth' mentioned in Allah's Words: '...while Allah speaks the truth...' (*al-Ahzab*: 4) means the reality that must be believed in. The inimitability present in this verse does not lie in the fact that the True Lord *the Almighty* speaks the truth, expressing the reality of things as they truly are, but lies in the fact that He *the Almighty* told us of things that came to pass in the future in the exact way that He *the Almighty* described.

Read Allah's words: '[Yet] the hosts [of those who deny the truth] shall be routed, and they shall turn their backs [in flight]!' (*al-Qamar*: 45) When the True Lord *the Almighty* says: '...while Allah speaks the truth...' (*al-Ahzab*: 4), it is as if He were saying, 'compare two types of speech: that which is uttered by the mouths, and that which expresses what is real and what one believes in. If Allah's speech is stronger than belief alone, then it is even more appropriate that it is stronger than speech which is only uttered by mouths.'

As for Allah's saying: '...and guides people to the right path...' (*al-Ahzab*: 4), it means that it is He *the Almighty* Alone who can show you the way to speak the truth.

Then the True Lord *the Almighty* says:

أَدْعُوهُمْ لِأَبَائِهِمْ هُوَ أَقْسَطُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ لَمْ تَعْلَمُوا آبَاءَهُمْ
فِإِخْوَانُكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَمَوَالِيكُمْ وَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ فِيمَا أَخْطَأْتُمْ
بِهِ وَلَٰكِنْ مَّا تَعَمَّدَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ﴿٥﴾

Name your adopted sons after their real fathers: this is more equitable in God's eyes — if you do not know who their fathers are [they are your] 'brothers-in-religion' and protégés. You will not be blamed if you make a mistake, only for what your hearts deliberately intend; God is most forgiving and merciful [5] (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 5)

When Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Name your adopted sons after their real fathers...' (*al-Ahzab*: 5), He means to name Zayd after Haritha, not after Muhammad. But how to strip Zayd *Allah be pleased with him* of such a crown? How to take away from him an honour bestowed upon him directly by Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*? Yes indeed, this was a

very difficult matter for Zayd *Allah be pleased with him*. But '... this is more equitable in Allah's Sight' (*al-Ahzab*: 5) even if not in your sights.

The expression '...more equitable...' (*al-Ahzab*: 5) is in the comparative form. It is like saying that is equitable but this is more equitable, or that is just but this is more just. Therefore, the meaning of the verse is that the choice of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to ascribe Zayd to himself was equitable and just in human terms, since he felt for him like a son and had become a father to someone who had preferred him to his own father.

The True Lord *the Almighty* however, wanted a greater form of equitability and justice for us, and that was for us to call children by their actual father's names. But '...if you do not know who their fathers are [they are your] 'brothers-in-religion' and protégés.' (*al-Ahzab*: 5) In other words, we define them by the fact that they are our brethren in faith.

The word *mawali* (protégés) refers to those servants and helpers who had, at one time, been called slaves. So even if you do not know the name of a particular boy's father, that boy is still your brother in faith and so you should choose a general name for him to indicate that fact. You might, for example, call him Zayd ibn 'Abdullah since we are all slaves of Allah *the Almighty*.

There are two ways of establishing paternity, either by means of the Law or by means of the intellect. When a man enters into a legal marriage and sires a boy, that boy is legally and biologically his son. If the wife, Allah forbid, commits adultery while 'on her husband's bed', i.e. while she is married to her husband, then the boy is legally his son even though it is not biologically his. This is because there is a legal principle that states, 'The child belongs to the bed, and the adulterer deserves stones'⁽¹⁾.

Similarly, in the case of a wife who remarries after the death of her husband or after being divorced and then gives birth six months later, there is some uncertainty as to the child's paternity since its father could have been

(1) This is from a Hadith of Prophet Muhammad narrated by Ahmad in his *Musnad* (2/ 239, 280, 386 & 409) and by Muslim in his *Sahih* (1458) in *Kitab Ar-Radaa'* – chapter on the child belonging to the bed (10) in a Hadith on the authority of Abu Hurayra *Allah be pleased with him*.

her previous husband, so the boy is considered to legally but not biologically be the son of the new husband since he was born 'on his bed'.

If the child is, Allah forbid, conceived in fornication, and born out of wedlock, then he is considered to biologically be his father's son but not legally be his. That is why such a child is referred to as illegitimate.

If you examine Allah's saying: '... this is more equitable in Allah's eyes...' (*al-Ahzab*: 5), you will see that they honour Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. If Allah *the Almighty* were to have said instead; 'it is equitable in the sight of Allah,' that would have entailed that what Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had done was tyrannical and unjust. His use of 'more equitable', however, means that what he *peace and blessings be upon him* had done was equitable and just.

Allah's saying: '... You will not be blamed if you make a mistake, only for what your hearts deliberately intend...' (*al-Ahzab*: 5) removes a great difficulty that this ruling might place us in, for we often address children who are not our own as 'my son', using that as a term of love and affection. We may also address the elderly as 'My father', using that as a term of respect. Allah *the Almighty* protects us and excuses us of any sin since, when we say those words, it is not our intention to claim that they are really our sons or our fathers, but only to show honour and respect to the old, and sympathy and affection to the young. So, you incur no sin when you err in this matter. When we say 'err', we mean that you unintentionally do what is not correct.

If our Lord *the Almighty* can remove hardship from us for the oaths in which we swear by His Essence without thought, as is stated in His saying, 'Allah will not take you to task for oaths which you may have uttered without thought, but He will take you to task for oaths which you have sworn in earnest...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 89), then how can He *the Almighty* not remove the hardship from us in this matter?

Then He *the Almighty* says: '...Allah is most forgiving and merciful.' (*al-Ahzab*: 5) We mentioned previously that when a verb is used to indicate an action of Allah *the Almighty* it has nothing at all to do with time.

Therefore, when the past tense verb (*kana*) is used in the verse '...Allah is most forgiving and merciful' (*al-Ahzab*: 5), it means that He *the Almighty* was

and still is Much Forgiving, a Dispenser of Mercy. The different tenses only apply to the actions of beings who are subject to change; and Allah *the Almighty* never changes.

For that reason, we fear changeable people for they are fickle and capricious. The people of gnosis say, 'Change for the sake of your Lord', meaning 'Change from deviancy to rectitude'. Allah *the Almighty* does not change for your sake, so you must change for His sake. Indeed, He *Glorified is He* does not change for anyone's sake. So, if He *the Almighty* was Much-Forgiving and a Dispenser of Mercy and He *the Almighty* has not changed, then He must still be Much-Forgiving and a Dispenser of Mercy.

You will notice that it is the way of the Quran to always link these two attributes, the Much-Forgiving and the Dispenser of Mercy (i.e. the Most Merciful), together. This is because forgiveness is taking away the punishment for someone's crime while mercy is giving them something good anew after the crime has been forgiven. So, for example, if you get your hands on a thief who has entered your house to steal from you, you can either call the police or forgive him and allow him to go on his way. But you also have the option to help him out by giving him what you can, to help him meet his daily needs. That is mercy: that is giving him something good after he has been forgiven.

This matter is dealt in the verse: 'Hence, if you have to respond to an attack [in argument], respond only to the extent of the attack levelled against you...' (*an-Nahl*: 126). This directive lays down for us the first foundation upon which forgiveness is built, since it is not possible for anyone to ever determine exactly what equivalence entails nor to guarantee that their retaliation will be of exactly the same degree as and no worse than the initial wrong done to them. Therefore, he falls on the side of forgiveness in order to ensure that he does not become embroiled in a new act of aggression that might require him to pay reparations.

Earlier, we related the story of the usurer who stipulated upon his debtor that if he did not pay back his loan before the agreed date, he would owe him a pound of flesh. When the debtor came late, the usurer took him to court and told the judge about the stipulations he had made on the loan. The judge upheld the stipulation but was inspired by Allah to say to the usurer, 'Yes,

you may take a pound of his flesh, but with one condition – if you take more or less than a just pound, then it will be paid for from your own flesh.' Thereupon the usurer reconsidered and retracted his stipulation.

So, at the first stage, the Islamic law makes permissible a level of retaliation that is exactly equivalent to the wrong done, in order to make it as difficult as possible to implement. Then, at the second stage, Allah *the Almighty* opens the door to pardon and forgiveness, saying: '...But if you pardon [their faults], and forbear, and forgive – then, behold, Allah will be much-forgiving, a dispenser of mercy.' (*at-Taghabun*: 14)

Then He, *Glorified Is He*, explains the matter from a different viewpoint when He *the Almighty* says: '...and hold in check their anger, and pardon their fellow men because Allah loves the doers of good.' (*Al- 'Imran*: 134)

Holding one's anger in check means not falling under the influence of the feelings of anger and rage that cause one to react vengefully but rather repressing them and placing them inside one's heart. That is the first stage. The second stage is to remove those feelings of rage and anger from your heart and to pardon and forgive the one who did you wrong.

As for the third stage, it has to do with the rank of *ihsan*– being good to the one who did you wrong and that is what we call mercy. Mercy means to bring something good to someone who is not capable of getting that good for himself, not the other way round. If someone who is incapable, like a slave, brings something good to his master, then that is not called mercy.

In all the examples we have given so far, mercy comes after forgiveness. This is the natural sequence of events, but there are some circumstances in which mercy can come before forgiveness such as, for example, when you get your hands on a thief who is robbing you and discover him to not be a hardened criminal but merely someone who has been forced by circumstances into that course of action, so your heart softens towards him and you give him something to help him out. Then you release and pardon him for what he did. In circumstances such as these, mercy comes first and then comes forgiveness.

After all, somebody might ask what happened with Zayd *Allah be pleased with him* after Allah *the Almighty* annulled his adoption: did he go back to being

Zayd ibn Haritha after being Zayd ibn Muhammad? How did he feel about the tremendous honour and blessing that he had been granted being taken away from him? Add to that the trouble he received at the hands of the rumourmongers and others who want to make him feel bitter and resentful and wanted to come between him and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the man he had preferred to his own father.

There is no doubt that the faith-filled drink that Zayd *Allah be pleased with him* had imbibed gave him the strength to remain above all of those things that were going on around him – for his heart had become infused with love of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. As well, the Words of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Now whenever Allah and His Apostle have decided a matter, it is not for a believing man or a believing woman to claim freedom of choice insofar as they themselves are concerned' (*al-Ahzab*: 36) had become deeply rooted in his soul.

Then the chapter goes on to make it clear to people that they are not more loving towards Zayd than Muhammad, since Prophet Muhammad is a greater friend to all the believers than their own selves, not just to Zayd *Allah be pleased with him*.

Allah *the Almighty* subsequently says:

الَّتِي أَوْلَىٰ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجُهُ أُمَّهَاتُهُمْ وَأُولُوا الْأَرْحَامِ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلَىٰ بِبَعْضٍ فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ إِلَّا أَنْ تَفْعَلُوا إِلَىٰ أَوْلِيَائِكُمْ مَعْرُوفًا كَانَ ذَلِكَ فِي الْكِتَابِ مَسْطُورًا ﴿٦﴾

The Prophet is more protective towards the believers than they are themselves, while his wives are their mothers. In God's Scripture, blood-relatives have a stronger claim than other believers and emigrants, though you may still bestow gifts on your protégés. All this is written in the Scripture [6] (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 6)

The meaning is that if Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is a greater friend to all the believers than their own selves, then how do you suppose it is with respect to Zayd *Allah be pleased with him*? No, you are

not more loving towards Zayd than Allah *the Almighty* nor than Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

If you can see the badge of honour which was taken away from Zayd Allah *be pleased with him* when he returned to being Zayd ibn Haritha after he had been Zayd ibn Muhammad, then why do you pretend not to also see the even greater honour that Allah *the Almighty* bestowed upon him Allah *be pleased with him* by clearly and unambiguously mentioning him by name in His Quran, the Noble Book that is recited and will be recited by every worshipper until the Day of Resurrection? What badge of honour could possibly be greater than that? Allah's saying: '... [But] then, when Zayd had come to the end of his union with her, We gave her to thee in marriage...' (*al-Ahzab*: 37) is eternal and Zayd Allah *be pleased with him* will be forever mentioned within the Quran. This is how Allah *the Almighty* recompensed Zayd for what he lost as a result of his name being changed.

What is this 'preference' with respect to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that is being referred to in Allah's Words: 'The Prophet is more protective towards the believers than they are themselves...' (*al-Ahzab*: 6)? They reply that it refers to different rungs on the ladder of perfection – first acting goodly to one self and then to others. A person first acts goodly to himself, then to his closest relatives, then to his distant relatives and then to those who are very far removed from him. This is why the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Begin with yourself then with your dependants.'⁽¹⁾

It is also said that where a person considers his home to be differs depending upon his aspirations. So one man might make his self his home, seeing everything as being for himself and himself as being for no one; another might make his children and family his home; another might go beyond his ascendants to include his descendants; another might make his city or village his home, while yet another might make the entire world and all of humanity his home.

(1) *It is narrated on the authority of Jabir ibn 'Abdullah that Prophet Muhammad said to a man from Banu 'Udhra, 'If you want to give charity, start with yourself. Then, if anything is left over, give it to your family. If anything is left over after that, give it your kinsmen, and if anything is left over after that, give it to such-and-such) a grouping of people.' See Muslim, Sahih (997) in Kitab Az-Zakat, chapter on starting by spending upon one's self.*

The goodness of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* extended in a general way to all of humanity and in a specific way to the believers. 'This is why Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* used not to pray over someone from his community who died leaving outstanding debts but no means to pay them, but rather instructed (his Companions) to be the ones to pray over him.'⁽¹⁾

We might ask, following a surface reading of this Hadith, 'Where is the crime in dying with outstanding debts, and why did the Messenger not pray over him?'

The answer is that the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* did not prevent the prayer being prayed over him, but, on the contrary, instructed his Companions to pray over their brother because of what he had said in another *Hadith*: 'If someone takes other peoples' money with the intention of paying them back – and the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* did not say 'and pays them back' – Allah *the Almighty* will pay it back for him.'⁽²⁾

However, when someone dies without paying his debts, it is more than likely that they did not intend to pay it back and that is why he did not pray over them. Then, with the revelation of Allah's words: 'The Prophet is more protective towards the believers than they are themselves...' (*al-Ahzab*: 6), Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* took upon himself the outstanding debts of any Muslim who died leaving debts behind and paid them off for them. As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'The Prophet is more protective towards the believers than they are themselves...' (*al-Ahzab*: 6), it means that Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* is more responsible for a Muslim than himself.

(1) *It is narrated on the authority of Qatada that when a man was brought before Prophet Muhammad for him to pray over, he Allah's peace and blessings be upon him said, 'Pray over your companion for he has an outstanding debt.' Abu Qatada said, 'I will take responsibility (for the debt).' So the Prophet Allah's peace and blessings be upon him asked him if he would take responsibility for the full amount and he replied that he would. So he Allah's peace and blessings be upon him prayed over him.' See It At-Tirmidhi, Sunnan (1069); he classified it as good and authentic.*

(2) *See Ahmad, Musnad (2/ 361 & 417); see Al-Bukhari, Sahih (2387); see also Ibn Majah, Sunnan (2411) on the authority of Abu Hurayra.*

Furthermore, did Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* not say in front of 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* 'None of you believes until I am more beloved to him than his self, his wealth and all other people.' 'Umar, being honest and true to himself, replied, 'Yes indeed, Messenger of Allah, you are more beloved to me than my family and my wealth, but as for myself...' So the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'By the One Who holds my soul in His Hand, none of you is a believer until I am more beloved to him than his own self!''⁽¹⁾ When 'Umar found it obligatory, he understood what the right response was. He knew that the sort of love Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was talking about was the intellectual love, not the type of love he had initially understood. So, according to that understanding, Messenger Muhammad was more beloved to him than himself. This is like when someone loves bitter medicine – he only loves it at an intellectual level not at an emotional one. Or like when someone loves clever children even when they are the sons of his enemy – that love is not the emotional love that you feel for your own children, or like when someone loves someone who is widely praised even though that person is foolish and mentally-retarded.

The story⁽²⁾ of the rich man whom Allah *the Almighty* had tested with a mentally retarded son is well known to Arabs everywhere. When the boy grew up and became adult, he remained mentally retarded, but supplicants who came to his house seeking gifts would still shower him with praise whenever they saw him in order to gratify his father and get him to be generous to them. This was despite their knowledge that the boy was stupid and backward. This state of affairs continued until one of the men amongst them found himself in need, so they advised him to go to the rich man, mentioning that he had a weak point when it came to his son.

(1) *The grandfather of Zahra ibn Ma'bad said, 'We were with Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him when he took hold of the hand of 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab Allah be pleased with him so 'Umar said to him, 'By Allah, Messenger of Allah, you are more beloved to me than everything except for myself,' whereupon Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him replied, 'By the One Who holds my soul in His Hand, none of you believes until I am more beloved to him than his own self!' So 'Umar Allah be pleased with him said, 'Now, by Allah, you are more beloved to me than myself.' The Prophet replied, 'Now (you have it) 'Umar.' See Ahmad, Musnad, 4/ 336.*

(2) *The story of the wealthy man whom Allah the Almighty favoured with a stupid boy.*

So he went to the rich man to seek his help. Then suddenly, while he was sitting with him in the hall, the son came down the stairs, playing around like a little child; his stupidity and backwardness were plain for all to see. When he saw him, the man turned to the master of the house and said, 'Is this your son, the one whom everyone invokes blessings upon?' When he replied that it was, the man said, 'May Allah relieve you of him! Allah is the One Who provides.'

As for Allah's saying: '...while his wives are their mothers...' (*al-Ahzab*: 6). They mean wives of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* are the Mothers of the Believers. This meant that Khadija *Allah be pleased with her* was a mother to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* since she was the first of the believers. This was why she did not act towards him in the manner of a wife, but in the manner of a compassionate mother.

Do you not see how she sympathised with him and clasped him close to her chest when he was exposed for the first time to the awesome power of the revelation and the descent of the angel? Or how she calmed him down? If she had been a young girl, however, then things would have been quite different because she would have doubted his sanity. At that particular juncture, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had need of a compassionate mother, not a young inexperienced wife.

All the wives of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* were considered to be mothers of the believers which is why Allah *the Almighty* addresses the believers saying: '...Moreover, it does not behove you to give offence to Allah's Apostle – just as it would not behove you ever to marry his widows after he has passed away...' (*al-Ahzab*: 53). Why should they not marry his widows? It is because when one man marries a woman who was previously married to another man, there will be feelings of hatred and resentment between the two men forever.

A man might hate his wife when he divorces her, but as soon as she marries another man, his feelings of attraction return and he finds himself hating the man whom she married. These are all things that do not behove the person of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. It is not right for anyone who was a wife of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to ever share the bed of another man. This is why Allah *the Almighty* made

them all mothers of the believers. This unlawfulness did not, however, extend from the mothers of the believers to their daughters – their daughters were free to marry whomsoever they wished.

So, it is not permissible for any man who believes in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and acknowledges his worth to marry one of his wives after him.

In the time of ignorance before Islam, there was no limit to the number of wives a man could take – a man could marry as many women as he so wished. Then, when Islam came, it wanted to impose limits on this number, so it commanded anyone who had more than four wives to keep hold of four of them but divorce the rest.⁽¹⁾ This meant that no man could have more than four wives at any one time. As for Prophet Muhammad, *peace and blessings be upon him* himself, he kept hold of nine wives. The orientalist have tried to use this fact to criticise the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* and to criticise the Law of Allah. There are a number of Muslims who have imitated them and said the same thing. To these people, we say, 'You are stupid, as is everyone else who affiliates themselves to you. The reason for this exception being made in the case of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is clear from Allah's words: "No [other] women shall henceforth be lawful to you – nor art thou [allowed] to supplant [any of] them by other wives..." (*al-Ahzab*: 52).

In other words, if any of them die, you, O Prophet Muhammad, may not marry someone else, indeed, even if they had all died, it would still not have been lawful for him *peace and blessings be upon him* to marry anyone else, unlike the rest of the community were free to replace their wives whenever they wished. If their wife died or they divorced her, then they could just find another one. As long as they did not have more than four wives at any one point, they could marry and divorce whomsoever they willed. Who is restricted by this ruling – Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* or his community? So, do not wrong Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

(1) *It is narrated on the authority of Ibn 'Umar that when Ghaylan ibn Salama Ath-Thaqafi became a Muslim, the ten wives he had had in the time of ignorance before Islam become Muslims with him, so Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him commanded him to choose four of them. See At-Tirmidhi, Sunnan, 1128; see also Ibn Majah, Sunnan (1953); see also Malik, Muwatta'...*

These people should also distinguish between two types of exception: one in terms of the number and one in terms of the specified women themselves. The fact that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had to make do with those nine wives and was not permitted to marry anyone else shows that the exception was in terms of the specified women themselves. So, even if any of those women died, still no other women would be lawful for him. However, if the exception had been in terms of number, then it would have been permissible for you to say what you say.

Consider the matter from another angle: when a man keeps hold of four of his wives and divorces the rest, those divorced wives have the right to marry someone else, but how would it have been for the wives of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the mothers of the believers, if he had divorced five of them? It is not lawful for any Muslim to marry them so they would have been left alone. No, it was in the best interest of the wives of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to remain married to him.

As long as 'The Prophet is more protective towards the believers than they are themselves' (*al-Ahzab*: 6), the believers should give preference to the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* more than themselves in order to return the favour. In other words, they should obey him whenever he commands.

Then He *the Almighty* says: '...In Allah's Scripture, blood-relatives have a stronger claim than other believers and emigrants...' (*al-Ahzab*: 6). The term *ulu al-Arham* (they who are [thus] closely related) is derived from the word *rahim* meaning 'womb', the place within a woman's belly where the embryo develops; it also refers to one's close relatives. The reason Allah made them have a higher claim over one another is as follows: when the first Muslims emigrated to Medina, they left their families, wealth and homes behind in Mecca. The Helpers did not want the hearts of their Emigrant brothers to remain constantly turned towards the wives they had left behind in Mecca and so, because of the preference they had for them, some offered to divorce their wives and marry them to their Emigrant brothers.⁽¹⁾ This kind of altruism is unique in the whole

(1) This happened with 'Abd Ar-Rahman ibn 'Awf, the Emigrant from Mecca, and Sa'd ibn Ar-Rabi' Al-Ansari: '...when Sa'd said to him, 'O my brother, I am one of the wealthiest men of Medina, so see which half of my wealth you want and take it for =

of human history and had never been witnessed before since it is possible for men to be generous with the most valuable things they possess except for women. The altruism of these Companions was indeed truly unique.

This pact of brotherhood that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* planted between the Emigrants and the Helpers meant that the Emigrants inherited from the Helpers. Then, when Allah *the Almighty* made Islam strong and the Emigrants found their own means of making a living, Allah *the Almighty* wanted things to return to their natural course since there was no longer a need for an Emigrant to inherit from his brother Helper. So the verse was revealed to establish that close relatives had more right to each other's inheritance than anyone else. So, when Allah *the Almighty* revealed: '...In Allah's Scripture, blood-relatives have a stronger claim than other believers and emigrants...' (*al-Ahzab*: 6), the financial position of the Emigrants had become stable and each of them had their affairs in order, so in those circumstances, close relatives had a higher claim to that inheritance.

Allah's words '...blood-relatives...' (*al-Ahzab*: 6) are a reminder to human beings that they must maintain their ties of kinship from the beginning of Adam because, if you truly reflect upon the way that the human being was created, you will find that we are all from Adam *Allah's peace be upon him* alone, not from Adam and Eve.

It is narrated⁽¹⁾ that a chamberlain came into Mu'awiyya's room and said to him, 'There is a man at the door who says he is your brother.' Mu'awiyya *Allah be pleased with him* said, 'How is it that you, my chamberlain, are unable to recognise my brothers?' The chamberlain replied, 'That is what he said,' so Mu'awiyya *Allah be pleased with him* told him to show the man in. When the man entered, Mu'awiyya, asked him, 'So which of my brothers are you then?' The man replied, 'I am your brother through Adam.' So Mu'awiyya *Allah be pleased with him* said, 'Yes, that is a tie that has been cut. So, by Allah, I will be the first to re-establish it.'

= yourself. I have two wives, so see which one you like the most and I will divorce her [so that you may marry her].' 'Abd ar-Rahman replied, 'May Allah bless you in your family and your wealth! Just show me where the marketplace is.' The full version of this story is narrated by Ibn Sa'd in *At-Tabaqat* (3/117).

(1) The story of the man who claimed to be brother Mu'awiya ibn Abu Sufyan's *Allah be pleased with him*.

When Allah *the Almighty* says: '... though you may still bestow gifts on your protégés...' (*al-Ahzab*: 6), He says that in order to leave open the possibility of acting charitably towards the Emigrants. So, whenever any one of them is present at the distribution of inheritance, they will still be able to receive a share, even though that is not obligatory, as is mentioned in Allah says: 'And when [other] near of kin and orphans and needy persons are present at the distribution [of inheritance], give them something thereof for their sustenance, and speak unto them in a kindly way.' (*an-Nisa*': 8)

Allah says: '... All this is written in the Scripture...' (*al-Ahzab*: 6). The Arabic word *Kitab* (Book) refers either to the Preserved Tablet or the Quran. The meaning thus is that everything is stated in the Preserved Tablet or in the Quran.

Then Allah *the Almighty* goes on to mention a matter that is general to all the Messengers, saying:

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ مِيثَاقَهُمْ وَمِنْكَ وَمِنْ نُوحٍ وَإِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَى
وَعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ وَأَخَذْنَا مِنْهُمْ مِيثَاقًا غَلِيظًا ﴿٧﴾

**We took a solemn pledge from the prophets – from you
[Muhammad], from Noah, from Abraham, from Moses,
from Jesus, son of Mary – We took a solemn pledge from
all of them [7] (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 7)**

The Arabic particle *idha* or *idh*, meaning 'when' or 'if', is a conjunction that makes one action dependent upon another. So, when you say, 'When so-and-so comes to you, honour him', the act of honouring is conditional upon the act of coming. In this particular verse, the meaning is, 'Remember when Allah *the Almighty* made a covenant with the Prophets,' and this matter was general to all the Messengers. Then Allah *the Almighty* sub-divided the Messengers, saying: '...from you [Muhammad], from Nuh, from Ibrahim, from Musa, from 'Isa, son of Maryam-' (*al-Ahzab*: 7).

The word *mithaq* (solemn pledge) is a covenant that is drawn up between two people, like the first covenant that Allah *the Almighty* made with mankind when they were still unformed atoms, about which He says: 'And whenever

your Lord brings forth their offspring from the loins of the children of Adam, He [thus] calls upon them to bear witness about themselves: 'Am I not your Lord?' (*al-A'raf*: 172)

So what is this covenant that Allah *the Almighty* made with his Prophets? This covenant is His Act of choosing a human being to be a Messenger and an ambassador between Him *the Almighty* and His creation. When He *Glorified is He* does choose a Messenger to convey His Laws to people, that choice is not rejected. No, the offer is accepted, and when the Messenger accepts that offer, it is as if he has made a pact and a covenant with Allah *the Almighty* to bring His Message to people. Thus it is a transaction where there is an offer and an acceptance.

In the verse: 'We took a solemn pledge from the prophets-' (*al-Ahzab*: 7), the one who makes the covenant is Allah *the Almighty* and the ones with whom the covenant is made are the Prophets. A *mithaq* is a ratified contract. The contract is an agreement between two parties to do something that is in both their interests. If one of the two parties does not agree, then the contract does not come into effect; if both parties are equal, then each of them may put clauses into the contract to suit themselves; but if the contract is made between a higher power and a lower power, then it is the higher power who sets the terms of the contract. Why should that be? Because you have put him in the position where he draws up the contract and binds you to him. That is why Allah *the Almighty* says: '...and the solemn pledge by which He bound you to Himself...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 7).

Muwathaqa (binding) is an action that takes place between two parties: you bind him to you, and he binds you to him, for when Allah *the Almighty* chose the Messengers, there is no doubt that He knew best where to place His Message. When Allah *the Almighty* chooses a Messenger, that Messenger's acceptance of the Message shows that he approves of what Allah *the Almighty* wants him to do in the covenant drawn up between them.

In the procession of Messages throughout the ages, have we ever seen a single Messenger reject the Message that was offered him? No, we have not. Therefore, the acceptance of a Message is like a contract, the terms of which have been set by one of the parties since that party is the higher power. As for the aspect of ratification, that lies in the fact that Allah *the Almighty* chooses that Messenger and makes him worthy of being chosen for such a Message.

That is why we see in the story of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* that, when Allah *the Almighty* chose him for the Message, he saw that it was a formidable matter for him to bear but, instead of rejecting it, asked Allah *the Almighty* to allow his brother Aron, to support him in taking on that responsibility, and addressed Allah *the Almighty* saying: 'And my brother Aron – he is far better in speech than I am. Send him with me, therefore, as a helper, so that he might [more eloquently] bear witness to my speaking the truth...' (*al-Qasas*: 34).

Musa *peace be upon him* did not say, 'I am not fit to take on this responsibility.' No, he submitted to the command of Allah for Allah *the Almighty* knows best where to place His Message, and he knew that Allah *the Almighty* would help him overcome the problem of the knot in his tongue by means of his brother.

So, the word *mithaq* refers to matters that are ratified and confirmed, and a usage of the word is found in Allah's words about what is done with enemies: 'Now when you meet [in war] those who are bent on denying the truth, smite their necks until you overcome them fully, and then tighten their bonds...' (*Muhammad*: 4).

Then this general matter is made specific in the Words that follow: '...from you [Muhammad], from Nuh, from Ibrahim, from Musa, from 'Isa, son of Mary– We took a solemn pledge from all of them...' (*al-Ahzab*: 7). When He *the Almighty* says 'from you', He *the Almighty* means from Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the Seal of the Prophets and Messengers. But why did He *the Almighty* mention Muhammad before Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* when Nuh *peace be upon him* is the second father of all of humanity after Adam *peace be upon him*?

We know that all of mankind is descended from Adam *peace be upon him* until, at the time of Nuh *peace be upon him* and they came to be divided up into believers and disbelievers. Then the Flood came, after which no one remained on earth except for Noah Allah's *peace be upon him* and those who believed in him. Therefore, he was the second father of humankind after Adam.

That is why some people say that the Message of Nuh *peace be upon him* was general in the same that the Message of Muhammad was general. We say, however, that the Message of Nuh *peace be upon him* was only general to those who believed in him and boarded his ship and was only general for a

particular period of time in a particular place. The Message of Muhammad, on the other hand, is general for every time and every place.

As for why Muhammad is mentioned first, it is because the Arabic particle *waw*, 'and', is not usually used to indicate any order or succession, but is only used to gather things together. Muhammad is mentioned first because he is the one who is being addressed by these words, and one of the ways that Allah *the Almighty* honours His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* is by mentioning him first in places such as this. Another reason for the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* being mentioned first may be understood from what he said about himself when he said, 'I was a Prophet when Adam was still between water and clay.'⁽¹⁾

Then He makes special mention of Nuh *peace be upon him* since he is the second father of humanity, then Ibrahim, Musa and 'Isa *peace be upon them*. Ibrahim *peace be upon him* is mentioned because the Arabs believed in him, knew him to be the forefather of Prophets, and valued his relationship to the *Ka'ba*, the fact that he laid its foundations, and the fact that he was the example that they followed with respect to the sacrifice and the *sa'y* 'walking between Safa and Marwa'.

Musa and 'Isa *peace be upon them* are mentioned because Judaism and Christianity were the two religions that were contemporary at the time at which Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was delivering his call to Islam – the Jews were present in Medina and the Christians were present in *Najran*. They were the people of the Book with whom Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had various contacts and encounters. They were the people who were in a position of scientific, economic, cultural, and military supremacy over the entire Arab peninsula. Indeed, it was as if they were the owners of that land.

It was amazing to think that Allah has made covenants with the prophets of Judaism and Christianity to witness to the trueness of the call of Muhammad.

(1) *As-Suyuti said in Ad-Durar Al-Muntathira* (p. 342), 'There is no basis to the (Hadith) with this wording'. It is narrated by *At-Tirmidhi* in his *Sunnan* (3609) in a Hadith on the authority of *Abu Hurayra* who said, 'They said, 'Messenger of Allah Allah's peace and blessings be upon him when did Prophethood become yours?' He replied, '[When] Adam was as yet between the soul and the body.' *At-Tirmidhi* judged it as authentic but strange.

That is why they sought victory under the leadership of Muhammad over the disbelievers. They said to the idol-worshippers, 'The time of a Prophet has come whom we will follow, and, through whom, we will kill you in the same way that the people of 'Ad and Iram were killed.' They knew the time and place in which Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would be sent. They knew that he would be sent in a land in which there were palm trees. Moreover, they knew his signs and the physical characteristics by which he would be known. That is why, after Allah *the Almighty* split them up into different nations and spread them throughout the earth, He enabled those who devoted their lives to knowledge came to Yathrib to await the coming of the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

This is why Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And [if] they who are bent on denying the truth say [unto thee, O Prophet], "Thou hast not been sent [by Allah]," say thou: "None can bear witness between me and you as Allah does; and [none can bear witness as does] he who truly understands this divine writ."' (*ar-Ra'd*: 43)

So, the people of the Book should have been the first to bear witness to the trueness of the Message of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* but that did not happen. The Quran relates about them after all this happened: '...whenever there came unto them something which they recognized [as the truth], they would deny it. Allah's rejection is the due of all who deny the truth.' (*al-Baqara*: 89)

How did this transformation come about? How did the belief of the heart come to be transformed into the rebellion of the limbs? This came about, they say, because of the temporal authority which they enjoyed in Arabia at that time and which they wanted to remain. When Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent, they were the people of wealth and trade, ran the businesses and held the property and so were frightened of what Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would do to them: they were frightened that the new religion would strip them of their exalted status and bring an end to their supremacy. That is why the Quran references them: 'Vile is that [false pride] for which they have sold their own selves by denying the truth of what Allah has bestowed from on high, out of envy that Allah should bestow aught

of His favour upon whomsoever He wills of His servants: and thus have they earned the burden of Allah's condemnation, over and over, for those who deny the truth there is shameful suffering in store.' (*al-Baqara*: 90)

That is why a special mention is made here of the succession of Prophets and of Musa and 'Isa *peace be upon them*. We notice that the verse mentions Musa *peace be upon him* but does not mention a father in connection with him, whereas, when it mentions 'Isa *peace be upon him* it says: '...and 'Isa the son of Maryam...' (*al-Ahzab*: 7). This shows that great emphasis is placed on the source of a person's lineage – if the father exists alongside his wife then he is the source, but if he does not, then paternity is attributed to the wife; and that is why the lineage of 'Isa is ascribed to his mother.

This matter is mentioned in order to prove the unlimited nature of the Divine Power. Creation is not some sort of mechanical process that is subject to certain laws – no, it was the Power of Allah that created Adam *peace be upon him* without a father or mother, created Eve with a father but without a mother, created 'Isa *peace be upon him* with a mother but without a father, and created everyone else in creation from both a father and a mother. Thus, every conceivable possibility for parenthood is found in creation.

When Allah *the Almighty* says: '... We took a solemn pledge from all of them...' (*al-Ahzab*: 7), he means 'from the Prophets'. When He says 'Solemn', he means 'emphatic'. He expanded the covenant and emphasised it when He informed His Prophets and Messengers that they would be persecuted and fought by their peoples.

That is why the covenant is nowhere described as being 'weighty' except here and when it is used to describe the relationship between a man and his wife when he divorces her and has to pay her the dowry that he allotted her, even if that be a full qantar (of gold). Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And how could you take it away after you have given yourselves to one another, and she has received a most solemn pledge from you?' (*an-Nisa*: 21)

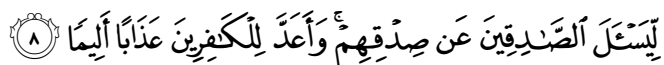
The covenant between a husband and wife is described as being *ghalidh* 'solemn' or 'strong' because it deals with their 'ird (honour). But covenants that deal with other matters are not described as being 'weighty'.

Details of this covenant which Allah *the Almighty* made with His Messengers, whom He sent to remind mankind, bringing them good news and a warning, are found elsewhere in the Quran: 'And, lo, Allah accepted, through the Prophets, this solemn pledge [from the followers of earlier revelation]: "If, after all the revelation and the wisdom which I have vouchsafed unto you, there comes to you an apostle confirming the truth already in your possession, you must believe in him and succour him. Do you" – said He – "acknowledge and accept My Bond on this condition?" They answered: "We do acknowledge it." Said He: "Then bear witness [thereto], and I shall be your witness"' (*Al-Imran*: 81).

When Allah *the Almighty* testifies to something, that testimony does not require any judge ratification. But why did Allah *the Almighty* extract such a promise from His Prophets? He did that because, while those who do not believe in a god have no religion with which they side when a new Messenger comes, those who do have a religion find it difficult to accept that Messenger when he tries to turn them aside from their old religion. Herein lies the greatest difficulty that Messengers face. This is why Allah *the Almighty* says to the Messengers, 'Part of the fulfilment of your covenant is that you say to your people, "If there comes to you an apostle confirming the truth already in your possession, you must believe in him and succour him."'⁽¹⁾ Then he sought their acknowledgement of that and asked them to bear witness to it, so they did so. The meaning of the verse is, 'Beware of leaving the nations who believe in you without first putting this principle to them, for this principle is what will protect them.'

Then Allah *the Almighty* says:

(1) *Ibn Jarir At-Tabari narrated that 'Ali ibn Abu Taleb said, 'There was not a single Prophet, from the time of Adam, that Allah sent except that he extracted from him a promise that he would believe in and help Muhammad if he were sent while he were still alive, and that he would extract the same promise from his people.' Then he recited: 'And, lo, Allah accepted, through the prophets, this solemn pledge [from the followers of earlier revelation]: 'If, after all the revelation and the wisdom which I have vouchsafed unto you...' (Al-Imran: 81) (Suyuti mentioned in Ad-Durr Al-manthur fi At- tafsir Al-ma'thur 2/253).*



God will question [even] the truthful about their sincerity, and for those who reject the truth He has prepared a painful torment [8] (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 8)

The particle *lam* in *li-yas'ala* means 'so that', is called a *lam* of *ta'il* (cause) and is used to indicate reason or purpose. So, the meaning is: We have made this covenant with the Prophets and we will ask them about it: 'We took a solemn pledge from the prophets-' (*al-Ahzab*: 7). Why? 'So that Allah will question [even] the truthful about their sincerity...' (*al-Ahzab*: 8). But if the conveyor is truthful then how can his truthfulness be questioned?

When Allah *the Almighty* asks a truthful person about his truthfulness, He does not do so to reproach him but rather to reproach those who denied him. So, He *the Almighty* is saying, 'We will ask the Messengers whether they conveyed (the Message) to those people.' Allah *the Almighty* says: 'On the day when Allah shall assemble all the apostles and shall ask, "what response did you receive?"' (*al-Ma'ida*: 109) Allah *the Almighty* asks the people: 'Have there not come unto you apostles from among yourselves, who conveyed unto you My Messages and warned you of the coming of this your Day [of Judgment]?' (*al-An'am*: 130) The question in this verse is intended as a rebuke of the deniers, not as an actual question.

It is also possible that 'So that Allah will question [even] the truthful about their sincerity...' (*al-Ahzab*: 8) means, 'You have given people the good news that there is Only One Allah, and you are telling the truth because you made with this covenant with Me and then, when the Hour comes, you will not find any other gods protecting the unbelievers. So, because you found Only One Allah in the Hereafter, you will see that I have been truthful with regards to what I said to you and you have been truthful with regards to what you conveyed from me.'

This is why He *the Almighty* says: '...he finds [that] Allah [has always been present] with him, and [that] He will pay him his account in full...' (*an-Nur*: 39). If there had been another god with Him, then Allah would have protected those unbelievers and prevented them from being punished.

The Messengers are also asked about whether they informed their peoples about the Resurrection which Allah *the Almighty* promised would come to pass, or about the Reckoning and the punishment or reward contained therein. It is as if Allah *the Almighty* were asking them, ‘Has anything I told you about failed to come to pass? Have I been lax in rewarding the good-doer or punishing the evildoer? No! Then, believe everything that I say.’

This is like when you have sat with your son, gone over his schoolwork with him and encouraged him to study, so that he could succeed in his exams. Then, when he comes back, you ask him, ‘What did you answer for such-and-such a question?’ You do so not in order to actually question him, but rather to remind him of the glory that he actually achieved and of the success that Allah *the Almighty* granted him. In the same way, Allah *the Almighty* is merely reminding his Messengers in that inescapable Hour of the way they stood with respect to the religion of Allah *the Almighty* and the way they raised high the word of the Truth.

Thus, by asking the people of Truth about their truthfulness, He is actually honouring them and bearing witness to the fact that they fulfilled what was required of them, while, at the same time, rebuked those who denied them.⁽¹⁾

Then He *the Almighty* says: ‘... and for those who reject the truth He has prepared a painful torment.’ (*al-Ahzab*: 8) The fact that the verb *a’adda* (He prepared) is in the past tense proves that everything was already prepared and was in existence beforehand; it also proves that Allah does bring anything new into being. Elsewhere in the Quran, He *the Almighty* said something similar about paradise: ‘...which has been readied for the Allah-conscious.’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 133)

Previously, we explained that Allah *the Almighty* created a paradise that was large enough to fit all of mankind if they believed in Him, and He created a Hell that was large enough to fit all of mankind if they denied Him. This

(1) In his *Tafsir* of this verse in question, Al-Qurtubi said, ‘There are four aspects to this: firstly, to ask the Prophets about conveying His Messages to their people. This interpretation is mentioned by An-Naqqash. Secondly, to ask the Prophets about how their people responded to them. Thirdly, to ask the Prophets about their fulfilment of the covenant He made with them. This interpretation is mentioned by Ibn Shajara; and fourthly, to ask truthful mouths about sincere hearts. See Al-Qurtubi, *Jame’ Ahkam Al-Quran*, 7/ 5388.

means that there will be no shortages or problems when it comes to space. Rather, when the people of belief have taken their places in paradise, and the places of the unbelievers have remained empty, Allah *the Almighty* will say to the believers, 'You take them'⁽¹⁾: 'for such will be the paradise which you shall have inherited by virtue of your past deeds.' (*az-Zukhruf*: 72)

Punishment is sometimes described as being 'painful'; others 'humiliating'; yet others 'immense' and still yet others 'strong'. Each of these types of punishment has its own particular qualities: a painful punishment is one which involves harshness and the infliction of pain, while a humiliating punishment is one which involves degradation and the stripping away of dignity. There are people who are able to endure pain and are not particularly bothered by it, but suffer badly as soon as you take away their honour and dignity. It is these people for whom a humiliating punishment is suitable.

There is a story⁽²⁾ that is told regarding physical endurance: a man entered upon Mu'awiyya *Allah be pleased with him* when Mu'awiyya was ill but was presenting to people that he was well and in good health. When he saw him, the man recited the following verse of poetry,

When death gets its claws into you,

You will not find any amulet to benefit you

Mu'awiyya understood immediately what he meant, so he answered with another verse from the same poem, written by Abu Dhu'ayb Al-Hudhali⁽³⁾,

By my patient endurance I show those who gloat,

That I am not rendered feeble by the uncertainties of time

(1) *It is narrated by Abu Hurayra that Messenger Muhammad Allah peace and blessings be upon him said, 'Everyone has a place in paradise and a place in hell. But the unbeliever inherits the believer's place in hell while the believer inherits the unbeliever's place in paradise. That is what is meant by the verse: '...for such will be the paradise which you shall have inherited by virtue of your past deeds.' (az-Zukhruf: 72)' This is narrated by As-Suyuti in Ad-Durr Al-Manthur (7/394) and has been traced back to Ibn Abu Hatim and Ibn Marduwayh.*

(2) *The story of the man who visited Mu'awiyya Allah be pleased with him during his sickness.*

(3) This poem is attributed to Abu Dhu'ayb Al-Hudhali by Shihab Ad-Din Mahmud Al-Halab in his book '*Husn At-Tawassul 'ila Sina 'at At-Tarassul*', p. 132; see also p. 3 of the first section of *Diwan Al-Hudhaliyyn*. See Ibn Mandhur, *Lisan Al-'Arab*, entry (*da'a'a*).

As for an immense punishment, it is described as being ‘immense’ because of the immensity of its nature or the largeness of its size. In other words, such a punishment is not physically small. Or it might be physically small, but immense in terms of its characteristics or in terms of its effects remaining over a long period of time.

A punishment is described as ‘strong’ on account of the strength of the Punisher, for when He *the Almighty* seizes someone, He, does so with the seizing of One Who is Almighty, All-Powerful.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ جَاءَتْكُمْ جُنُودٌ فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ
رِيحًا وَجُنُودًا لَّمْ تَرَوْهَا وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرًا ﴿٩﴾

**You who believe, remember God’s goodness to you when
mighty armies massed against you: We sent a violent wind
and invisible forces against them. God sees all that you do [9]
(The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 9)**

Allah *the Almighty* wanted to provide proof for His Words to His Messenger in one of the preceding verses: 'And place you trust in Allah [alone]: for none is as worthy of trust as Allah.' (*al-Ahzab*: 3), so He mentioned an incident that brought about the defeat of all enemies after they had united against him *peace and blessings be upon him*. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had already defeated each of them when they were separate: first he defeated the unbelievers of Mecca at Badr, and then he defeated the Jews at Banu Nadir and Banu Qaynuqa’. But on this occasion, they had all united to make war on him and Muslims. Despite the unity of the disbelievers against Islam, Allah *the Almighty* assures Prophet Muhammad that their assembly will prove unable to turn him aside from his call, affirming meanwhile that they will be defeated by soldiers sent directly by Him *the Almighty*.

So, the circumstances for ‘Place your trust in Allah’ (*al-Ahzab*: 3) are found in the verse: 'You who believe, remember Allah’s goodness to you...' (*al-Ahzab*: 9). A *Ni‘ma* (blessing) is something that fills someone with happiness, joy and the desire for it to last. Such qualities are only found in

faith, since the blessing represented by it is truly lasting, transcending the limited time of this world, and going on forever in the limitless time of the Hereafter, while the blessings of this world are limited by your own capabilities and resources, the blessings of the Hereafter are determined by the infinite capacity of the Giver of blessings, making them the ultimate blessings.

In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* is addressing believers. Belief means having utter conviction in the Unique Existence of Allah *the Almighty* Who embodies all the Attributes of Majesty and Perfection. Allah *the Almighty* made it within the capacity of the intellect to find its way to the single creative force that none may deny. However, it is not part of the intellect's job to know the name of this God itself, nor to know what His Will is. For these things, a direct communiqué from Allah *the Almighty* is required.

We previously gave an example for this of someone knocking at the door: we all know intellectually that there is a knocker at the door – that is the job of the intellect – but is it also part of the intellect's job to tell us who that person is? Or to tell us what the knocker wants? No, that is what we call imagination.

The bane of human intellect is that it is not satisfied with merely being aware that there is an irresistible effective force. No, it is enough for it to know that, behind existence, there is a force, and that this force has attributes of perfection by which it brought existence into being. But, if we want to know what that force is, then we must let that knocker tell us about himself. We must let he himself tell us what his purpose is and why he has come. It is only through a messenger that any of that can happen: one who has been sent directly by Allah *the Almighty* to tell us about that force, to tell us about Allah, His Names, His Attributes and the Way of Guidance He *the Almighty* has sanctioned for His creation, and to tell us about the Blessings that He *the Almighty* has prepared for those who obey Him and the Punishment that He *the Almighty* has prepared for those who disobey Him.

If we deny this messenger and ask him to prove that he is telling the truth in what he has conveyed to us, he comes with miracles that back up his words and convince us to believe in him, since he makes miracles that prove his veracity. Amazingly enough, these miracles are from the same field in which his people excelled in.

Thus, intellectual understanding is the first stage of belief. This is why the simplest way of refuting the position of those who worship other than Allah *the Almighty* is to say to them, 'What do your gods command you to do? What do they forbid you from doing? What rewards have they prepared for those who obey them? What punishments have they prepared for those who disobey them? What form of worship do they require of you?

As soon as a Messenger comes to us from Allah *the Almighty* it is logical, intellectually speaking, for us to seek him out and ask him about those mysteries of life and existence about which we had no knowledge. Then we should listen to him and obey his orders, since his sole purpose in coming is to give us a way out of a conceptual predicament – an intellectual dilemma that none of us are able to solve. People should pine for this Messenger, not to meet him with hostility and resistance because of their worldly power which they think will last forever.

What is meant by *dhikr* (calling to mind) mentioned in Allah's Words: '...remember Allah's goodness to you...' (*al-Ahzab*: 9)? When the intellect receives information from the senses it first weighs it up and sifts it through, then it stores it in a region of the brain that acts as a storehouse for knowledge. The intellect resembles most the camera in terms of the way it takes in information. All people take in information in the same way; the important thing is that the piece of information encounters a mind that is free of distraction so that it could be memorised so easily.

This region of the brain is called the conscious mind and it can only hold a single mental image at any one moment. Then if you want to retrieve a piece of information from your memory or from your subconscious, it is your *dhakira*, your ability to recall, that allows you to retrieve it and bring it out of the subconscious back into the conscious mind. Then there is something called association of ideas. That is when one thing reminds one of something else. Then there is the imagination which is the faculty by which you use information stored in your brain to make up something completely new. We call this *takhayyul*. When an Arab poet liked the way a green tattoo looked on the white skin of a young lady, he imagined her in the following way:

A beautiful girl – it is as if her fingertips on

The perfectly formed interlocking tattoo

Were a crystal fish in
A net made of Chrysolite

This is an imaginary picture that is specific to the poet, for who else would see in that girl a crystal fish in a net made of Chrysolite? The poet has his own peculiar way of viewing things.

We previously mentioned the picture painted by a poet ⁽¹⁾ of a hunchback when he said:

Shortened neck veins and submerged occiput
As if he were bowed down waiting to be slapped,
And as if the back of his head had already been slapped once
And he had gathered himself expecting the slap once again

Since ancient times, poets have considered the heart to be the locus of love and feelings. However, this poet brings forth a new and different picture of this from the depths of his imagination when he says:

Thoughts of you awaken my love
So I feel it pervading my heart.
In each of my limbs love is to be found,
As if each of them were created a heart

The meaning then of the saying of Allah, '... remember Allah's goodness to you...' (*al-Ahzab*: 9) is, 'Do not be heedless of blessings because they appear to you as something mundane, but always remember them and keep them firmly in your conscious mind.' This is why Allah *the Almighty* considers remembrance to be an act of worship and, indeed, it is an act of worship that does not entail any hardship whatsoever unlike the prayer, for example, which takes time and effort to be fulfilled and for which you have to first perform

(1) The poet is ibn Ar-Rumi 'Ali ibn Al-'Abbas ibn Jurayj; he is a great poet from the same poetic class of Bashara and Al-Mutanabbi. He was Byzantine by birth and his grandfather had been one of the clients of the Banu Al-'Abbas. He was born in Baghdad in 221 AH, grew up there and died there as a result of consuming poison in 283 AH when he was 62 years old. See *Az-Zirikli, Al-'Alam*, 4/297.

wudu' (ablution) and to go to the mosque, or *zakat* (mandatory alms) for which you have to give up some of your wealth; *Dhikr* costs you nothing.

That is why when Allah *the Almighty* calls His slaves to the prayer in the chapter of *al-Jumu'a*, He *the Almighty* says: 'O you who have attained to faith! When the call to prayer is sounded on the day of congregation, hasten to the remembrance of Allah, and leave all worldly commerce...' (*al-Jumu'a*: 9). There are two movements that are mentioned here: a positive movement whereby people hasten to the prayer; and a negative movement whereby people leave all forms of buying and selling and everything else that distracts one from the prayer.

Then He *the Almighty* says: 'and when the prayer is ended, disperse freely on earth and seek to obtain [something] of Allah's bounty; but remember Allah often...' (*al-Jumu'a*: 10).

Elsewhere He *Glorified is He* says: '...and remembrance of Allah is indeed the greatest [good]...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 45). So do not think that Allah *the Almighty* only wants you to remember Him at the time of the prayer; no, you should remember Him in every moment. The prayer might have a particular time in which it must be performed, but there is no specific time for the Remembrance of Allah *the Almighty* and that is why He *the Almighty* made it easy. There is no difficulty when it comes to the Remembrance of Allah *the Almighty* neither in terms of time nor in terms of effort. Indeed, to meet the conditions of the Remembrance of Allah *the Almighty* it is enough for you to reflect on everything that passes in front of your eyes and try and see the Power of Allah *the Almighty* in them.

Allah *the Almighty* reminds of the blessings He has bestowed upon us because when a human soul receives blessings on a constant basis, it becomes used to them and they become mundane to Him so he stops paying any attention to them. A good example of this is the sun – you see it rising every morning and yet rarely remember that it is a sign or a blessing from your Creator. The reason for that is because you have got used to seeing it and so have come to see as something mundane and unremarkable.

Another way that Allah *the Almighty* calls our attention to His Blessings with is when He *the Almighty* takes them away from others. So seeing someone

who is ill reminds you of the blessing of good health, and seeing someone who is blind reminds you of the blessing of sight, and so on and so forth. But, as soon as you see those people, you must remember to thank the Giver of blessings for relieving you of that affliction with which He tried others. So, Allah *the Almighty* makes these exceptions a means of reminding the rest of creation of the blessings that He, the Creator, gives them.

The Arabic word for blessing '*ni'ma*' appears in this verse in the singular form, and so is the case in the following verse in which Allah says: '...and should you try to count Allah's blessings, you could never compute them...' (*Ibrahim*: 34). The enemies of Islam have raised objections to this verse on the basis that the word for 'blessing' is used in the singular, saying, 'How can something which is single be counted?' This objection of theirs stems from their lack of understanding of the Quran's meanings and stylistic styles.

We say, 'If you were to reflect on what you think of as a single blessing, you would find a countless number of other blessings within that one blessing.' That is why the Quran uses the word '*in* (if), which indicates doubt, since Allah's Blessings, like grains in the sand in the desert, are not subject to being counted or enumerated. Has anyone ever sat down to try and count them? No, because no one applies themselves to counting anything unless that thing is something which is thought to be countable.

And that is why Allah *the Almighty* makes it clear to us that if we try to count His Blessings – and no one would ever actually try to do that – we will not be able to do so, despite the fact that there is now an entire science 'statistics' devoted to the act of counting and which is taught, researched and studied in universities and colleges the world over.

If you can take any single one of the blessings that Allah *the Almighty* has bestowed on you and reflect on it – if you reflect on the constituent parts that make it up, the benefits it brings you and the characteristics that describe it, you will find many other blessings wrapped up within it. Take apples, for example, outwardly, they appear to be a single blessing, but if you consider their taste, colour, make-up, smell and the many different varieties in which they come, you will see that there are many blessings within a single apple.

Allah made these blessings general to both believers and unbelievers alike because He made it that they come about through means. So, if someone uses those means well, he will be given the blessing even if he is an unbeliever.

Then we notice that verse: '...and should you try to count Allah's blessings, you could never compute them...' (*Ibrahim*: 34) appears twice in the Quran, but each time with a different ending to the verse. On one occasion, He *the Almighty* says: 'And [always] does He give you something out of what you may be asking of Him; and should you try to count Allah's blessings, you could never compute them. [And yet,] behold, man is indeed most persistent in wrongdoing, stubbornly ingrate!' (*Ibrahim*: 34), and on the other occasion, He says: 'For, should you try to count Allah's blessings, you could never compute them! Behold, Allah is indeed much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace.' (*an-Nahl*: 18)

There is an indication in this that, if Allah *the Almighty* were to have blessed people in His creation according to their level of belief, He *the Almighty* would have bestowed His Blessings upon the believers and taken them away from the unbelievers. But He *the Almighty* did not do that because He is Much-forgiving and Dispenser of Mercy to His creation. It is through these two Attributes that Allah *the Almighty* bestows blessings upon absolutely everyone in creation. All of the blessings that you acquire in the course of your life are traces of Allah's Forgiveness and Mercy. The first thing He *the Almighty* does is to forgive your defects for you. Forgiveness is covering up what is ugly in someone who is beneath you.

Then comes Mercy when you stretch out your hand to do something good for someone who is beneath you. We mentioned previously that the general rule is that forgiveness precedes mercy, although it is possible for mercy to sometimes precede forgiveness. The reason for this is that unpleasantness should be removed before blessing is given; or that harm should be pushed out before benefit is pulled in.

The example we provided for this was that of the thief whom you find in your home: first you cover up his crime by not handing him to the police, and then your heart softens towards him to the extent that you stretch out your hand to do something good for him. In this case, forgiveness preceded mercy. However, you could have acted in a different way towards him, for you could have shown

him mercy before showing him forgiveness. Forgiveness is only possible from a higher being to a lower one; you can only cover up a person's ugliness when you are above him. It is never said of a servant that he forgave his master.

Then Allah *the Almighty* sends us this message that proves His Support for His believing slaves: '...when mighty armies massed against you: We sent a violent wind and invisible forces against them. Allah sees all that you do.' (*al-Ahzab*: 9) The word *junud* (forces) notifies us of war; it appears in the indefinite form twice in this verse: '... We sent a violent wind and invisible forces against them. Allah sees all that you do.' (*al-Ahzab*: 9)

The nature of these hosts is not mentioned; the only thing that is mentioned is that they came directly from Allah *the Almighty* to drive back the unbelievers and cause their plots to come to naught. Then Allah *the Almighty* provides us with an explanatory reminder to clarify to us who those hosts were, saying:

إِذْ جَاءُوكُم مِّن فَوْقِكُمْ وَمِنْ أَسْفَلَ مِنكُمْ وَإِذْ زَاغَتِ الْأَبْصَارُ
وَبَلَغَتِ الْقُلُوبُ الْحَنَاجِرَ وَتَظُنُّونَ بِاللَّهِ الظُّنُونَا ﴿١٠﴾

They massed against you from above and below; your eyes rolled [with fear], your hearts rose into your throats, and you thought [ill] thoughts of God [10] (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 10)

This is a description of what took place during the battle of *Al-Ahzab* when all the defeated factions of the enemies of the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* joined together. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had already fought against each of them when they were separate, but now they had joined together in a single army to fight him: Quraysh and those who followed them from the tribes of Ghatafan, Asad, Banu Fuzara and others came, as did the Jews from Banu Nadir and Banu Qurayzha. Given the enmity and disagreements between these disparate groupings, it is quite amazing that they joined together to fight Islam.

As we said before, the people of the Book used to seek victory by means of the Prophets *peace and blessings be upon them* over the unbelievers. Then verses were revealed to make the people of the Book bear witness to the truthfulness of Messenger Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him*

Allah says: 'And [if]they who are bent on denying the truth say [unto you, O Prophet], "you have not been sent [by Allah]," say you: "None can bear witness between me and you as Allah does; and [none can bear witness as does] he who truly understands this divine Book."' (*ar-Ra'd*: 43)

If the people of the Book had attached any value to this testimony, which Allah *the Almighty* linked directly to His Own, then it would have been necessary for them to believe in the truthfulness of Messenger Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him*.

The meaning of 'They massed against you...' (*al-Ahzab*: 10) is 'Remember, O Prophet Muhammad, and picture in your mind that time when the clans gathered together to make wage war against you.' As for the saying of Allah, '...from above...' (*al-Ahzab*: 10), it refers to the direction of the East. As a matter of fact, those who came from this direction were Ghatafan, Banu Nadir and Banu Qurayzha. As for the saying of Allah, '...and below...' (*al-Ahzab*: 10), it refers to the direction of the West; and those who came from this direction were Quraysh and those who followed them from the tribes of Asad, Banu Fuzara, etc. As for His saying, '...your eyes rolled [with fear]...' (*al-Ahzab*: 10), it means 'Remember when your eyes rolled.' The verb *zagha* (rolled) literally means 'wavered', and it is used in that sense in Allah's Words: '... the eye did not waver, nor yet did it stray...' (*an-Najm*: 17).

So the expression *zaghat al-'absar* (eyes rolled) means 'wavering from top to bottom'. Allah *the Almighty* created the eye in a particular form, giving it the ability to move upwards, downwards, to the right and to the left; and every one of these directions has a specific name in the Arabic language: if you look at someone from the centre of the eye, you use the verb *ra'a* (to look/ saw); if you look at someone out of the corner of the eye, you use the verb *lamaha* (to glance); if you look at someone over your nose, you use the verb *ramaqa* (to regard/glance); and so on and so forth.

So, when we say the eye wavers from top to bottom, we mean that it moves in all of these directions. When it takes fright, it deviates from its lowest point and starts to revolve. This is why He *the Almighty* says: '...But then, lo! The eyes of those who [in their lifetime] were bent on denying the truth will stare in horror...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 97), and also says: '...He but grants

them respite until the Day when their eyes will stare in horror...' (*Ibrahim*: 42). The Arabic phrase *shukhus al-basar* refers to when the upper eyelid lifts up and the eye fixates itself upon an object and does not look away from it for even a moment.

Elsewhere in the Quran, Allah *the Almighty* says about the hypocrites and those who hinder others from fighting: 'Who begrudge you [believers] any help. When fear comes you [Prophet] see them looking at you with eyes rolling like someone in their death throes...' (*al-Ahzab*: 19).

This is because one of two things happens to the eye when it becomes overpowered by terror: it either, out of sheer terror, fixates itself upon whatever it sees and does not look away for even a moment, or starts to dart this way and thus looking for a way to escape. These are the states experienced by those who find themselves in terror's grip.

As for Allah's saying: '... your hearts rose into your throats...' (*al-Ahzab*: 10), it is well-known that the *hanjara* (the larynx) is the cavity at the topmost part of the windpipe, so how can a heart possibly come up to it? This is another effect that terror has on a person: when someone becomes frightened, he starts to become agitated, his heartbeat increases and his breath quickens. His heart continues to beat faster and faster, and harder and harder, until it feels to him as if it were about to burst from his chest. Indeed, in Egyptian dialect, people say, *qalbi hayanut minni* or (My heart is going to jump out of me).

Allah says: '... and you thought [ill] thoughts of Allah...' (*al-Ahzab*: 10). As a matter of fact, this part of the verse tells that this happens when conflicting ideas take hold of them and overpower them. Everyone had thoughts serving their own purposes: the believers thought that Allah *the Almighty* would never abandon them or give them up to their enemies, while the unbelievers thought that they would be victorious and wipe out the believers completely, leaving them no base from which to operate.

In this verse, we notice that Allah *the Almighty* does not limit Himself to merely stating what happened, but makes Prophet Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* himself be the one to recall the picture of the events. So He *the Almighty* says to him, 'Remember when such-and-such happened.'

Allah *the Almighty* subsequently says:

هٰذَاكَ ابْتَلَى الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَزَلْزَلُوا زَلْزَالًا شَدِيدًا ﴿١١﴾

There the believers were sorely tested and deeply shaken [11] (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 11)

When Allah *the Almighty* says: 'There the believers were sorely tested...' (*al-Ahzab*: 11), He means that they were put to the test. So those with strong faith would say, 'Allah *the Almighty* will never give us up', while the hypocrites would say, 'This is the end of Islam and the end of the Muslims.' Then He *the Almighty* says: '... and deeply shaken.' (*al-Ahzab*: 11) The Arabic word *zalzala* refers to a violent and forceful convulsion that causes things to tremble and shake but without uprooting them. What is meant by the term here is that they were subjected to such a high degree of distress that their whole being shook. Allah *the Almighty* however, distinguishes between those who believed and those who were hypocrites, and that is why He *the Almighty* says immediately afterwards:

وَلِإِذْ يَقُولُ الْمُنَافِقُونَ وَالَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ مَا وَعَدَنَا اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ إِلَّا غُرُورًا ﴿١٢﴾

The hypocrites and the sick at heart said, 'God and His Messenger promised us nothing but delusions!' [12] (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 12)

It was the hypocrites themselves who were the ones who had disease in their hearts, so the two categories of people mentioned here are, in fact, one single category. This type of conjunction is known as '*atf al-bayyan* (an explanatory conjunction).

'Delusions' take place when human beings are deceived by something which outwardly appears delightful but which is, in reality, distressing. So when you say, 'What has deluded you in respect of such-and-such a thing?', it is as if you are saying that there is something in its outward form that tricks and deceives you, but when you actually examine it in detail, you do not find it to be as you thought.⁽¹⁾

(1) It is narrated by Ibn Jarir and Ibn Abu Hatim that Qatada said, 'The hypocrites, when they saw the clans on the day of the battle of the clans, said, 'They have surrounded us on all=

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

وَلِذَٰلِكَ طَآئِفَةٌ مِّنْهُمْ يَتَآهَلُونَ لِمَا هِيَ بِعَوْرَةٍ وَأَنَّهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ
 مِّنْهُمْ الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ إِنَّا لَنُؤْتِيَنَّكَ عَوْرَةَ وَمَا هِيَ بِعَوْرَةٍ إِنَّا كَاذِبُونَ إِلَّا فِرَارًا

Some of them said, 'People of Yathrib, you will not be able to withstand [the attack], so go back!' Some of them asked the Prophet's permission to leave, saying, 'Our houses are exposed,' even though they were not – they just wanted to run away [13] (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 13)

The particle *idh* (when) here means 'remember when'. So, the verse means, 'Remember "When some of them said, 'O you people of Yathrib...' (*al-Ahzab*: 13). Yathrib is the name for the bit of land, upon which Medina stood, but Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* changed its name to 'Tayba'.

As for the saying of Allah, '...you will not be able to withstand [the attack...]' (*al-Ahzab*: 13), it means 'You cannot stand against them in battle.' Regarding His saying, 'so go back!' (*al-Ahzab*: 13), it means 'Leave Muhammad and his followers alone on the battlefield and go way'; Allah *the Almighty* then says, '...you will not be able to withstand [the attack...]' (*al-Ahzab*: 13) which means 'You cannot stand up for this religion which you reject in your hearts but support with your limbs'.

Then the Quran discloses the stratagem used by another group who wanted to run away, saying: '... Some of them asked the Prophet's permission to leave...' (*al-Ahzab*: 13). This tells that they asked permission for not to go out to battle, '...saying, 'Our houses are exposed,'...' (*al-Ahzab*: 13), i.e. they are unprotected and there is nothing there to stop those who desire them ill. A

= sides!' And because of their doubts regarding Allah's Command, they said, 'Muhammad promised us that we would conquer Persia and Byzantium, but here we are, so thoroughly surrounded that it is not even possible for us to go out to meet the call of nature!' So, Allah revealed His saying: 'And [remember how it was] when the hypocrites and those with hearts diseased said [to one another], "Allah and His Apostle have promised us nothing but delusions!"' (*al-Ahzab*: 12) See As-Suyuti, *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur*, 6/577.

house is described as *'awra* (being exposed) when it has no fortifications or protection against those who might come to it during the night with evil intentions, such as when its walls have collapsed or are too low making them easy to scale, or when its doors are not strong and reinforced, etc.

We use the word *manat* to describe this state of affairs in Egyptian dialect. Allah *the Almighty* however, exposed their lie and invalidated their arguments. He says '...even though they were not...' (*al-Ahzab*: 13) meaning that their only purpose in saying that was because '...they just wanted to run away' (*al-Ahzab*: 13), i.e. to run away from the battle, fearing what might result from it and fearing that they might be killed.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

وَلَوْ دَخَلَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ أَقْطَارِهَا ثُمَّ سَأَلُوا الْفِتْنَةَ لَأَنتَوٰهَا
وَمَا تَلَبَّثُوا بِهَا إِلَّا يَسِيرًا ﴿١٤﴾

**Had the city been invaded from all sides, and the enemy
invited them to rebel, they would have done so almost
without hesitation [14] (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 14)**

Allah's saying *dukhilat 'alayhim* (entered upon them) means if their houses were overrun *min 'aqтариha* (from its districts), i.e. from every side '... and the enemy invited them to rebel...' (*al-Ahzab*: 14), i.e. if they had been asked to embrace unbelief, 'they would have done so almost...' (*al-Ahzab*: 14), i.e. they would have become unbelievers '...without hesitation...' (*al-Ahzab*: 14). Allah *the Almighty* would only have left them alone for a short time before laying His vengeance down upon them.⁽¹⁾

He *Glorified is He* then says:

(1) *Ibn Kathir* said in his *Tafsir* of this verse (3/473), 'Allah is telling those who said, '... 'Our houses are exposed,' even though they were not– they just wanted to run away' (*al-Ahzab*: 13) that if their enemies were to have overrun them from every direction and from every part of the city and asked them to embrace unbelief, they would have done so without delay. As soon as they felt the slightest amount of fear, they would have ceased to hold firm to their belief and would have become unbelievers. This is the way that *Qatada*, 'Abd Ar-Rahman and *Ibn Jarir* interpreted this verse.

وَلَقَدْ كَانُوا عَاهَدُوا اللَّهَ مِنْ قَبْلُ لَا يُؤَلُّونَ الْأَدْبَرَ وَكَانَ عَهْدُ اللَّهِ مَسْخُورًا ﴿١٥﴾

Yet they had already promised God that they would not turn tail and flee, and a promise to God will be answered for [15] (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 15)

The meaning of the saying of Allah, '... promised Allah...' (*al-Ahzab*: 15) is that Allah *the Almighty* presented them with a pledge that they accepted. This is what the *Ansar* did at the Pledge of 'Aqaba when they vowed to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that they would help and support him, or these words might be directed at those ⁽¹⁾ who did not fight at Badr or at Uhud, but said, 'By Allah, when another battle comes, we will take part in it and demonstrate our bravery.'

A pledge to Allah *the Almighty* is made when you make a vow before Him *the Almighty* to do something. Your first pledge to Allah *the Almighty* is to believe in Him, and so long as you believe in Him *the Almighty* you must take note of those things which He requires of you and makes you responsible for; you must beware of failing to fulfil any of His commands, since your failure to fulfil a matter required of you by Him *the Almighty* signifies that your faith is lacking. So, it ill befits you to break faith with the assurance you made to Allah *the Almighty* to believe in Him. No, rather, you must keep your promise since if you keep your word to Him, then He *the Almighty* will keep His Word to you. Do not look at the matter from your side alone, but look at the opposite side as well.

Know that Allah *the Almighty* is watching you, and know that He *the Almighty* knows what you conceal within your breast, so beware of making a promise to Him when you fully intend to break that promise. Do not think that your promise to Him can deceive Him, since your Lord knows everything that you do.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

(1) Yazd ibn Ruman said, 'They are Banu Haritha, who were on the point of losing heart along with Banu Salama on the Day of Uhud. Then when what happened to them happened, they vowed that they would not do that again so Allah is reminding them of the pledge that they themselves gave.' See Al-Qurtubi, *Jame' Ahkam Al-Quran*, 7/5410.

قُلْ لَّنْ يَنْفَعَكُمُ الْفِرَارُ إِن فَرَرْتُمْ مِّنَ الْمَوْتِ أَوِ الْقَتْلِ وَإِذَا لَا تُمْنَعُونَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿١٦﴾

**[Prophet], say, ‘Running away will not benefit you. If you manage to escape death or slaughter, you will only be permitted to enjoy [life] for a short while’ [16]
(The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 16)**

When Allah *the Almighty* says to His Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'Say...' (*al-Ahzab*: 16), He means, 'Say to those people who want to run away from the battle'. As for His saying, '...Running away will not benefit you. If you manage to escape death or slaughter...' (*al-Ahzab*: 16), we talked previously about the difference between dying and being killed, and it is because of this difference that Allah *the Almighty* says about His Prophet *Muhammad*: 'And Muhammad is only an apostle; all the [other] apostles have passed away before him: if, then, he die or is slain, will you turn about on your heels?...' (*Al-Imran*: 144).

The only one capable of bringing about death is the One Who gave life. First, by a Command from the Creator, a person's soul is plucked out and then his body is destroyed. As for killing, that is something of which creation is capable. It happens the other way round: first a person's body is destroyed and that then leads to his soul departing, since a soul cannot remain in a body that is no longer serviceable, a body that has lost those characteristics that made it a fitting home for the soul.

In this matter, there is nothing to be gained from running away since the time of everyone's death is set and cannot be avoided. It makes no difference whether your end is brought about by the Giver of life or by some created being who disobeys Allah *the Almighty* and destroys the physical frame that He *the Almighty* Himself created. What use is there in running away from a battle when we have seen many people who fought in all the battles and yet still died in their own beds? People such as Khalid ibn Al-Walid *Allah be pleased with him* said,

‘I took part in approximately one hundred attacks (against the enemy), and there was not a single inch of my body that escaped the blow of a sword or the thrust of a spear. Yet, here, I am dying on my bed like a camel. May the eyes of the cowards never sleep.’⁽¹⁾

(1) *Ibn Kathir* mentioned this in *Al-Bidaya wa Al-Nihaya* (7/117), and he traced it back to *Al-Waqidi* from ‘*Abd Ar-Rahman ibn abi Az-Zinad* from his father.

Then the Quran debates with them, saying: 'Even supposing that you had succeeded in running away from death or being killed, do you really think that your good health will last? Do you think this life will go on forever? No, it will not, for '... you will only be permitted to enjoy [life] for a short while.' (*al-Ahzab*: 16)

How quickly does life come to an end, and you come face to face with death from which there is no escape! Death is the ultimate destiny of every one of us.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says:

قُلْ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَعْصِمُكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ إِنْ أَرَادَ بِكُمْ سُوءًا أَوْ أَرَادَ بِكُمْ رَحْمَةً
وَلَا يَحِذُّونَ لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلِيًّا وَلَا نَصِيرًا ﴿١٧﴾

**Say, 'If God wishes to harm you, who can protect you? If
God wishes to show you mercy, who can prevent Him?'**

They will find no one but God to protect or help them [17]

(The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 17)

The meaning of this verse, 'Say to them, O Prophet Muhammad, 'Who is the One Who 'protects you' (*al-Ahzab*: 17), i.e. prevents you '...If Allah wishes to harm you, who can protect you? If Allah wishes to show you mercy, who can prevent Him?' (*al-Ahzab*: 17) This is like what He says in another verse: 'Today there is no protection [for anyone] from Allah's Judgment, save [for] those who have earned [His] Mercy!' (*Hud*: 43)

When Allah *the Almighty* desires evil for a people, there is no one who can protect them since no one can prevent Allah *the Almighty* from fulfilling His Promise— there are no other gods to avert the evil from those people.

There is one riddle thrown up by this verse and which requires a certain amount of clarification, and that is to be found in Allah's saying: 'If Allah wishes to show you mercy, who can prevent Him?' (*al-Ahzab*: 17) How can someone be protected from mercy? They reply that the explanation for this lies in the fact that '*isma* here means 'prevent', not 'protect'. So the meaning of the verse is that none of your enemies can stop Allah's Mercy from encompassing someone when He desires mercy for them.

Another thing we notice in this verse is that it is phrased as a question, not as a statement of fact. The Quran did not say to Muhammad, ‘Say to them, O Muhammad, that there is no one to keep you safe from Allah *the Almighty* if He desires evil for you’ because statements may be said to be true or false. Rather, He *the Almighty* wanted him *peace and blessings be upon him* to phrase the statement as a question so that they themselves would affirm the reality of the situation with their own mouths. It is as if He *the Almighty* were saying to them, ‘I am content to accept your judgement on the matter.’ If Allah *the Almighty* had not been confident that their reply would have been, ‘No one’, He would not have used the interrogative here. Therefore, we can say that the truthfulness of this statement is better established by the use of the interrogative case.

You also resort to this particular stylistic device when someone displays ingratitude to you after you have done them a good turn: you might say to him, for example, ‘Did I not do you a good turn on such-and-such a day?’ and he would then have no response except to say, ‘Yes.’

Then Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘... They will find no one but Allah to protect or help them...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 17). The Arabic word *waliy* (one to protect them) means one who is close to you. In fact, no one allows anyone to get close to them except when they hope for some benefit from them. So a *waliy* is someone who remains near you and befriends you; someone whose love for you precedes any eventuality which might occur, so when something actually does happen, he is there to protect you.

As for the Arabic word *nasir* (one to bring them succour), its meaning is similar to that of *waliy*. A *nasir* is also someone who protects you, but his protection for you comes after the event. It is often the case that he is someone who was not previously near to you.

So, the meaning of the verse is, ‘When Allah *the Almighty* desires evil for someone, he will not find a single friend, or helper to protect him from Him *Glorified is He*.’

The True Lord *the Almighty* then says⁽¹⁾:

(1) *Ibn Abu Hatim narrated that Ibn Zayd said regarding Allah's saying: 'Allah knows exactly who among you hinder others...' (al-Ahzab: 18), 'This was on the day of the battle=*

قَدْ يَعْلَمُ اللَّهُ الْمُعَوِّقِينَ مِنْكُمْ وَالْقَائِلِينَ لِإِخْوَانِهِمْ هَلُمَّ إِلَيْنَا وَلَا يَأْتُونَ الْبَأْسَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿١٨﴾

God knows exactly who among you hinder others, who [secretly] say to their brothers, 'Come and join us,' who hardly ever come out to fight [18] (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 18)

Qad is a particle to indicate perfect certainty, especially when it is used in connection with an action of Allah *the Almighty*. Usually the verb to which it is connected is in the past tense, but here the verb is in the present tense, which means that the event which is happening now will prove that Allah *the Almighty* knows the diverters and that he knew them from the pre-eternity before time even began.

If you were to say, 'This means that Allah *the Almighty* knows of the act of diverting others from taking part in the battle before it actually happens', we would reply that there is a difference between being aware of something before it happens and being aware of it while it happens. Someone might say, 'I knew, and you will repay me according to what you knew of me previously, but if you were to leave me be in the future then I will not be the source of any infringement.' It is this matter that Allah *the Almighty* desires to emphasise. A *mu'awwiq* (diverter) is one who obstructs you from what you want, holds you back from what you aspire to and tries to make you give up.

Allah's saying: 'Come and join us...' (*al-Ahzab*: 18) means, 'Approach' or 'Come here'. The word *halumma*, which appears here in the singular form,

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- = of the clans. A man left the presence of Prophet Muhammad and found his brother sitting with bread and grilled meat laid out before him, so he said to him, 'You are here surrounded by bread, grilled meat and nabdh (i.e. date nectar), while the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him is surrounded by spears and swords!' His brother replied, 'Come hither to me. The game is up for you and your companion. By the One in Whose Name he swears, Muhammad will not be able to stand up in the face (of his enemies).' So the man said, 'You lie, by the One in Whose Name he swears!' – and the man was his full brother – 'By Allah, I will tell the Prophet about you.' So he went to him Allah's peace and blessings be upon him to tell him of what had come to pass. But when he got there he found that Gabriel had already brought the news to the Prophet Muhammad Allah peace and blessings be upon him when he brought him the averse: 'Allah knows exactly who among you hinder others, who [secretly] say to their brothers, 'Come and join us,' who hardly ever come out to fight.' (The Quran, 33: 18) See *As-Suyuti, Ad-Durr Al-Manthur*, 6/580.

is indeclinable. In other words, the same form of the word is used for the singular, dual and plural, and for the masculine and feminine, like when it appears in Allah's Words: 'Say: 'Bring forward your witnesses who could bear witness that Allah has forbidden [all] this!' (*al-An'am*: 150) meaning that 'You lot bring forth.' This is how the word is used in the purest form of the Arabic language.

However, in one of the *Tuhama* variants of the language, the different suffixes are attached to *halumma* to indicate the number and gender of those addressed by the word. So you say *halumma* for masculine singular; *halummi* for feminine singular; *halumma* for dual; *halummu* for masculine plural and *halumna* for feminine plural.

As for Allah's Words: 'who hardly ever come out to fight' (*al-Ahzab*: 18), the word *ba's* (fight/peril) means 'war' or 'battle' and is used in the same sense as when it appears in Allah's saying: 'And We taught him how to make garments [of Allah-consciousness for you, [O men,] so that they might fortify you against all that may cause you fear...' (*al-Anbiya*': 80).

Elsewhere, Allah *the Almighty* says: '...and are patient in misfortune and hardship and in time of peril...' (*al-Baqara*: 177). The difference between *ba's* (peril) and *ba'sa* (misfortune) is that *ba's* simply refers to war, whereas *ba'sa* refers to every affliction or misfortune which befalls a person outside of what happens to his body, such as losing a child, losing all one's wealth or something else of that sort. As for *darra* (hardship), it refers to those afflictions which do impact a person's body, such as illness or something of that sort.

This is the sense in which it is used in Allah's saying: 'And We taught him how to make garments [of Allah-consciousness] for you, [O men,] so that they might fortify you against all that may cause you fear...' (*al-Anbiya*': 80). This refers both to the armour which man creates to fight in them and to protect the living organs of his body, such as his heart, chest, and head, for which a special piece of armour called a helmet, is made. And each suit of armour was made to be corrugated so that, when its surface was struck by a sword, it would hold up the sword and not allow it slip down to wound him in another part of his body.

That was why Allah *the Almighty* says to His Prophet Dawud (David) *peace be upon him* about the making of them: '...and give deep thought to their steady

flow...' (*Saba'*: 11), i.e. 'Take great care in how you fit together the links of the chain-mail'.

This verse also highlights the difference between the two terms *libas* and *labus*: *Libas* is those types of garments that protect you from the elements and cover up your nakedness in times of peace and security. They are those types of clothes that people wear on a day-to-day basis, and which are referred to in the Words of Allah *the Almighty*: 'And among the many objects of His creation, Allah has appointed for you [various] means of protection: thus, He has given you in the mountains places of shelter, and has endowed you with [the ability to make] garments to protect you from heat [and cold], as well as such garments as might protect you from your [mutual] violence. In this way does He bestow the full measure of His blessings on you, so that you might surrender yourselves unto Him' (*an-Nahl*: 81).

The word *labus*, on the other hand, refers only to garments that people don in times of war, such as helmets, armour, and other things of that type. This is why the Arabic morphological form used for the word *labus* is one that customarily indicates bulkiness and great size.

This verse is a wonderful example of the precise and miraculous wording of the 'an, for it mentions 'heat' here but does not mention its opposite, 'cold'. It has been the custom of many of the scholars, in their commentaries on this verse, to maintain that the word 'cold', even though it is not mentioned, is implied by the context. So, they say the verse means 'to protect you from heat and cold'⁽¹⁾, thereby seeking to supplement the words of the Quran. That is not permissible.

(1) Ibn Mandhur said in *Lisan Al-'Arab* – entry '*sarbala*', 'It is said that in the verse: '...garments to protect you from heat...' (*an-Nahl*: 81), they refer to shirts that protect you from both heat and cold, but that Allah made do with mentioning the word 'heat' because clothes that protect you from heat will also protect you from cold.' And Abu Yahya Zakariyya Al-Ansar said in his book, '*Fath Ar-Rahman bi-Kashfi ma Yaltabisu fi Al-Quran*', '...garments to protect you from heat...' (*an-Nahl*: 81), i.e. and from cold. The only reason He omitted 'cold' is because it is indicated in its opposite, just like the verse: '...In Thy hand is all good...' (*Al-'Imran*: 26) The reason that heat was chosen is because the first group of people to be addressed by the Quran were the people of the Hijaz, and, because of the fact that the severity of the heat was greater than the severity of the cold in that region, they attached more importance to protecting themselves from the heat than protecting themselves from the cold. And, in the other verse, good is mentioned instead of evil because that is what slaves hope for from their Lord.'

When we take a detailed look at this verse, we find that Allah *the Almighty* created darkness, clothing, and places of shelter in the mountains to protect us from the heat of the sun. And there is a reason why Allah *the Almighty* created this form of heat that people find unbearable, and that is because it plays a vital role in our lives: the heat of the sun serves you in many ways even though it sometimes makes you uncomfortable. Allah *the Almighty* leaves the sun in place so that you may benefit from its good, and then protects you from its harm by providing you with shade, clothing, and shelter.

But those things also protect us from the cold, you might say. The truth is that they do not because the warmth that you feel when you wear thick clothes or wrap yourself in a thick blanket comes from your own body, not from the clothes or the blanket. You are the one who warms the bed and quilt when you sleep in them; and that is proven by the fact that when you first get into bed you find it cold but, the next morning, after you have spent the night in it, you find it warm.

So, heat is transferred from your own body to your covers warming them up. Then the covers simply hold in your own warmth inside them, not letting it disperse into the surrounding air.

That is why when scientists looked into the matter of human body heat, they found in it a manifestation of the Power of Allah *the Almighty*: human beings emit enough heat in a twenty-four hour period to boil seventeen litres of water; and the average temperature of the body remains constant at 37°C whether in the heat of summer or the cold of winter, all of which proves that the thermo system of your body is completely separate from that of the surrounding atmosphere.

One of the most remarkable things about the way the human being has been created is the way that temperature varies from limb to limb and organ to organ despite the fact that they are all within a single body. There are some organs, such as the nose, ears and eyes, that have a temperature of between 7°C and 9°C - and if you were to raise the temperature of the eye above that level it would explode; and others, such as the liver, that have a temperature of 40°C; and so on and so forth. And this is despite the fact that it is the nature of heat to evenly spread itself out in a single body or a single place.

Another of the most remarkable things about the way the human being has been created in this particular regard is the phenomenon of sweating: whenever you are subjected to severe heat, sweat exudes from the pores of your skin to reduce your temperature, acting like a cooling system similar to that found in car motors. Indeed, some people, such as farmers who work the land, work so hard and sweat so much that their bodies come to be encrusted in a layer of something resembling lime but which is in fact salt created from the sweat that has poured out of their bodies. That is why those farmers eat so much *mish* 'pickled vegetables and other salty foods' in order to replace the amount of salt their bodies lose through perspiration. So, the reason Allah *the Almighty* did not say 'and cold' is because warmth is produced from within the human body.

As for Allah's words: 'who hardly ever come out to fight' (*al-Ahzab*: 18), the word *qalil* 'few', either means that none of them joined battle except for a 'few', or it means that they did join battle but only a few of them fought with energy or resolve, while the rest went out merely to pull the wool over people's eyes and make it impossible for them to be accused of remaining behind the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says:

أَشْحَةً عَلَيْكُمْ فَإِذَا جَاءَ الْخَوْفُ رَأَيْتَهُمْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَيْكَ تَدُورُ أَعْيُنُهُمْ كَالَّذِي يُغْتَنَّى
عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْمَوْتِ فَإِذَا ذَهَبَ الْخَوْفُ سَلَفُوكُمْ بِالسِّنَةِ جِدَادٍ أَشْحَةً عَلَى الْخَيْرِ
أُولَئِكَ لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوا فَاحْبِطْ اللَّهُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ وَكَانَ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرًا ﴿١٩﴾

Who begrudge you [believers] any help. When fear comes, you [Prophet] see them looking at you with eyes rolling like someone in their death throes; when fear has passed, they attack you with sharp tongues and begrudge you any good. Such men do not believe, and God brings their deeds to nothing – that is all too easy for God [19] (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 19)

Although the term *shuh* referred to in the verse as 'begrudging you any help...' (*al-Ahzab*: 19), is commonly used to mean the same thing as *bukhl*. There is in fact a difference: The *shahih* is one who, while miserly to others, might well be generous to himself and his family, while the *bakhil* is one

who is miserly to absolutely everyone, including himself. That is why Allah *the Almighty* says: 'begrudging you any help...' (*al-Ahzab*: 19), i.e. but not begrudging it to themselves.⁽¹⁾

When you reflect on blameworthy attributes in existence, you will find them to be an essential part of the natural order of things and to have an important role to play in existence. This fact was understood by the poet when he said:

Of all people, misers are the most generous,
Since they own the world but benefit from it not
They only deny people part of what they own,
In order to give them all they have accumulated.

Another poet considered misers to be doing himself a good turn. He said:
Misers are rewarded with a good turn

From me for the ease they bring my self

Yes, misers are easy on yourself since they never do anything good for you or give you anything that places you in their debt. Yes, they are easy on you because you owe them nothing. This is according to the definition of another poet:

Do people a good turn and you enslave their hearts
For good turns all too frequently enslave people

So, even though miserliness is blameworthy, Allah *the Almighty* has made it part of certain people's characters in order to help bring about its opposite. And the opposite of miserliness is generosity, so when we say, 'help bring about its opposite', we mean that misers help generous people in their task of being generous. It is habitual amongst generous people to give without restraint, expending money here and there until they have nothing left. And some

(1) *Al-Qurtubi* narrated a number of opinions in his (*Tafsir*) (7/5412) regarding how the verse: 'begrudging you all help...' (*al-Ahzab*: 19): 'It is said that 'begrudging you all help' means 'in terms of digging the trench and spending in the way of God'. This was the view of *Mujahid* and *Qatada*.

It is also said, 'in terms of fighting alongside you'.

It is also said, 'in terms of giving to your poor and needy'.

It is also said that they were miserly with the booty they plundered. This was the view of *As-Suddi*.

generous people do not stop there but are driven to sell their lands or even their homes so that they have something to give. But who would be there to buy those things from them if everyone was like them and no one hoarded wealth? Who would buy them if there were no misers?

If you look at any single thing in existence you will find that it is there for a purpose, even if that thing is inherently blameworthy. Then there is the fact that misers are often witty, their circles never being short of a witticism or two. In the early days of our youth, when some of us used to smoke cigarettes, it was the custom for one of us to take out his packet of cigarettes and distribute them amongst those who were present, and if one packet was not enough, to take out another. We had a person of that sort (i.e. a miser) in our group who, when that happened, looked at me in exasperation and said 'How could you have the heart to do that, my brother?'

However, young people should know that those cigarettes were the cause of ruining our youth, and that their effects remain with us even in old age. No, people should safeguard their youth and not destroy it by partaking of nasty forbidden substances such as this!

Then He *the Almighty* says: '... When fear comes you [Prophet] see them looking at you with eyes rolling...' (*al-Ahzab*: 19), i.e. when terror comes, it takes hold of a person's eyes and causes them to look here and there without remaining fixed or resting on any object for even a moment. Their eyes rolled '... like someone in their death throes...' (*al-Ahzab*: 19). For that reason, it says in the Hadith: 'There are many of you in times of fear, but few of you in times of greed.' This was their state in times of fear and terror and '... when fear has passed, they attack you with sharp tongues and begrudge you any good...' (*al-Ahzab*: 19). The meaning of '...they attack you sharp tongues...' (*al-Ahzab*: 19) is that they will harm you and cause you pain by means of their words. They will say to you, 'Give us what is rightfully ours for we fought alongside you. If it had not been for us, you would not have gained victory over your enemies', and give voice to many other spurious grievances and words of blame.

All of these meanings are to be found in the Arabic word *salq*, but its root meaning is to cook something, like meat, on its own in boiling water without the addition of any other ingredients. A similar term is *salkh* 'flaying' since it shares with it the idea of causing pain.

It is often the case in Arabic that when two tri-literal words have two root letters in common with the third one being different, that there is some wider meaning that links those two words together. This is true with *salaqa* and *salakha*, and it is also true with *qatafa*, *qata'a*, and *qatama* since all three words share the sense of something being separated from something else.

In Allah's words, '...with sharp tongues...' (*al-Ahzab*: 19), the Arabic word used for 'sharp' meaning *hidad* is high-pitched, forthright and in a loud voice, like in Allah's saying: '...and sharp is your sight today!' (*Qaf*: 22)

The meaning of: '...begrudging you all that is good...' (*al-Ahzab*: 19) is this: After earlier saying: 'begrudging you all help...' (*al-Ahzab*: 19), Allah *the Almighty* re-emphasises their feelings to the Muslims by saying here: '...begrudging you all that is good...' (*al-Ahzab*: 19), i.e. in its general sense

Such '... men do not believe...' (*al-Ahzab*: 19) since, if they had believed, they would have known that it was not in their interests to begrudge you and that, by doing so, they were in fact begrudging themselves since generous people seek increase from the bounty of their Lord while misers have no increase from anywhere. It is for that reason that Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Behold, [O believers,] it is you who are called upon to spend freely in Allah's cause: but [even] among you are such as turn out to be niggardly! And yet, he who acts niggardly [in Allah's cause] is but niggardly towards his own self...' (*Muhammad*: 38).

When your Lord *the Almighty* sees you spending out from that which He *the Almighty* has given you, He *the Almighty* will give you more, since your provision from Him is guaranteed. That is why a righteous person once said, 'O Allah, you have made me accustomed to good things, and I have made (parts) of your creation accustomed to good things, so do not cut me off from what you have accustomed me to so I do not have to cut off people from what I have accustomed them to.' So giving allows Allah's blessings to flow and causes them to increase and become abundant.

Suppose, for example, that you had many children: if you were to give one of them a pound and he were then to go out, buy some sweets with it and distribute them amongst his siblings without giving any preference to himself over them, then you would most certainly put your trust in him and give him more since when he is entrusted with something good, it spills over from him to encompass the rest.

The result of their lack of faith is that: '... , and Allah brings their deeds to nothing– that is all too easy for Allah...' (*al-Ahzab*: 19), i.e. they did what they did, but their works lacked any worth in terms of faith, so Allah *the Almighty* made them come to nought. In other words, He made them such that they would never derive any benefit or profit from them. This is clearly stated by Allah *the Almighty* in the Quran when He *the Almighty* says: '[This, then, is] the parable of those who are bent on denying their Lord: all their works are as ashes which the wind blows about fiercely on a stormy day: [in the life to come,] they cannot achieve any benefit whatever from all [the good] that they may have wrought: for this [denial of Allah] is indeed the farthest one can go astray.' (*Ibrahim*: 18)

It is easy for Allah *the Almighty* to make their works equal nothing. Here, we stress that there is nothing difficult for Allah *the Almighty*. This is because everything is easy for Him *Glorified is He* since He does not make things by manipulating or handling them, but merely by saying to them 'Be', and they are. Previously we gave an example of someone manipulating or handling things; a man who wants to transport a huge amount of wheat from one place to another: the only way he can do so is by dividing it up and carrying it in small loads. So he must first take one sack from here to there, and then another sack, and so on until he finishes moving the entire amount. The amount of time and effort that this job takes corresponds to the strength of the man who is doing it. Then as science progressed and human thinking evolved, we invented machines that enabled us to carry and transport the entire amount in a single go by simply pressing a few buttons or turning a few keys. So, if a slave who has been created by Allah *the Almighty* is capable of doing things with this degree of ease, then how easy do you suppose things must be for the Creator *the Almighty* Himself? That is why Allah *the Almighty* says: 'His command, when He intends anything, is only to say to it: Be, so it is.' (*Ya Sin*: 82) Do not be amazed by this matter since your Lord *the Almighty* has given you yourselves something like that. You should not astonish; Allah *the Almighty* is fully able to do things by simply saying 'Be'; when you see how your own limbs move around simply because you want them to. By simply willing yourself to stand up, you find that you have stood up without giving any commands to your limbs or muscles. If someone asks why someone does not command their limbs and organs to do what he wants of them, I reply that you

do not have the ability to command them. They thus submit to you dues to the fact that Allah *the Almighty* has commanded them, for everything, without exception, carries out the commands of the Creator *the Almighty*. Nothing ever goes against what He *the Almighty* has commanded. Have you not read what He *the Almighty* said about the sky? 'And obeys its Lord and it must.' (*ash-Sharh*: 2) The sky, despite its immensity, hears and obeys the command of its Creator. As for you, a weak slave, what is it that you command when you have no idea whatsoever to whom you direct your commands? Do you know each of the muscles, organs, and nerves which come together within you to enable you to stand? With your lack of knowledge of what commands to give them, Allah *the Almighty* has made all your organs and limbs act in response to your will alone. As for Him, He *the Almighty* says 'Be' because He is the Creator of all things and all things submit to His Commands. Allah *the Almighty* said 'Be' so that you would not have to say it yourself. It is as if He *the Almighty* said 'Be' beforehand with your own interests in mind; in other words, it is from that first command of 'Be' that all of your actions emanate.

Allah *the Almighty* says:

يَحْسَبُونَ الْأَحْزَابَ لَمْ يَذْهَبُوا وَإِنْ يَأْتِ الْأَحْزَابُ يَوَدُّوا لَوْ أَنَّهُمْ بَادُونَ فِي
الْأَعْرَابِ يَسْتَخْلِفُونَ عَنْ أَنْبِيَائِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانُوا فِيكُمْ مَا قَاتَلُوا إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿٢٠﴾

They think the joint forces have not gone, and if the joint forces did come again they would wish they were in the desert, wandering among the Bedouin and seeking news about you [from a safe distance]. Even if they were with you [believers], they would hardly fight at all [20] (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 20)

The Noble Quran relates the position of the hypocrites and exposes their bad intentions. Even after the clans had banded together and gone out to make war on the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* those hypocrites still, as Allah *the Almighty* says: '... think the joint forces have not gone...' (*al-Ahzab*: 20). This huge concentration of troops scared them out of their wits, so they did not believe it. They saw that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* defeated his enemies when they were separate, but this was the first time that all the enemies of Islam, despite their individual

differences, had banded together into a single mass. So the hypocrites found it hard to believe that the clans would band together in such a way.

The use of the word *husban* (think) indicates that they were merely speculating and not speaking of the reality of the situation. Allah *the Almighty* says: '...and if the allies should come (again) they would fain be in the deserts...' (*al-Ahzab*: 20) meaning that if the clans did indeed band together, and then the hypocrites would prefer to become Bedouin and live with the desert Arabs. In other words, they wanted to go into the desert far away from Medina and live there because they feared the huge enemy army and because if they remained in Medina, they knew they would have to either fight the clans without being sure of victory, or not to fight and thus become enemies of the Muslims. So, because they wanted to remain living in hypocrisy, they wanted to go out and live in the desert with the Bedouins, and then, from a position of safety far away from danger, they were, as Allah *the Almighty* says, '...asking for news about you...' (*al-Ahzab*: 20), meaning that they asked about how you fared in the battle. Then the Quran affirms this reality when Allah *the Almighty* says: '...and if they were among you they would not fight save a little.' (*al-Ahzab*: 20) This means that they will fight in order to allay your suspicions and prove that they fought with you. Therefore do not despair about them and do not be sad about the fact that they remain behind.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ
يَرْجُوا اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا ﴿٢١﴾

**The Messenger of God is an excellent model for those of you
who put your hope in God and the Last Day and remember
Him often [21] (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 21)**

The Arabic word *uswa* means 'role model' or 'example of good behaviour'. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in addition to his mission of conveying Allah's Way of Guidance prepared for man to safeguard his progress through life, was also an example for good character and correct behaviour. It is all too easy for you to speak or preach to others. What is important, however, is that your own actions accord with what you say and want, and

this is how Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was both a conveyor of the Message and a paradigm for good conduct. It is for this reason that 'A'isha *Allah be pleased with her* said about him *peace and blessings be upon him*, 'His character was the Quran.'⁽¹⁾ But what is the good example shown to us by Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in this regard of the war of the clans? When the clans banded together against him, one of the supplications he *peace and blessings be upon him* used to make against them was, 'O Allah *the Almighty*! O You Who sends down the Book and is swift in reckoning, destroy the clans! O Allah *the Almighty* defeats them and shakes them up!'⁽²⁾ He *peace and blessings be upon him* later made the slogan of belief, 'There is no god but Allah Alone. He was true to His Promise, gave victory to His slave, made His army mighty and He alone defeated the clans.'⁽³⁾

And as long as that is the slogan of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* he is an example for you. Allah *the Almighty* says about the believers during this battle: '...distress and affliction befell them and they were shaken violently so that the Apostle and those who believed with him said: When will the help of Allah come...' (*al-Baqara*: 214). During the battle of Badr, Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* said, 'O Messenger of Allah! Lessen your appeal of your Lord, for He will surely fulfil His Promise to you.'⁽⁴⁾ If someone were

(1) See Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 163, 6/91; Al-Bayhaqi, *Dalail An-Nubuwwa*, 1/310, from a Hadith narrated on the authority of 'A'isha that Sa'd ibn Hisham ibn 'Amir said, 'I went to 'A'isha and said to her, 'Mother of the faithful, tell me about the character of Prophet Muhammad.' She replied, 'His character was the Quran. Have you not read the saying of Allah the Almighty in the Quran: '...and most surely you conform (yourself) to sublime morality' (*al-Qalam*: 4)?

(2) This Hadith is agreed upon. See Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Hadith no.2933; Muslim, *Sahih*, Hadith no.1742. .

(3) This Hadith is agreed upon. See Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 4114; Muslim, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 2724. in *Kitab Adh-Dhikr wa Ad-Du'a'* in chapter (18) from a Hadith narrated on the authority of Abu Hurayra with the wording, 'There is no god but Allah Alone. He made His army mighty, gave victory to His slave, overcame the confederates on His own and there is nothing after Him.'

(4) See Ibn Hisham, *As-Sira An-Nabawiyya*, no. (2/627). It is narrated that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* straightened the ranks of the Muslims on the day of the battle of Badr, then returned to his hut and went inside. And the only other person in the hut with him was Abu Bakr As-Siddiq. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was beseeching his Lord for the victory that He had promised him with, and said as part of his supplication, 'O Allah, if this band of men perishes today=

to ask, 'If Allah *the Almighty* had promised victory to His Prophet *peace and blessing be upon him* then why was he so persistent in his supplication to Him?' I would reply, 'It was not for the purpose of victory that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* so persistently supplicated, since that was a certain promise from his Lord. Read the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'And when Allah promised you one of the two parties that it shall be yours and you loved that the one not armed should be yours and Allah desired to manifest the truth of what was true by His words and to cut off the root of the unbelievers.' (*al-Anfal*: 7) So, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not want victory over the caravan or over the trade network of Quraysh, but wanted victory over the band of men who had come out from Mecca to make war on him.

So, when Allah *the Almighty* says: '...in the Messenger of Allah...' (*al-Ahzab*: 21), it is as if He is saying that it is in the entire being of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that the good example is to be found. The good example is within him, in every one of his limbs and organs. There is a good example in his tongue; there is a good example in his eyes; there is good examples in his hands; and so on and so forth. Every part of him is a good example. But he is an example to the one whom Allah mentioned in the Quran: '... for those of you who put your hope in Allah and the Last Day and remember Him often.' (*al-Ahzab*: 21) Remembrance of Allah *the Almighty* is described with the adjective 'plentiful' (unceasing) because, unlike the other duties of Islam which require preparation and are cumbersome and difficult, remembrance of Allah *the Almighty* as we said previously, is not difficult at all and costs you nothing; and that is why Allah *the Almighty* says: '...and certainly the remembrance of Allah is the greatest...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 45) meaning that it is greater than any other act of obedience to Allah *the Almighty* since it is light on the tongue and you can do it at any time and in any place, regardless of whatever else you are doing. That is why He *the Almighty* says in the chapter of *al-Jumu'a*: 'but when the prayer is ended, then disperse abroad in the land and seek of Allah's grace, and remember Allah much...' (*al-Jumu'a*: 10).

= You will not be worshipped anymore.' Then Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* drowsed off for a short while then woke up and said, 'Rejoice, Abu Bakr, Allah's victory is at hand. Here is Gabriel leading a horse by its reins with dust on his front teeth.'

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

وَلَمَّا رَأَى الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الْأَحْزَابَ قَالُوا هَذَا مَا وَعَدَنَا اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ
وَصَدَقَ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ ۚ وَمَا زَادَهُمْ إِلَّا إِيمَانًا وَتَسْلِيمًا ﴿٢٢﴾

When the believers saw the joint forces, they said, ‘This is what God and His Messenger promised us: the promise of God and His Messenger is true,’ and this only served to increase their faith and submission to God [22] (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 22)

This means that when the believers saw the clans withdrawing in defeat from the battlefield, they said as Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...they said, "This is what Allah and His Messenger promised us: the promise of Allah and His Messenger is true"...' (*al-Ahzab*: 22) meaning that this victory and this promise had already come true: ‘... and this only served to increase their faith and submission to Allah.’ (*al-Ahzab*: 22) Here is one of the proofs that faith both increases and decreases: faith increases as belief in the secondary matters that advance it increases, for after belief in Allah *the Almighty* comes belief in those secondary matters that prove the Trueness of Allah *the Almighty* in everything that He *the Almighty* does. The saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...and submission to Allah’ (*al-Ahzab*: 22) means to surrender to Allah *the Almighty* in every situation that He *the Almighty* places His slaves in.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ رِجَالٌ صَدَقُوا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللَّهَ عَلَيْهِ فَمِنْهُمْ
مَّن قَضَىٰ نَحْبَهُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّن يَنْتَظِرُ وَمَا بَدَّلُوا تَبْدِيلًا ﴿٢٣﴾

There are men among the believers who honoured their pledge to God: some of them have fulfilled it by death, and some are still waiting. They have not changed in the least [23] (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 23)

This verse was revealed about a group of believers who were true to their faith⁽¹⁾, but had not taken part in either the battle of Badr or the battle of

(1) ‘Ali ibn Abu Taleb said about Talha ibn ‘Ubayd Allah, ‘He was the man about whom the verse: ‘...some of them have fulfilled it by death, and some are still waiting...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 23) was revealed. Talha was one of those who redeemed his pledge and so there will be no=

Uhud, so they vowed to Allah *the Almighty* that if there was another battle, they would be the first ones there and would be tested in it in an excellent way. It is transmitted that this verse was revealed about Anas ibn An-Nadr who vowed to Allah *the Almighty* after missing Badr, that if another battle against the idolaters came along, he would be tested in it in an excellent way. And, indeed, when Uhud came, he was tested in it in an excellent way, so much so that he was martyred. When they found his body after the battle, they found more than eighty spear and sword wounds in it ⁽¹⁾. This is the meaning of the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...the men who honoured their pledge to Allah...' (*al-Ahzab*: 23). Whenever you heard the word *rijal* (men) mentioned in the Quran, you know that the case that is being referred to is one of gravity, adherence to the truth and pride with firm, unwavering resolve and hearts in which faith has firmly taken root. These men fulfilled the promise they made before Allah *the Almighty* that they would put their lives on the line in order to bring about the victory of Islam, even if that meant dying as martyrs. In the saying of Allah: '...some of them have fulfilled it by death, and some are still waiting...' (*al-Ahzab*: 23), the phrase *qada nahbah* means that they fulfilled their promise and died. The root meaning of the word (*nahb*) is 'pledge', so the phrase means 'fulfilling what he pledged to do', or 'fulfilling his vow to Allah *the Almighty* to fight.' Then the word (*nahb*) is also used to mean 'death'.

= *reckoning for him in the future.* 'Isa ibn Talha said that the Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him passed by Talha and said, 'This is one of those who have redeemed his pledge.' See *Al-Wahidi An-Nisaburi, Asbab An-Nuzul*, pp. 202-203.

- (1) Anas ibn Malik said, 'My paternal uncle, Anas ibn An-Nadr, was absent from the battle of Badr and that matter weighed down heavily upon him so he said, 'I was absent from the first battle in which Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him took part but, by Allah the Almighty if Allah the Almighty gave me the opportunity to take part in a battle, He would see what I would then do!' Then, when the day of the battle of Uhud came and the Muslims were exposed to defeat, he said, 'O Allah the Almighty free me from blame for what those idolaters have brought and excuse for what these Muslims have done.' Then, with sword in his hand, he walked forward until he met Sa'd ibn Mu'adh who said to him, 'By the One Who holds my soul in His hand, I have smelled the scent of Paradise below Uhud.' Then Anas ibn An-Nadr fought the enemy until he was martyred.' Anas ibn Malik continued, 'When we found his body among the dead, we discovered that he had received more than eighty wounds, some from sword strikes, some from spear thrusts and some from arrow piercings, and that he had been mutilated by the enemy. In fact, we did not even know whose body it was until his sister recognised him by his fingers. Then the verse was revealed. See *Al-Wahidi An-Nisaburi, Asbab An-Nuzul*, p 4/329.

But what is the relation between making a pledge and death? Scholars replied that when you make that pledge, you make your life the price of fulfilling that pledge. So, the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...some of them have fulfilled it by death...' (*al-Ahzab*: 23) is there to let you know that there must be a solemn pledge from you to die. In other words, you must make an oath to Allah *the Almighty* that you will die, on condition that this must be done in support of Truth and the Way of Allah *the Almighty*. It is as if He *the Almighty* were saying that the believer is the one who pledges his life and soul to Allah *the Almighty* and as if death were required of him to make his actions truly be in the Way of Allah *the Almighty*.

When the believer looks into the matter of death, he sees that death is one of the established facts in the universe; people, from the time of Adam *peace be upon him* until the present day, are subject to it. That is why his life is of so little importance so long as he is acting in the Way of Allah *the Almighty* and so he willingly and gladly pledges it to Him *the Almighty*. And why not! For by doing that, you have swapped a life that will cease to be replaced with a life of eternal luxury and blessing. We find narrated in a Hadith, 'I have not seen any form of certainty more similar to doubt than the certainty of people that they will die.' Despite our awareness that death comes to everyone, there is still some part of each of us that imagines that we will never die. It is every believer's right to pledge his life and sacrifice it in the way of Allah *the Almighty*. This is because Allah *the Almighty* Himself says: 'And reckon not those who are killed in Allah's way as dead; nay, they are alive (and) are provided sustenance from their Lord; Rejoicing in what Allah has given them out of His grace and they rejoice for the sake of those who, (being left) behind them, have not yet joined them, that they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve. They rejoice on account of favour from Allah and (His) grace, and that Allah will not waste the reward of the believers.' (*Al-Imran*: 169-171) This life in the Hereafter is the real, not metaphorical since *rizq* (provision) or (sustenance) is a characteristic of alive creatures who eat, drink, sleep and so on and so forth: you must not think that only a metaphorical form of life is being described here. You might well hear some people scoff and say to you, 'Does that mean that if I were to open up the graves of those who died as martyrs, I would find them be alive?' We reply to those who love to dispute over this matter; Allah *the Almighty* says: '... they are alive (and) are provided sustenance

from their Lord.' (*Al-Imran*: 169) meaning that they are not alive with you, so do not use your own laws to judge this life that is described here. Do not transpose the laws of this world to the Hereafter. Believers should view death in the way described by one of the mystics; they should see it as an arrow that has already been fired at you, and that your life takes place in the length of time that it takes for that arrow to reach you. In the course of the Quran's discussion of this matter, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Blessed is He in Whose hand is the kingdom, and He has power over all things, Who created death and life...' (*al-Mulk*: 1-2). Allah *the Almighty* mentions death before life so that it is not with the illusion of living that we go into life but with its opposite so that we are protected from its deception. As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...and some are still waiting...' (*al-Ahzab*: 23), it means that they await the fulfilment of their pledge to Allah *the Almighty*. It is as if He *the Almighty* were saying, 'Good will remain in you, O *Ummah* (followers of the Prophet) of Prophet Muhammad, until the Day of Resurrection.' Allah *the Almighty* then says: '...They have not changed in the least.' (*al-Ahzab*: 23) The meaning of *tabdil* (change) refers to those things that they pledged to Allah *the Almighty* with but then failed to do. But whenever a war came after that point, none of them ever again failed: none of them entered a war to show off, avoiding the heat of battle by fighting from a distance, or retreated because of fear of death. No, rather, they remained in the front ranks where the fighting was at its fiercest until they achieved martyrdom. The True Lord *the Almighty* then says:

لِيَجْزِيَ اللَّهُ الصَّادِقِينَ بِصِدْقِهِمْ وَيُعَذِّبَ الْمُنَافِقِينَ
 إِنْ شَاءَ أَوْ يَتُوبَ عَلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ﴿٢٤﴾

[Such trials are ordained] so that God may reward the truthful for their honesty and punish the hypocrites, if He so wills, or He may relent towards them, for God is forgiving and merciful [24] (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 24)

Reflect here upon the Mercy of Allah *the Almighty* to His creation, that mercy which no one is denied, not even the hypocrite, for Allah *the Almighty* says: '...and punish the hypocrites, if He so wills, or He may relent towards them...' (*al-Ahzab*: 24). We previously discussed the two Attributes of Forgiveness and Mercy; we previously mentioned that the two words *ghafur*

(Much Forgiving) and *rahim* (Dispenser of Mercy) were intensive forms. In other words, their morphological roots are indicative of much forgiving and much mercy. These two words are often linked together in the Quran, so Allah *the Almighty* forgives people first by covering up their faults and defects, then He follows that up with His Mercy by extending His Hand towards them in charity and kindness. We gave a clear example of that of the thief whom you find in your home, and then towards whom your heart softens, to the extent that you might offer him the sort of support that will help him not have to commit such a crime again. Then we mentioned that forgiveness usually precedes mercy, although mercy does on certain rare occasions precede forgiveness. We also mentioned that one of the preconditions of forgiveness is that it comes from a higher being to a lesser one: when a slave covers up something ugly in his master, it cannot be said of him that he forgave him. The same is true with respect to mercy – if a lesser being does an act of kindness towards a higher being, this is not called mercy since he might have done that to repay an act of kindness done to him or in anticipation of getting something back at a later date.

The True Lord *the Almighty* then says:

وَرَدَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِغَيْظِهِمْ لَمْ يَنَالُوا خَيْرًا وَكَفَى اللَّهُ
 الْمُؤْمِنِينَ الْقِتَالَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ قَوِيًّا عَزِيزًا ﴿٢٥﴾

**God sent back the disbelievers along with their rage
 – they gained no benefit — and spared the believers
 from fighting. He is strong and mighty [25]
 (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 25)**

The word *Ghayzh* (fury) is when one burns with hatred for an opponent. The meaning of the verse is that Allah *the Almighty* repulsed the unbelievers whose hearts were filled with fury at the fact that they were forced to leave without taking anything from the Muslims; He *the Almighty* says: ‘...they gained no benefit...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 25). This does not refer to good in its general sense, but to what they perceived as good. So, the verse means that they did not achieve victory over Muslims, which would have been good for them but bad for Islam. Allah *the Almighty* inflicted such a reverse on the unbelievers that they were unable to ever come back from it, for after that

defeat, they never again thought of attacking the Muslims. That is why Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said after they withdrew in defeat, 'They will never attack us again. We will, however, attack them.'⁽¹⁾ And, indeed, the conquest of Mecca came soon after. As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty* '...and Allah spared the believers from fighting...' (*al-Ahzab*: 25), it means that it was not your strength or fighting prowess that defeated the unbelievers, but Allah *the Almighty* Himself is the One Who took care of that, repulsing them and sparing you the need of fighting them. It is true that there were a few skirmishes but nothing came close to turning the fighting into a full-blown war. And, indeed, it would not have been in the best interests of the believers if a battle had taken place since there were only three thousand Muslims, while there were ten thousands of the idolaters. So, it was Allah's Mercy to the believers that caused their victory. For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* ends the verse with His saying, '...He is strong and mighty.' (*al-Ahzab*: 25) meaning that He is All Powerful, All Strong in the sense that He gave you victory without you even engaging in fighting. In addition, He is Almighty in the sense that He *Glorified is He* was the Conqueror, not the conquered. This is what happened to Quraysh and its allies.

As for Banu Quraydha, Allah *the Almighty* says:

وَأَنزَلَ الَّذِينَ ظَاهَرُوهُمْ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ مِنْ صَيَاصِيهِمْ وَقَذَفَ
فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الرُّعْبَ فَرِيقًا تَقْتُلُونَ وَنَأْسِرُونَ فَرِيقًا ﴿٢٦﴾

**He brought those People of the Book who supported them
down from their strongholds and put panic into their hearts.
Some of them you [believers] killed and some you took
captive[26] (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 26)**

The word *Zaharuhum* (supported them) refers to those who helped them. As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...from their strongholds...' (*al-Ahzab*: 26),

(1) See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 4109 & 4110; Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 4/262, from a Hadith narrated on the authority of Sulayman ibn Sard. Al-'Asqalani said in Fath Al-Bari (7/405), 'This contains one of the signs of prophethood for he went on 'umra (voluntary pilgrimage) the following year and then, when Quraysh blocked him from coming to the House, he made a truce with them which remained in effect until they broke it. And that was the cause that led to the Muslim's conquering Mecca. So everything happened as he said it would.'*

it means from their citadels and fortresses. As for His saying: ‘...and put panic into their hearts...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 26), it refers to fear, which is one of the hosts of Allah *the Almighty*. It was this terror that He *the Almighty* cast into the hearts of the unbelievers and which caused them to split up and made the sheer size of their army meaningless, since of what value are legions of soldiers who are all terrified out of their wits as Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...they think every cry to be against them...’ (*al-Munafiqun*: 4)! Did the Companions not tell us that when they were cleaning their teeth with their *siwak* (sticks), the unbelievers thought that they were sharpening their teeth to eat them? This is the level of terror by which Allah *the Almighty* gave victory to His believing slaves. As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...Some of them you [believers] killed...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 26), it refers to those combatants who bore weapons against you. As for His saying: ‘...and some you took captive.’ (*al-Ahzab*: 26), it refers to the women, children and those who were not armed.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

وَأَوْرَثَكُمْ أَرْضَهُمْ وَدِيَارَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُمْ وَأَرْضًا لَّمْ تَطْعُوهَا
وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرًا

He passed on to you their land, their houses, their possessions, and a land where you had not set foot: God has power over everything [27] (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 27)

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘He passed on to you...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 27), it means that He *the Almighty* gave you the land, houses and possessions of your enemies after they had been wiped out and defeated. As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...and a land where you had not set foot...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 27), it means new places you, O Muslims, have never been to before. This part of the verse refers mainly to the land of Khaybar. It is as if Allah *the Almighty* were saying to them, ‘If you wait a while, then you will take a lot from them.’ He *the Almighty* then says: ‘... Allah has power over everything.’ (*al-Ahzab*: 27) Thus ends the Quranic description of the tale of the clans.⁽¹⁾ But it would be

(1) *Ibn Abu Shayba, Ibn Jarir, Ibn Al-Mundhir and Ibn Abu Hatim all narrated that Qatada said about the saying of Allah the Almighty: ‘He brought those people of the Book who=*

useful for us to now consider the philosophical implications of the various things that happened in the story, and look at the numerous acts of heroism that took place during it, and the roles that those heroes played.

The story⁽¹⁾ begins when two of the leaders of Banu Qurayzha, i.e. Huyayy ibn Akhtab and Sallam ibn Abu Al-Huqayq went to see Quraysh in Mecca and said to them, 'We have come to help you bring an end to the Call of Muhammad. If you attack from below and we attack from above, then we can surround him and his followers, thus destroy them completely.' Quraysh had a certain amount of discernment, so they said to Huyayy ibn Akhtab, 'You are people who have a Book and have more knowledge in matters of religion than we do, so tell us whose religion is better: ours or Muhammad's?' They replied, 'You are the ones who are upon the truth.'⁽²⁾

= supported them...' (al-Ahzab: 26) that it refers to Banu Qurayzha who offered their aid to Abu Sufyan, kept a line of communication open to him and broke the pact they had made with Prophet Muhammad Allah's peace and blessings be upon him. Then, while he Allah's peace and blessings be upon him was with Zaynab bint Jahsh, washing his head after she had already washed his side, Gabriel came to him and said, 'Allah the Almighty pardons you! It is forty days since the angels last put down their weapons. Go forth to the Banu Qurayzha. I have cut loose the pegs of their tents, flung open their doors and left them confused and shaken up.'

So Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him set out, laid siege to them and called out to them, addressing them as the brothers of monkeys. So they replied to him, saying, 'Abu Al-Qasim, you never used to use bad language!' Then they came down under the agreement that their fate would be in the hands of Sa'd ibn Mu'adh. He had been an ally of theirs, so they hoped he would treat them with mercy and compassion. However, Abu Lubaba gestured to them what their fate would be, so Allah the Almighty revealed the verse: 'O you who believe! be not unfaithful to Allah and the Messenger...' (al-Anfal: 27). Then Sa'd ruled that their combatants be killed, their children be enslaved and their lands and property be distributed among the Emigrants not the Helpers. Thereupon (some of) the Helpers said, 'The Emigrants have been given preference over us by being given that property,' so Sa'd said, 'You are people who already have property, whereas the Emigrants have not had any property of their own.' It is said that Prophet Muhammad Allah's peace and blessings be upon him then said the Takbir and said, 'You have judged them with the Judgment of Allah the Almighty!' See As-Suyuti, Ad-Durr Al-Manthur fi At- Tafsir bi Al-Ma'thur, 6/591.

(1) The preparation and beginning for the battle of the clans.

(2) Allah the Almighty says: Have you not seen those to whom a portion of the Book has been given? They believe in idols and false deities and say of those who disbelieve: These are better guided in the path than those who believe.' (an-Nisa': 51) It is =

Quraysh heard these words pandering to their desires and wishful thoughts, and as the saying goes, 'Wishful thinking is the bane of good sense.' That is why they, i.e. the people of Quraysh did not engage with them, i.e. the Jews in any discussion about the matter but simply went along with them; they even neglected to bring up the way the people of the Book had used to deal with them before Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* appeared on the scene, or the fact that they had used to pray for victory over them, i.e. Quraysh through the awaited Messenger, saying, 'The time is at hand of a new Prophet whom we will follow, and with whose support, we will kill you as 'Ad and the people of 'Iram were killed.'⁽¹⁾

Quraysh missed an opportunity to call Huyayy ibn Akhtab to account and ask him why their opinion about Muhammad had changed. Then, after that, the Quran showed up both these groups of people: 'Have you not seen those to whom a portion of the Book has been given? They believe in idols and false deities and say of those who disbelieve: These are better guided in the path than those who believe.' (*an-Nisa'*: 51) This was the first example of brainlessness and unsound reasoning in the battle. Quraysh, finding someone

= narrated that 'Ikrima said, 'Huyayy ibn Akhtab and Ka'b ibn Al-Ashraf came to the people of Mecca who said to them, 'You are people of the Book and people of knowledge, so tell us about us about Muhammad.' 'What about you and Muhammad?' they asked. Quraysh replied, 'We maintain our ties of kinship, sacrifice camels, give water to drink in exchange for (laban), let our prisoners go and give water to the pilgrims, while Muhammad is a solitary palm-tree who has cut off his ties of kinship to us and who has been followed by those thieving pilgrims from Ghifar. So who is better than the other: we or him?' They replied, 'You are better and more surely guided.' See Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir*, 1/513.

(1) Mohamed ibn 'Ishaq narrated from 'Asim ibn 'Amr from Qatada Al-'Ansari that one of his teachers said, 'By Allah the Almighty this story – meaning the verse: 'And when there came to them a Book from Allah verifying that which they have, and aforetime they used to pray for victory against those who disbelieve, but when there came to them (Prophet) that which they did not recognise, they disbelieved in him...' (*al-Baqara*: 89) – was revealed about us and about them – meaning about the Helpers and the Jews who were their neighbours. The Helpers said, 'In the time of ignorance before Islam, we, the idolaters, subjugated them, the People of the Book, and held the upper hand over them, so they would say to us, 'A Prophet will now be sent whom we will follow: his time is at hand, and when he arrives, we will kill you as 'Ad and the people of 'Iram were killed.' Then when Allah the Almighty sent a Prophet from Quraysh, we followed them and they rejected him.' See Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir*, (1/124).

willing to help them against Prophet Muhammad and his religion, seized the opportunity and gathered together its soldiers as well those from its allies from Banu Fudhara, Banu Murra, Ghatafan, Banu Asad, the people of Al-Ashja' and others. All of these tribes banded together to try to finish off the new religion. The first act of heroism that took place in this battle was not by an Arab, but by someone from Persia, the nation of fire-worshippers – May Allah *the Almighty* protect us from ever doing that. It was as if Allah *the Almighty* were committed to bring about the triumph of Truth even if that had to be through something false. The hero in question was the esteemed Companion, Salman Al-Farisi,⁽¹⁾ who had spent his whole life wandering the earth searching for the Truth until the winds of fate brought him to Medina; and it was there that he encountered Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and believed in him. By suggesting the construction of the trench to him *peace and blessings be upon him* Salman became the first hero of the battle. He said, 'O Messenger of Allah, when the fighting became intense, we – meaning the Persians – built trenches,' meaning that they placed ditches between themselves and the enemy. Both the Emigrants and the Helpers met this idea with approval and so both of them tried to claim Salman as one of their own. But when their dispute reached Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* he denied both of them and said, 'Salman is one of us, the people of the House (*Ahlu Al-Bayt*).'⁽²⁾ This was

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- (1) *Salman Al-Farisi was one of the foremost Companions: he originally came from a family of Magians in Isfahan. He travelled to Sham and Nisabin and read the books of the Persians, Byzantines and Jews. Then he heard about Islam, sought out Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him and heard what he had to say. He did not become Muslim, however, until after he had been freed from the bondage of slavery. He used to weave together wool and eat barley bread bought with money he had earned. He died in 36 A.H. See Az-Zirkili, Al-'Alam, 3/112.*
- (2) *'Amr ibn 'Awf Al-Muzni said, 'In the year of the battle of the clans, Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him dug a trench, beginning at the place where the palm trees were at their thickest at the edge of (the lands of) the Banu Haritha, and assigned work crews of ten people to every forty arm's length of the trench. While this was being done, the Emigrants and the Helpers quarreled over Salman Al-Farisi who was a strong man, with the Helpers saying that he was one of them and the Emigrants saying the same. So, Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said, 'Salman is one of us, the people of the House (Ahlu Al-Bayt).' See Al-Bayhaqi, Dala'il An-Nubuwwa, 3/418; Al-Hakim, Al-Mustadrak, 3/598. Adh-Dhahabi, however, considered this Hadiith to have a weak chain of narrations because of the presence of Kathir ibn 'Abdullah as one of the narrators.*

the greatest honour that could possibly have been given to Salman. This idea of Salman's is a proof that Allah *the Almighty* even conscripts falsehood to serve in the army of Truth – we had never even seen a trench before nor met the Persian people who came up with the idea, and yet, by means of this great Companion, Allah *the Almighty* conveyed it to us and made it serve in our defence as one of His Hosts. He did this so that we might know, as He *the Almighty* says, '...and know that Allah intervenes between man and his heart...' (*al-Anfal*: 24). We fully illustrated this point when we commented on the story of Pharaoh in which he slaughtered the children of the Israelites after hearing the prophecy that one of them would bring about his downfall. Then, one day, an infant came to him in a way, not normally expected, carried to him in a box floating upon the water. Everyone well-knows that the reason the infant's family did that to him was to get him as far out of the reach of Pharaoh as possible but, despite that, Allah *the Almighty* intervened between Pharaoh and the desires of his heart, thus caused him to be the one who took the child into his home and raise him as a son.

A poet expressed this beautifully when he wrote:

If you find no concern in your children

Then know that hopes are often dashed and left unrealised:

The Moses who was raised by Gabriel became an unbeliever,

While the Moses who was raised by Pharaoh became a Messenger!

The second hero of this battle was a man called Nu'aym ibn Mas'ud Al-'Ashja'i.⁽¹⁾ He came to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and said to him, 'O Messenger of Allah, my heart has become favourably disposed to Islam, but there is not one of my people who knows that.' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, 'What use are you alone? What you can do, however, (is to go among them) and use trickery on our

(1) Nu'aym ibn Mas'ud 'Amir Al-'Ashja'i, Abu Salama, was a famous Companion who embraced Islam during the battle of the Trench. It was he who instigated the disagreement between the tribes of Qurayzha and Ghatafan, which led to Ghatafan leaving Medina. Nu'aym was killed at the battle of the Camel during the beginning of the Caliphate of 'Ali before 'Ali had come to Basra. It is also said that he died during the Caliphate of 'Uthman, and Allah *the Almighty* knows best. See Ibn Hajar, *Al-'Isaba fi Tamyiz As-Sahaba*, no. 8780.

behalf,⁽¹⁾ meaning that 'use whatever means available to you to rid us of them – such as making them get lost on the way or go far away or instilling fear in them by telling them that our army is huge.' This is a man who was only the previous day an unbeliever, and yet look what effect faith had on his heart even though it had been there for but a short while. Nu'aym looked around and saw that Quraysh and its followers were coming from below and Banu Quraydha and its followers were coming from above. He wanted to create discord between the two parties, so he went to Abu Sufyan and said, 'Abu Sufyan, I am your friend and you know I have no connection to the religion of Muhammad. However, I have heard a rumour that Banu Qurayzha have made peace with Muhammad, saying that Quraysh and her allies do not live in Medina so, if they achieve victory, the victory will be theirs, but if they lose, then they will run home leaving Banu Qurayzha at the mercy of Muhammad. That is why they have decided not to fight by your side unless you leave ten of your top men with them as hostages.' After Abu Sufyan had heard these words, he went to his people and said to them, 'Stay here, this is not part of the homeland of Banu Qurayzha. They are planning to leave you to fight Muhammad alone, so if you want them to hold to their agreement to fight Muhammad, then you must ask them to give you some hostages to act as guarantors that they will support you. Then, after that, Abu Sufyan went to Banu Qurayzha to speak to them about this matter. He said to them, 'Our camels and horses have perished and we are not in a place where we are resident, so let us go and fight Muhammad now.' And this after they had already spent more than twenty days in consultation and making promises to one another. Banu Qurayzha, however, replied, 'Today is the Sabbath. We are not prepared to pervert our religion in order to fight Muhammad, and in any case, we are not going to participate in the fighting with you anyway unless you leave ten of your top men with us as hostages.' As soon as Abu Sufyan found out what Nu'aym ibn Mas'ud Al-'Ashja'i said to be true, he gathered together his

(1) *In his As-Sira An-Nabawiyya, Ibn Hisham says: 'Nu'aym ibn Mas'ud came to Prophet Muhammad Allah's peace and blessings be upon him and said, 'Messenger of Allah, I have become Muslim, and my people have no knowledge of that fact, so tell me what I should do.' Prophet Muhammad Allah's peace and blessings be upon him replied, 'If you stay here with us you are but a single man, so, if you can, (go back to them) and use trickery to relieve us of them. War is deception.'*

people and said to them, 'This land is not one in which we are resident and our camels and horses have perished, so let us save ourselves.' When Nu'aym ibn Mas'ud came to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and told him what happened, he *peace and blessings be upon him* felt a feeling of calm come over him and said, 'Is there any man among you who will go to them and then come back and tell us what has become of them? He will be my close companion in Paradise.' What he meant was that he wanted someone to insinuate himself among the ranks of the enemy and find out what they were up to. But despite the good news that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* gave of the one who might perform this task, not one of those present stepped forward. This proved that the level of fear felt by the Muslims at that time was huge and that the danger they confronted was acute – the people were suffering from exhaustion, hunger and fear and so felt themselves unable to carry out this task that was asked of them. So, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* entrusted the task to a man named Hudhayfa ibn Al-Yaman. Hudhayfa said, 'Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* however, said to me, "Do not do anything until you come back to me." So I went and spent a night mingling with the army, sitting among the people. Then, when Abu Sufyan brought back his report from the Banu Quraydha, wanting to go away with those who were with him, he said to the people, out of fear that there might be a stranger among them, 'You should all look at the person you are sitting next to in order to make sure that you know them.' It was at this point that the ingenuity and quick thinking of Hudhayfa came to the fore: he said, 'I quickly turned to the man on my right and said, "Who are you?"' He replied, 'Mu'awiyya ibn Abu Sufyan.' Then I turned to the man on my left and said, 'Who are you?' and he replied, 'Amr ibn Al-'As.'⁽¹⁾ I then heard Abu Sufyan say to the people, 'Our camels and horses have perished

(1) *In his Dala'il An-Nubuwwa (3/451), Al-Bayhaqi mentioned in a Hadith from Hudhayfa that, 'Abu Sufyan felt that there was a stranger in their midst, so he said, "Let everyone take hold of the hand of the man sitting next to him," so I tapped the man to my right and took hold of his hand, and tapped the man to my left and took hold of his hand.' See Al-Hakim, Mustadrak, 3/31. In his Tafsir (3/471), Ibn Kathir mentioned another narration and attributed to Ibn 'Ishaq that Abu Sufyan said, 'O people of Quraysh, let every man among you look to who is sitting next to him.' Hudhayfa said, 'So I took hold of the hand of the man beside me and said, "Who are you?" He replied, "I am so-and-so,"' mentioning neither Mu'awiyya nor 'Amr, and Allah the Almighty knows best.*

and this land is not one in which we are resident, so let us go and I will be the first of you to do so.' And in his rush to leave, he mounted his camel without untethering it first.' Hudhayfa said, 'I decided to kill him so I got out my bow, strung it and placed an arrow in its notch. At that point, however, I remembered the words of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* "Do not do anything until you come back to me' so I stopped myself from killing him. Then when I came back to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* I found him praying. When he felt my presence, and knowing it to be a very cold day, he made a gap between his legs, bade me come and sit at his feet and threw the end of his wrapper over me to warm me up. Then, after he finished his prayer, he said to me, 'What is your news?' so I related my story to him.⁽¹⁾

After conscripting both Nu'aym ibn Mas'ud Al-'Ashja'i and Hudhayfa to serve the Truth, Allah *the Almighty* then brought forth other armies that they were unable to see. That happened during an exceedingly cold and blustery night. A gale, which uprooted their tents, came and overturned their cooking pots and drove them back so that whoever remained fled as fast as they could. This is what is meant by the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...He is strong and mighty.' (*al-Ahzab*: 25) and '...none knows the hosts of your Lord but He Himself...' (*al-Muddaththir*: 31). Then, after Allah *the Almighty* repulsed the rage-filled unbelievers of Mecca and spared the believers the need of fighting them, He wanted to turn their attention to another front, that of the Banu Quraydha Jews. When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* returned from fighting the clans, Jibril (Gabriel) met with him and said, 'Have you laid down your arms, Muhammad, when the angels have not yet laid down their own weapons of war? Go and seek victory for yourself over the Banu Quraydha.' So, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to his people, 'If you are truly one who hears and obeys, then do not pray the 'Asr prayer unless it is among Banu Quraydha.'⁽²⁾

(1) See *Al-Bayhaqi, Dala'il An-Nubuwwa*, 3/451; *Ibn Kathir, Tafsir*, 3/471.

(2) *Ibn Hajar Al-'Asqalani* narrated it with this wording in his commentary on *Al-Bukhari [Fath Al-Bari 7/408]* from something said by *Ibn 'Ishaq*. The original version of the Hadith is narrated by *Al-Bukhari* in his *Sahih* (4119) from a Hadith narrated on the authority of *Ibn 'Umar* that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said on the day of [the battle] of the clans, 'Let none of you pray 'Asr until he is in (the houses of) the Banu Quraydha.'

The Companions did not agree among themselves about what Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* meant: some of them took his words literally and betook themselves to the houses of the Banu Qurayzha as quickly as possible, making an intention to pray the 'Asr prayer there; while others, fearing that they might miss the time of 'Asr, prayed it immediately and then left. Then, when the two groups gathered together with him *peace and blessings be upon him* he declared both opinions to be correct. This occurrence is one of the reference points in Islamic thought for the principle of *ijtihad* (personal reasoning). 'Asr is an event, and events have a fixed time and a fixed place. Some of the Companions looked at the time element and saw that the sun was on the point of setting so they prayed; and others looked at the place element and so made sure that they did not pray until they were in the houses of Banu Qurayzha. And that is why Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* approved both groups.⁽¹⁾ Every Muslim should be wary of delaying a prayer beyond its time. The time of 'Asr, for example, extends from the time in which an object's shadow is twice as long as the object itself until sunset, but that does not mean that you delay its performance until the end of its time. It is true that if you pray at the end of its time, you incur no sin, but what guarantee do you have that you will still be living till the end of its time? Therefore, even though you incur no sin for praying a prayer at the end of its time, if you were to die then without praying that prayer you would be spending the last moments of your life in sin. And that is the reason why Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'The best form of action is praying the prayer in its time.'⁽²⁾ So the fact that a prayer's time is prolonged does not give you an excuse to delay it. Another case of heroism in

(1) This is an agreed upon Hadith. See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no .4119; Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 1770 in Kitab Al-Jihad in the chapter on 'Going out to battle' from a Hadith narrated on the authority of Ibn 'Umar, in which he states that the time for the 'Asr prayer arrived while some of the Companions were on the way (to the Banu Qurayzha), so some of them said, 'We will not pray until we reach them,' and others said, 'Rather, we will pray now. That is not what he wanted of us.' Then, when this was mentioned to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* he did not rebuke either party.

(2) Ibn Mas'ud said, 'I asked Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* what the best form of action was. He replied, '(Praying) the prayer in its time.' 'Then what?' I asked. He replied, "Then jihad in the way of Allah *the Almighty*." This Hadith is agreed upon. See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, no. (2782); Muslim, Sahih, no (85) in Kitab Al-'Iman

the battle of the clans was that of 'Ali ibn Abu Taleb. His heroism demonstrated itself when some of the unbelievers found a section of the trench narrow enough for their horses to leap over, thus allowing them to venture against the Muslims. After they had leapt to the other side, their horses patrolled the marshy area between the trench and Sal 'Mountain. Then one of the unbelievers stepped forward – that unbeliever was 'Amr ibn Wudd Al-'Amiri⁽¹⁾ who was at that time considered to be the bravest and strongest warrior among all the Arabs and whose battle prowess was considered to be equivalent to that of one thousand horsemen. 'Amr ibn Wudd Al-'Amiri stood in front of the Muslim camp brandished his sword and called out, 'Who will meet me in battle?' So 'Ali said to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'May I fight him, Messenger of Allah?' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, 'No, 'Ali, stay seated for it is 'Amr.' Then 'Amr repeated his challenge and said, 'Where is this Paradise that you promise to those who are killed in this way? Give me an answer!' 'Ali again said, 'May I fight him, Messenger of Allah?' but he again replied, 'No, 'Ali, stay seated for it is 'Amr.' Then, on the third time, 'Amr said,

I have become hoarse from calling out.

Is there not one man amongst your group who will fight me?

I stand here when brave men show themselves cowardly

As a true peerless warrior

In young men, bravery

And generosity is the best qualities.

Upon hearing this, 'Ali leapt to his feet and said, 'Let him be mine, Messenger of Allah.' So he *peace and blessings be upon him* gave him permission to fight. Then 'Ali motioned to 'Amr and said,

Do not be hasty. One comes

To answer your call who is no weakling.

(1) He is 'Amr ibn 'Abd Wudd, a Qurayshi from the Banu Lu'ay. He was a horseman of Quraysh in the time of Ignorance before Islam, but he was still around after the advent of Islam without becoming Muslim. He lived until the battle of the Trench, and despite having reached the age of eighty, he took part in the fighting. 'Ali ibn Abu Taleb killed him in the year 5 AH. See Az-Zirikli, Al-'Alam, 5/81.

A man of firm resolve and keen insight

Truth is the saviour of everyone successful:

Indeed I hope to be the cause

Of women mourning over your dead body

Killed by the blow of a spear

Which will be remembered as long as there's war'⁽¹⁾

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had at that time a loose-fitting piece of chain mail armour known as 'Dhat Al-Fudul, so he gave, it to 'Ali to wear. He also gave him his sword, Dhu Al-Fiqar, and his turban, As-Sahhab, which was wound around seven times. Then 'Ali went out to meet 'Amr in single combat. When they met, 'Amr struck him on the shield and split it. But 'Ali quickly aimed a blow with his sword at his shoulder and 'Amr fell to the ground dead. As soon as he fell, 'Ali shouted out, 'Allah *the Almighty* is the Greatest.' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* heard those words and said, 'The enemy of Allah *the Almighty* has been killed.' Then the dust of war rose and obscured the battle so that nothing could be seen. So 'Umar went out to find out what had happened, and he found 'Ali wiping his sword clean on the armour of 'Amr ibn Wudd and so called out, 'Allah *the Almighty* is the greatest.' So, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'By Allah, the enemy has been killed!' This event highlighted some of 'Ali's good qualities of character. When he returned from killing 'Amr, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* asked him, 'Did you strip him of his armour? It is the best armour that any Arab possesses.' 'Ali replied, 'By Allah *the Almighty* because his private parts were to be exposed, I felt too ashamed to do that.'⁽²⁾

(1) *These verses are mentioned in a context of this sort by Abu Bakr Al-Bayhaqi in Dala'il An-Nubuwwa (3/438 & 439).*

(2) *In his Dala'il An-Nubuwwa (3/439), Al-Bayhaqi said that the one who asked 'Ali that was 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab. He related that 'Umar said to him, 'Have you stripped him of his armour? There is no armour better than it among the Arabs.' 'Ali replied, 'When I struck him down, he turned his private parts towards me, so I felt too embarrassed, my cousin, to strip it from him.' Allah the Almighty knows best.*

Then, pointing at 'Amr⁽¹⁾, he recited the following:

In his stupidity he fought for bits of stone

While I rightly fought for the Lord of Muhammad

I turned away when I left his body prostrate upon to the ground

Lying like a stump between the rocks and the sand

I refrained from taking his garments even though

Were I the one fallen, he would have stripped me of mine.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said about this particular event: 'Even if you were not to do anything else for Islam, (what you have done today) would have been enough for you.' This is the reason those with gnosis of Allah *the Almighty* say that, by killing 'Amr ibn Wudd, 'Ali became the subject of envy and was thus afflicted by the evil eye which led to him eventually being killed by Ibn Muljim. Because of this, they said that the most beloved blow in Islam was that delivered by 'Ali to 'Amr ibn Wudd, and the most calamitous blow in Islam was that delivered by Ibn Muljim to 'Ali. Another case of heroism in the battle was that of Sa'd ibn Mu'adh⁽²⁾ about which he said, 'On the day of the battle of the clans, Hibban ibn Qays ibn Al-'Ariqa struck me a blow and said, "Take that from me, the son of Al-'Ariqa⁽³⁾!" So I replied, "Allah *the Almighty* make your face sweat in Hell!" When he hit me in the vein – and this vein is the one into which needles are injected and from which blood is let when people undergo cupping – I said to myself, "O Allah, if this is the final battle in which I take

(1) In his *As-Sira An-Nabawiyya* (3/225), Ibn Hisham mentioned these verses and ascribed them to Ibn 'Ishaq. Then he said, 'Most of those with knowledge of poetry doubt whether it was really 'Ali ibn Abu Taleb who said these verses.

(2) He is Sa'd ibn Mu'adh ibn An-Nu'man Al-Awsi Al-Ansari, one of the heroes of the Companions from Medina. He was the leader of the tribe of Aws and took part in the battles of Badr and Uhud. He was struck by an arrow on the day of the battle of the Trench and died as a result of that wound in the year 5 AH when he was 37 years old. See *Az-Zirikli, Al-'Alam*, 3/88.

(3) Al-'Ariqa was Qilaba bint Sa'd ibn Sahm. Her patronymic (*kunya*) was Umm Fatima, but she was known as Al-'Ariqa because of the beautiful way she smelled. She was the grandmother of Khadija, the mother of her mother Hala. See *As-Suhayli, Ar-Rawd Al-'Unuf*.

part between Quraysh, and us then grant me martyrdom. But if You know that they are going to come back another time, then prolong my life so I can take vengeance on those who drove out and insulted Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*; and do not let me die until I have quenched my thirst for revenge on Banu Qurayzha.”⁽¹⁾

And it came to pass as he asked. After the siege of the clans, Banu Qurayzha had held out for approximately twenty-five days without any fighting, when finally negotiations brought the whole affair to an end; Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* appointed Sa’d ibn Mu’adh to be the arbiter in this affair. So, Sa’d passed judgment that the combatants of the Banu Quraydha be killed, their women, and children be taken into captivity and their wealth be confiscated. When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* heard his judgement, he said, ‘You have passed judgment over them according to the judgement of the Lord of the seven heavens.’⁽²⁾ Then the wound that Sa’d had received flared up again until it became so bad that he died of it. So they carried him to the tent of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had set up in the mosque, whereupon the angels came down and said to him *peace and blessings be upon him* ‘Who is this who has died? The throne of the Most Merciful shook on his behalf!’ Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, ‘It is Sa’d ibn Mu’adh.’⁽³⁾

(1) In his *As-Sira An-Nabawiyya* (3/226), Ibn Hisham and in his *Dala’il An-Nubuwwa* (3/441), Al-Bayhaqi mentioned it in with the addition, ‘O Allah the Almighty if you have appointed war between us and them, then grant me martyrdom by means of it, but do not let me die until You have given me satisfaction with respect to Banu Qurayzha.

(2) From Abu Sa’id Al-Khudri that people came down [from their fortresses] to hear the judgment of Sa’d ibn Mu’adh, so he was sent for and came on the back of a donkey. Then, when he had neared the mosque, Prophet Muhammad Allah’s *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘Stand up for the best of you – or he said, ‘for your master.’ Then he said, ‘Sa’d, these people have come down [to hear and submit] to your judgment.’ Sa’d replied, ‘Then I give judgment that their combatants be killed and their children be enslaved.’ Whereupon Prophet Muhammad Allah’s *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘You have passed judgment over them according to the judgment of Allah the Almighty – or he said, ‘the judgment of the King.’ See Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 3804.

(3) In his *Mustadrak* [3/207], Al-Hakim mentioned that ‘in a Hadith from ‘Abdullah ibn Ka’b ibn Malik that Sa’d lived for about a month after being wounded by an arrow until, on the command of Prophet Muhammad Allah’s *peace and blessings be upon him* he passed judgment over Banu Qurayzha. Then, that night, after returning to the city of=

Allah *the Almighty* said: ‘... Some of them you [believers] killed and some you took captive.’ (*al-Ahzab*: 26) As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...and a land where you had not set foot...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 27) it means that Allah *the Almighty* gives the believers the good news that those lands would be conquered by them without them even having to fight. And, indeed, such was the case in most of the lands the Muslims came to: it was the noble conduct of the Muslims of that era that opened up most of those countries to them, not their weight of arms. By this, we are able to refute those who claim that Islam was spread by the sword. If Islam was truly spread by the sword, then whose sword was it that caused the very first Muslims to enter into Islam, since they were the weakest of people and were not even able to defend themselves?! No, it was nothing but the noble conduct they witnessed that caused them to take on the faith. We mentioned previously that ‘Umar, a man known for his strength and severity, said when he heard the saying of Allah: ‘Soon shall the hosts be routed, and they shall turn (their) backs.’ (*al-Qamar*: 45) ‘What hosts are those, when we as Muslims are unable to even defend ourselves?’ showing how weak he saw the Muslims and how strong the unbelievers.⁽¹⁾ And if Islam had indeed spread by the sword, then all of the inhabitants of the lands conquered by Islam would have become Muslim and there would have been no need for the (*jizya*) tax in Islamic jurisprudence. But the fact that there is a *jizya* (tax) levied on those who do not believe proves the lie of that assertion and proves that there is no compulsion in religion in Islam. The reality was that the Islamic conquests guaranteed freedom of belief. Allah *the Almighty* says:

= *Prophet Muhammad Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him his wound erupted and he died. [At that moment], Gabriel came to him Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him and said to him, ‘Who is this for whom the gates of Paradise have been thrown open, and on whose behalf the throne of the Most Merciful has shaken?’ Prophet Muhammad Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him went out to where Sa’d was and found that he had died.’ Ibn Hajar said in (Al-Fath) [7/124], ‘The shaking of the throne signifies its joy and happiness at the arrival of his soul.’*

- (1) *In his Tafsir, Ibn Kathir ascribed to Abu Hatim [4/266] that ‘Ikrima said, ‘When the verse: “Soon shall the hosts be routed, and they shall turn (their) backs.” (al-Qamar: 45) was revealed, ‘Umar said, “Which hosts will be routed? Which hosts will be defeated?” ‘Umar said, “On the day of the battle of Badr, when I saw Prophet Muhammad Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him leap into his armour and say, ‘The hosts will be routed!’ I finally understood the significance of the verse.’*

‘...so let him who please believe, and let him who please disbelieve...’ (*al-Kahf*: 29) and pay the *jizya* (tax) to the Muslim treasury in exchange for certain services done for him by the state. Therefore, *jizya*, which some of you use as a reason to curse Islam is, in fact, a proof that Islam acknowledges your religion. The only reason the sword was used was to protect the ability to call people to Islam, if I want to present Islam to the people, I have the right to fight those who try to prevent me from doing that with weapons. I have the right to set the principles of Islam before the people. Then, if they believe in it, they are gladly accepted, but if they do not, then they come under our protection. Then Allah *the Almighty* transports us to the houses of the wives of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Allah *the Almighty* says⁽¹⁾:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لِّأَزْوَاجِكَ إِن كُنْتُنَّ تُحِبُّونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَزِينَتَهَا
فَتَعَالَيْنَا أُمَتِّعْكُنَّ وَأُسَرِّحْكُنَّ سَرَاحًا جَمِيلًا

Prophet, say to your wives, ‘If your desire is for the present life and its finery, then come, I will make provision for you and release you with kindness [28] (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 28)

Someone might ask what the significance is of this incredible jump from speaking about the war against the clans and the Banu Qurayzha to mentioning this directive from Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to his wives. The answer is found in the verse that ends the story of the battle of the clans, when Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘He passed on to you their land, their houses, their possessions, and a land where you had not set foot...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 27). It might well be that the wives of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* upon hearing this, demanded that he give them a portion of the wealth of those lands that had been opened up to him by Allah *the Almighty* and so Allah

(1) In his *Tafsir*, Al-Qurtubi (7/5422) said: ‘Our scholars say that there is a connection between this verse and the understood meaning of the previous verses that it is forbidden to harm or wrong Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. And he had been disturbed by some of his wives when they made certain requests of him: it is said that they asked him for the good things of this world; it is said that they asked him for an increase in their maintenance payments; and it is said that it was their jealousy of one another that caused him pain.

the Almighty revealed the verse: 'Prophet, say to your wives...' (*al-Ahzab*: 28) to establish the fact that Islam does not afford any special privileges to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* or to his family. Indeed, not even the proceeds of (*zakat*) may be given to the descendent of the Banu Hashim. But the fact that this verse appears in the imperative form thus: 'Prophet, say to your wives, 'If your desire...' (*al-Ahzab*: 28) proves that some of the Prophet's wives did something that indicated their desire for the charms and good things of life. It is narrated by 'Umar that they gathered together to ask Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* for maintenance payments and that he be munificent towards them, after hearing what he said about the unbelievers [of Quraysh] when he said, They will never again attack us, but we will attack them' ⁽¹⁾, and after the verses had been revealed giving the Muslims the good news of those lands that would become theirs. As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...then come, I will make provision for you and release you with kindness' (*al-Ahzab*: 28), it means that I do not have those charms and things of this world that you want.' As for the word *ta'alayn* (then come), it normally means 'Come here', but here means 'Rise above'. In other words, 'Rise above the programs of mankind and the earth to the programs of the Creator of mankind and the Creator of the earth, for it is in the Program of Allah *the Almighty* that dominion is found, not in the baubles and charms of this world.'

This meaning of the word (*ta'alaw*) is also found in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Say: Come I will recite what your Lord has forbidden to you...' (*al-An'am*: 151) meaning: rise above the laws of mankind and the laws of the earth to the laws of Heaven since the condition stipulated for those who draw up laws is that they not be the sole beneficiaries of those laws, and that they be fully cognizant of all of the secondary issues that might come up in relation to those laws. There will always be things that mankind is ignorant of

(1) See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih*, no. 4109&4110; *Ahmad, Musnad*, Hadith no. (4/262) from a Hadith narrated on the authority of Sulayman ibn Şard. In a second narration in *Al-Bukhari*, it says, 'We will go to them.' Ibn Hajar said in (*Al-Fath*) [7/405], 'This contains one of the signs of prophethood for he went on ('umra) (voluntary pilgrimage) the following year and then, when Quraysh blocked him from coming to the House, he made a truce with them which remained in effect until they broke it. And that was the cause that led to the Muslim's conquering Mecca. So everything happened as he said it would.'

no matter how powerful or knowledgeable they become, so the only one who should draw up laws for them should be their Creator. As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...umatti ‘kunna...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 28), it is translated as ‘I shall provide for you’; it literally means ‘I shall give you the legal compensation due to a wife when she is divorced by her husband’. This legal compensation is referred to in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*:⁽¹⁾ ‘and for the divorced women (too) provision (must be made) according to usage; (this is) a duty on those who guard (against evil).’ (*al-Baqara*: 241) As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...and release you...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 28), release refers here to divorce. As for His saying: ‘...and release you with kindness.’ (*al-Ahzab*: 28), this indicates that if a man and wife separate, they should separate in a becoming manner – in other words, their split should be amicable and kind, not vicious and spiteful. The reason for this is because the act of separating from one another is painful in itself, so Allah *the Almighty* wants to avoid there being two agonies in a single act: the agony caused by divorce and the agony caused by vicious and spiteful words. You may notice that the word (*jamal*) is often mentioned in the Quran in connection with difficult matters that cause people distress. For example, look at the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...so patience is good...’ (*Yusuf*: 83). Patience is beautiful and goodly when it is not accompanied by complaints, feelings of exasperation or going beyond the limits of moderation. So Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is offering his wives an amicable divorce without rancor or ill-feeling if that is what they want for themselves – it was not for him to remain married to a woman who chose something else instead of him, no matter what that thing was that she chose. The scholars said a lot concerning whether offering a choice such as this to a woman is tantamount to divorce or not. They say that this process of offering her a choice is like handing over the right of divorce to the woman – it is the same as saying, for example, that the bond of marriage is in her hands. Then she is free to choose for herself – if she chooses the first option then the divorce comes about, but if she chooses the

(1) *Ibn Kathir said in his (Tafsir) [1/297], ‘Those scholars who viewed this form of compensation for divorced women as being obligatory used this verse as proof, regardless of whether or not the amount of the compensation was agreed in advance, and regardless of whether or not the woman was divorced before consummation. This was the opinion of Ash-Shafi’i, which was the position adopted by Sa’id ibn Jubayr and others of the (Salaf) and was that chosen by Ibn Jarir.*

second option, then the marriage is still alright and the matter is at an end.⁽¹⁾ Allah's Command to His Messenger to say these words to his wives indicates that those sorts of thoughts must have occurred to his wives when they saw Islam conquer all those lands and amass all those riches and so they hoped for some of that to come their way. The Arabic word *azwaj* (wives) is actually the plural of the word *zawj* (spouse) which applies equally to both men and women. The word, however, does not mean 'couple', it does not mean both of them together as some people think. Rather, it refers to one for which another of its type exists (i.e. one of a pair). It is exactly the same as the word (*taw'am*), 'twin' which refers to a single being that is accompanied by another being that is like it. The proof of this is found in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'And of everything We have created pairs...' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 49); it means male and female. The male on his own is a (*zawj*), and the female on her own is a (*zawj*). This division (into males and females) exists in all creatures. The word (*zawj*) also has the plural (*zawjat*).

We notice with regard to the literary style of the verse that when Allah *the Almighty* proposes to His Messenger that he offers his wives the choice between the trinkets of this world and the delights of the Hereafter, He uses the word (*'in*) which indicates doubt and does not use the word *idha* which indicates certainty. This indicates that the accusation against them was not particularly strong, and that it amounted to no more than a few thoughts crossing the minds of a few of his wives.

As you know, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was married to nine wives at the same time: five of these wives were from Quraysh,

(1) *Ash-Shafi'i* said, 'Offering a choice (*takhyir*) is an indirect declaration of intent (*kinaya*) – if a man offers his wife a choice, wanting her to choose between divorcing him or remaining under his matrimonial authority, and then she chooses herself, intending that choice to constitute a divorce, then the divorce is ratified. If she were to say, however, that she did not intend divorce by choosing herself, then her word is accepted.' *Al-Qurtubi* said in (*Al-Mufhim*) that when a woman offered the choice says she chooses herself, that choice of hers represents a divorce even though she has not uttered any word that indicates divorce itself. As for *Al-Hafizh Ibn Hajar Al-'Asqalani*, he said, 'But the most obvious meaning of the verse indicates that offering the choice does not bring about divorce in itself, but it is still necessary for the husband to instigate the divorce [after she makes her choice clear to him]. This is because the actual wording of the verse is: '...then come, I will make provision for you and release you...' (*al-Ahzab*: 28), means 'I shall release you after you have made your choice.'

namely; 'A'isha, Hafsa, Umm Habiba, Sawda bint Zam'a and Umm Salama bint abu 'Umayya; four from outside Quraysh, namely; Safiyya bint Huyayy ibn Akhtab (whose father's story was mentioned in the story of the battle of the Confederates), Juwayriyya bint Al-Harith from Banu Mustaliq, Maymuna bint Al-Harith AL-Hilaliyya– and anyone who visits Tan'im will find a well there called the 'well of Maymuna' – and Zaynab bint Jahsh from the Banu Asad. These were the nine mothers of the believers who were all married to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* at the same time. When⁽¹⁾ they came to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* asking him for maintenance payments, the boldest one amongst them was Hafsa bint 'Umar! Words were exchanged between her and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* so he asked her whether she wanted someone to come and decide between them. When she agreed, he sent for 'Umar. Then, after 'Umar had arrived, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to Hafsa, 'Speak your piece,' meaning that she should set out what she wanted. She, however, replied, 'No, you speak your piece first, and only say what is true!' Her words awoke feelings of anger in the heart of 'Umar: indeed he became so angry that he went up to her and slapped her. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* tried to restrain him, but he still took hold of her and slapped her a second time. Then 'Umar said to her, 'Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* only ever speaks the truth! By Allah *the Almighty* if it were not for the fact that I was in his salon, I would not have stopped beating you until you were dead!' Thereupon, the Messenger got up from where he was sitting in order to bring the argument to an end. Then he went to his room and secluded himself therein. Indeed, he stayed there, cutting off relations from everyone for a full month.⁽²⁾

Reflect on the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...If your desire is for the present life and its finery...' (*al-Ahzab*: 28). What description of this world

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- (1) *The story of the misunderstanding between 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab and Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him and the latter calling her father.*
 - (2) *The narrations disagree with one another regarding this matter: some narrates the protagonists of this event as being 'A'isha and her father Abu Bakr; and some narrates them as being Hafsa and her father 'Umar. For the first, See Ibn Sa'd, At-Tabaqat, 10/79, and for the second, see Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 2468 within the confines of a much longer Hadith. It is possible, however, that this event happened on more than one occasion. Allah the Almighty knows best.*

could possibly be lower or more derogatory than calling it *dunya* (literally, 'the lowest')? And all the enjoyments in it are no more than decoration – in other words, delightful on the surface but lacking in any real substance. It is as Allah *the Almighty* says in another verse in the Quran: 'Know that this world's life is only sport and play and gaiety and boasting among yourselves, and a vying in the multiplication of wealth and children...' (*al-Hadid*: 20).

Then Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* presents his wives with the second choice – the alternative to this world:

وَلَيْنَ كُنْتُمْ تُرِيدُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَالْآخِرَةَ
فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ أَعَدَّ لِلْمُحْسِنِينَ مِنْكُمْ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

**But if you desire God, His Messenger, and the Final Home,
then remember that God has prepared great rewards for
those of you who do good [29] (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 29)**

Anyone who reflects on the two sides of the choice they were presented with will find that, in reality, there is no comparison between the two.

One of the two sides was always going to be rejected since who would accept the life of this world in exchange for Allah *the Almighty* or the baubles of this world in exchange for Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* or nothing whatsoever in exchange for the life eternal in the Hereafter? Even if this world in which we live were not described as being *dunya* 'the lowest', it would still be incumbent upon us to do without in it.

The truth is that the prophet's wives understood this and so chose Allah *the Almighty*, His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* and the life of the Hereafter, and who would be satisfied with anything else as an alternative! Praise is due to Allah!

Then Allah *the Almighty* describes the reward that is obtained by those who choose Him, His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* and the life of the Hereafter: ' then remember that Allah has prepared great rewards for those of you who do good' (*al-Ahzab*: 29) A woman is *muhsina* 'doer of good' if she gives her husband more love and compassion than is required of her

يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ مَنْ يَّاتِ مِنْكُنْ بِفَحِشَةٍ مُّبِينَةٍ يُضَعَفْ لَهَا
الْعَذَابُ ضِعْفَيْنِ وَكَانَ ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ يَسِيْرًا ﴿٣٠﴾

**Wives of the Prophet, if any of you does something
clearly outrageous, she will be doubly punished – that
is easy for God [30] (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 30)**

After offering the wives of the Prophet their choice and after they had chosen Allah *the Almighty* His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* and the life of the Hereafter, Allah *the Almighty* wanted to give them a program and teach them principles that would make their lives easier for them. It is noteworthy indeed that the choices offered in the previous verse were words of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* from His Lord, while the words in this verse are directly from Allah *the Almighty* to the wives of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* for He addresses them saying: 'Wives of the Prophet...' (*al-Ahzab*: 30).

The matter started with the words: 'O Prophet! Say unto thy wives...' (*al-Ahzab*: 28). Then they chose Allah *the Almighty* His Messenger and the life of the Hereafter, and it as if that choice made them worthy of being addressed directly by Allah *the Almighty* himself. It is as if they had fulfilled what had been required of them in the previous verse when Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to them, *ta'alayn*, '...well, then...' (*al-Ahzab*: 28).

We all know that, although the Arabic word *nisa'* 'women', translated as 'wives', is a plural; it does not have any etymological singular form.

No, the only way of referring to women in the singular is by using a different word entirely: *'imra'a*. In Arabic, there are singulars of certain plurals that are often forgotten when the singular of another word is better-known or easier to use. That word is *'imra'a* or *mara*; singular form for 'women' which is derived from the word *'imru'* meaning 'man' This word, *'imru'*, is unique in the Arabic language in terms of the way it is inflected. Unlike the rest of words in Arabic, changes in syntactical inflection are not limited to the final letter but also impact the preceding letter, so you say, '*'imru'u al-Qays* said', 'I heard *'imra'a al-Qays*' and 'I read to *'imri'i al-Qays*.'

Some linguistic theoreticians said, 'The word *nisa*', 'women', is derived from a word that means delay or deferral because of the fact that the creation of women until after that of men.' Therefore the singular of the word must be *nas*' even though using that word would be an unnecessary burden.

After addressing them with the words: 'Wives of the Prophet!' (*al-Ahzab*: 30), Allah *the Almighty* mentions the first instruction in the program directed at them: '...if any of you does something clearly outrageous, she will be doubly punished—...' (*al-Ahzab*: 30). We notice, here, that when Allah *the Almighty* addressed the wives, he did not begin by saying, for example, 'Whichever of you has *taqwa* (fearful awareness of Allah)', but instead began by warning them against engaging in immoral conduct. The reason He did that because the legal maxim for legislation and reform is that 'The prevention of harm takes priority over the attraction of benefit.' Similarly, before we can perform *wudu*' for the prayer, we must first make sure we are free of all physical impurities.

We mentioned the following scenario, as an example: Supposing that one person threw an apple to you, while at the same time someone else threw a stone at you, what would you do first, try to catch the apple or try to protect yourself against the stone? Without doubt, you would try to do the latter and protect yourself against the harm the stone might cause you. In the same way, if you want to iron your clothes and find them dirty, you would wash them first.

This is why Allah *the Almighty* began his instructions to the wives of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* by saying: '...if any of you does something clearly outrageous...' (*al-Ahzab*: 30). But is immoral conduct i.e. acts of sexual indecency on their behalf not somewhat far-fetched? Is one of the worst types of sin truly to be expected of the wives of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*? 'Why not?' Scholars reply. Did Allah *the Almighty* not address His own Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* with the Words: '...if thou ever ascribe divine powers to aught but Allah, all thy works shall most certainly have been in vain...' (*az-Zumar*: 65)? Since it is well-known that there is no suspicion of *shirk* 'associating others with Allah' attached to the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* the meaning of the verse

must be, 'O Muhammad, the fact that you have been chosen does not mean that you are above being taken to account.' The same interpretation may be applied to the verse above dealing with his wives: in other words, the verse means, 'If any of you were to commit some act of indecency, we would give her double the punishment and would not overlook her act simply because of her standing with Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. So do not make the mistake of thinking that your standing somehow mitigates your crime.' 'If that had not been the case, then that would be the same sort of thing as commoners stealing and being punished while nobles steal and are let off.'⁽¹⁾

So, the status that each of you holds lies not in the fact that you are wives of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* but lies in the extent to which you obey the commands of Allah *the Almighty*. If you do not, then know that there are wives of Prophets who did betray⁽²⁾ their husbands. Read the following verse: 'For those who are bent on denying the truth Allah has propounded a parable in [the stories of] Noah's wife and Lot's wife: they were wedded to two of Our righteous servants, and each one betrayed her husband; and neither of the two [husbands] will be of any avail to these two women before Allah when they are told [on Judgment Day], 'Enter the fire with all those [other sinners] who enter it!' (*at-Tahrim*: 10)

You might well ask, 'If the ruling for the socially-manifest immoral behaviour is that their punishment be doubled, then what is their ruling when they are guilty of immoral behaviour that is not socially-manifest?

(1) *This is from an agreed-upon Hadith. It is narrated by Al-Bukhari in his (Sahih) [6788]; and by Muslim in his (Sahih) [1688] in a (Hadith) from 'A'isha that Messenger Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said, 'O people, those who came before you went astray by letting off their nobles when they stole while they punished their weak for the same crime. I make an oath by Allah that if Fatima, the daughter of Muhammad, were to steal, Muhammad would cut her hand off.'*

(2) *Ibn Kathir said in his (Tafsir) [4/393], 'When Allah says that 'they betrayed them', he does not mean that they cheated on them by having an affair but that they betrayed them with respect to their religion. Because of the inviolability of the Prophets themselves, their wives are protected from ever committing acts of sexual indecency.' Ibn 'Abbas said, 'They did not commit fornication. The betrayal of the wife of Nuh (Noah) peace be upon him lay in the fact that she used to tell people that he was mad, while the betrayal of the wife of Lut (Lot) peace be upon him lay in the fact that she used to lead her people to her guests.'*

This ruling is specific to the wives of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* according to scholars. If one of them were to commit a wrong action in the privacy of her own home, then that would be between herself and her Lord and would only be counted as a single sin restricted to her own person. However, if she were to commit a wrong action in the public domain, then that sin would be counted as double because the wives of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* are role models whose behaviour is closely scrutinised and imitated by other Muslim women. So, if one of them were to commit an act of indecency that would persuade others to also commit that act. And why should anyone else not do that act when one of the wives of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* did it?

The reason, therefore, for their punishment being doubled, is because when they are immoral, their immorality is not just limited to them but spreads from them to others. They would be making the house of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* home to bad role models and so would deserve their double punishment because they would have hurt his feelings, disrespected his home and preferred another to him by committing their act of indecency with him. All of this would merit their punishment being multiplied many times over. So if Allah *the Almighty* were to only double their punishment, that would be an act of kindness and mercy on His part because of their shared marital history with Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

In the same way, if one of them were to perform a good action, her reward would be multiplied, since she would have performed a right action for herself just like anyone else, but would also be providing others with a good example because of her position as role model to Muslim women.

Consider the Hadith of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* 'Whoever establishes a good *sunna* will be rewarded for it and the reward of everyone who acts by it until the Day of Rising; and whoever establishes a bad *sunna* will receive the wrong action for it and the wrong action of everyone who acts by it until the Day of Rising.'⁽¹⁾

(1) *It is narrated by Imam Ahmad in his (Musnad) [4/361 & 362] (al-Ahزاب); by Ibn Majah in his (Sunnan) [207] (al-Ahزاب); and by At-Tirmidhi in his (Sunnan) [2675] (al-Ahزاب) in a (Hadith) from Jarir ibn 'Abdullah. At-Tirmidhi classified the (Hadith) as (hasan sahih).*

It tells us that a person's reward for a good action is not only doubled, but is multiplied by as many times as the number of people who imitate him and put that good action into practice. There is a difference between the two Arabic words *di'f* the word which is used in this verse and *du'f*. The *di'f* of something is its exact equivalent, while the *du'f* is the loss of this equivalent and so is less.

Then He *the Almighty* says: '...for that is indeed easy for Allah.' (*al-Ahzab*: 30). It is as if Allah *the Almighty* were saying, 'the doubling of your punishment is an easy matter: your standing with Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* matters not to Me one bit. This is a matter that no one will question Me about and a matter in which I show no favouritism to anyone. I allow things to run in the way that they must and in that none may oppose Me. That is why so many rulings of Allah *the Almighty* in the Quran are followed by the Words: '...[but] behold, Allah is almighty, wise!' (*al-Baqara*: 220) His might means that the execution of the ruling is something inevitable and unavoidable and that none may oppose it.

This meaning is clear in the words Allah *the Almighty* spoke to 'Isa (Jesus), *Peace be upon him*: 'And lo! Allah said: "O 'Isa, son of Maryam! Did you say to men, 'Worship me and my mother as deities beside Allah'?" ['Isa] answered: "Limitless are you in your glory! It would not have been possible for me to say what I had no right to [say]! Had I said this, You would indeed have known it! You know all that is within myself, whereas I know not what is in Thy Self. Verily, it is You alone who fully know all the things that are beyond the reach of a created being's perception." [116] "Nothing did I tell them beyond what You did bid me [to say]: 'Worship Allah, [who is] my Lord as well as your Lord.' And I bore witness to what they did as long as I dwelt in their midst; but since You has caused me to die, You alone has been their keeper: for You are witness unto everything." [117] "If thou cause them to suffer – verily, they are Thy servants; and if You forgive them – verily, You alone are almighty, truly wise!"[118]' (*al-Ma'ida*: 116-118).

His words: '...and if You forgive them...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 118) require him to say: '...verily, You are forgiving, merciful!', but instead of them, Allah *the Almighty* says: '...verily, You alone are almighty, truly wise!' (*al-Ma'ida*: 118) because

the sin into which the people had fallen was one which involved the pinnacle of their faith, for they had taken the divinity from Allah *the Almighty* and placed it in the person of 'Isa. This is a sin for which common sense demands a severe punishment. Allah *the Almighty* is never questioned about what He does: He *the Almighty* punishes whomsoever He wills and forgives whomsoever He wills. If He *the Almighty* does forgive them, it is by means of His Attribute of Might; against which none may stand. It is as if common sense dictates that Allah *the Almighty* be asked why, given the seriousness of their crime, He did not punish them. That is why He *the Almighty* deals with them with the attribute of might against which none may stand and the attribute of wisdom which never misses the mark.

After mentioning immoral acts and their consequences, Allah *the Almighty* then mentions their opposite:

وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ مِنْكُمْ خَيْرًا فَلِلَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ عَمَلٌ صَالِحًا نَّؤْتِيهَا
أَجْرَهَا مَرَّتَيْنِ وَأَعَدْنَا لَهُمْ رِزْقًا كَرِيمًا ﴿٣١﴾

**But if any of you is obedient to God and His Messenger and
does good deeds, know that We shall give her a double
reward and have prepared a generous provision for her [31]
(The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 31)**

The word '...is obedient...' (*al-Ahzab*: 31) means to submit to Allah's Will completely and utterly and to humbly abase oneself in supplication before Him. Allah *the Almighty* chose the Arabic Word *qunut* (devout obedience) because He *the Almighty* does not want those who obey Him to pride themselves on their obedience and look down on others as a result. That is why the people of inward knowledge say, 'Disobedience that brings about abasement and contrition might well be better than obedience which brings about self-importance and pride.'⁽¹⁾

(1) This is one of the aphorisms from the (*Hikam*) of ibn 'Ata'illah Al-'Iskandari, a Sufi from the Shadhili Tariqa. He was one of the scholars of his day and died in 709 AH. 'Abd Al-'Al Kahil mentioned this aphorism of Ibn 'Ata'illah on page 76 of his book 'Abu Al-'Aynayn Ad-Dusuqi', published by Dar Ash-Sha'b.

Or 'But if any of you is obedient to Allah...' (*al-Ahzab*: 31) means that you 'go to such utmost lengths to do right action and be scrupulous that you reach the level of *qunut*', i.e. complete submission and abasement to Allah *the Almighty*.

And the result of this devout obedience is that: '...We shall give her a double reward...' (*al-Ahzab*: 31). While the previous verse establishes that the punishment of the one who commits an indecent act will be multiplied, this verse establishes that the reward of the one who submits to Allah *the Almighty* abases herself and does a right action will be multiplied.

'...and have prepared a generous provision for her' (*al-Ahzab*: 31), i.e. We have just now prepared it for her, and it will be here waiting for her until she comes.

When you reflect on the literary style applied in these two verses, the extraordinary nature of its composition confronts you: when it mentions immoral conduct and the doubling of punishment, it uses the verb *yuda'af* 'double' in the passive voice, but when it mentions devout obedience, it says: '...and have prepared a generous provision for her' (*al-Ahzab*: 31), linking the action of the verb directly to Allah *the Almighty*. It is as if Allah *the Almighty* did not want to confront people with Himself in the position of punishing them but merely with the punishment itself.

By using the verb *yuda'af* in the passive voice, it indicates Allah's mercy and the subtlety of His expression. Allah *the Almighty* loves all of His creation and wants to get them to love Him – He hopes for the one who is disobedient to come back into the fold and, when a believing slave of His repents, rejoices more than one who finds his camel after losing it in a waterless desert.⁽¹⁾

In a Hadith, we find, 'Son of Adam, do not fear anyone who has dominion so long as I have dominion, and My dominion will never come to an end. Son of Adam, do not fear that your provision will become straitened, for My storehouses are full and will never become empty. Son of Adam, I have created you for worship, so do not play about - and by 'play about', He means

(1) It is narrated by Muslim in his (*Sahih*) [2747] (*al-Ahzab*:) in a (*Hadith*) from Anas ibn Malik.

‘engage in useless action that brings no benefit’ – and I have assigned you your provision, so do not tire yourself out.’

By ‘tire yourself out’, He meant ‘Do not cause your heart to become distracted.’ There are different types of tiredness: there is tiredness of the limbs of the sort mentioned in the Noble Prophetic Hadith, ‘Whoever spends his night exhausted by work and physical exertion, spends his night being forgiven.’⁽¹⁾ And when the Prophet *Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him* saw a hand that had been coarsened by hard work, he *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘This is a hand that both Allah and His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* love.’⁽²⁾

Then there is the tiredness of the heart. Something that your heart is able to stand and you are able to bear does not tire you out. Henceforth, we find people whose hearts are free of concern calmly breaking rocks, humming tunes and singing songs to strengthen their resolve and help them keep going. Despite, all their strenuous efforts, you find them to be happy and content. An Arab poet showed wonderful understanding of this when he wrote:

A burden is not that which is borne on the backs of men.

No, a burden is that which preoccupies the heart.

So the meaning is, ‘Wear out your limbs but do not wear out your heart. Tiredness and exhaustion do not destroy one’s limbs; they only destroy one’s heart. Make your limbs weary with useful serious work that gives you with

(1) *It is narrated by As-Suyuti with this wording in (Ad-Durr Al-Manthur) (Hadith 401) in a (Hadith) from Anas from the Prophet, and he ascribed the (Hadith) to Ibn 'Asakir; and it is narrated by Al-Haythami in Majma' Az-Zawa'id [4/63] in a (Hadith) from Ibn 'Abbas who said that he heard Messenger Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him say, 'Whoever spends his evening exhausted by work and physical exertion, spends his evening being forgiven.' Al-Haythami said, 'It is narrated by At-Tabarani in (Al-'Awsat), but there are a number of people I do not know in [his chain of narrations]. Al-Hafizh Al-'Iraqi said in his (Takhrij) of the (Hadiths) of Al-'Ihya' [2/90], 'There is weakness in [this (Hadith)].'*

(2) *Another (Hadith) narrated in this regard is that Messenger Muhammad Allah's peace and blessings be upon him said, 'None of you will eat any food better than that which himself has worked for and earned,' and that he himself only ate from what he himself worked for and earned. It is narrated by Al-Bukhari in his (Sahih) [2072] in a (Hadith) from Al-Miqdam ibn Ma'dikarib.*

enough to fulfil your needs and have some left over for those who are unable to work for themselves.

Then He *the Almighty* says, 'If you are content with what I have allotted you, then I will bring rest to your heart and body and you will be one who is praised in My presence. If you are not content, however, with what I have allotted you, then, by My might and majesty, I will make the world your master: you will run around in it like a beast in the wild but will get nothing from it except that which I have allotted to you, and you will be one who is blamed in My presence. Son of Adam, I created the heavens and the earth and was not wearied by creating them, so should I be wearied by bringing you a loaf of bread? Son of Adam, I do not demand of you your work of tomorrow, so do not demand of Me your provision for tomorrow. Son of Adam, I do not forget those who disobey Me, so consider how it is with those who obey Me.'

Here we witness the words with which Allah *the Almighty* completes this Qudsi Hadith, 'Son of Adam, I love you, so by the right which I have over you, love Me.'⁽¹⁾

So your Lord appears to you directly when He *the Almighty* wants to bring you something good or beneficial, but when it is something bad, He *the Almighty* points it out to you from a distance and draws your attention to it with gentleness and solicitude.

Another thing we notice in terms of the literary style of the verse is that when Allah *the Almighty* says: 'But if any of you is obedient to Allah...' (*al-Ahzab*: 31), addressing the wives of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* he uses the masculine form of the verb *yaqnut* (obeys), and not the feminine form *taqnut*. Then, later in the verse when he says: '...and does good deeds...' (*al-Ahzab*: 31) He reverts to the feminine form for the verb *ta'mal* (does). So, on one occasion, he takes the word into account and on the other occasion he takes the meaning into account. As we mentioned previously, the word *man*, 'who' is a relative pronoun that is used for the singular, dual and plural, and for both masculine and feminine.

(1) This section of the (Hadith) is narrated by Imam Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali in ('Ihya' 'Ulum ad-din) [4/296], and he said, 'In some books, it has, 'My slave, I love you as is your right [over Me], so by the right which I have over you, love Me.'

Another matter that gives us food for thought here is the fact that *rizq* (sustenance) or (provision) is described as being *karim*, 'generous' or 'excellent' in Allah's Words: '...and have prepared a generous provision for her' (*al-Ahzab*: 31). *Rizq* is the food, drink, clothing, lodging and appurtenances that a person receives in the course of his life, although the word may also be used to refer to matters which are not material such as knowledge, clemency etc. However, it is not the provisions that we receive in this world that are described as being generous.

No, the one who is described as being generous is the Provider Himself *the Almighty*. So, why then, in this verse, is provision described as being generous?

They reply that the difference between provision in this world and provision in the Hereafter is that provision in this world requires the presence of a medium between you and the Provider. That medium might be a father, an administrator, an employer, a merchant or someone else, but it is he who conveys your provision to you with his own hands and so he is the one who is described as being generous. In the Hereafter, however, your provision comes to you directly without there being any medium, so it is fitting that the provision itself be described as being generous. If provision may be described as being generous, then what about the True Provider himself

Then Allah *the Almighty* says:

يٰۤاَيُّهَا النِّسَاءُ الَّذِي لَسْتُنَّ كَأَحَدٍ مِّنَ النِّسَاءِ ۚ إِنِ اتَّقَيْتُنَّ فَلَا تَخْضَعْنَ
بِالْقَوْلِ فَيَطْمَعَ الَّذِي فِي قَلْبِهِ مَرَضٌ وَقُلْنَ قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوفًا ﴿٣٢﴾

Wives of the Prophet, you are not like any other woman. If you are truly mindful of God, do not speak too softly in case the sick at heart should lust after you, but speak in an appropriate manner [32] (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 32)

The word *ahad* 'one' is used in a number of different ways in the Arabic language. For example, when it comes to number, if we want to refer to eleven of something, we say '*ahad* 'ashar if the object being counted is masculine, and '*ihda* 'ashra if the object being counted is feminine, The word *ahad* is used, also, to refer to the singular, dual and plural, and both masculine and

feminine, so you would say, 'There is no one (*ahad*) with me, not one man or one woman, not two men or two women, and not many men or many women.' That is why the word *ahad* is used in, Allah's Words: 'and there is nothing that could be compared with Him.' (*al-Ikhlās*: 4)

Allah *the Almighty* says: '... you are not like any other [*ahad*] woman...' (*al-Ahzab*: 32). This is particular to them because things divide up into species with every species dividing up into types.

The human being, for example, is a species. Within that species there are males and females. Then, under each of these types, there are individuals. Such division of a single species into male and female would not have taken place without there being differences between them over and above their shared characteristics. So the limits imposed on them by being a single species are shared – they are both living creatures capable of speech and thought – but their differences make us divide them into two types, each with its own special characteristics that distinguishes it from the other.

Another good example is time, which may be described as the envelope for events: if those events are events of movement and motion, then that time is the day. If they are events of stillness and lack of motion, then that time is the night. So, night and day are two types under a single genus, time, and each of them has special characteristics which we must be aware of if we want to avoid mixing them up.

Reflect on Allah's Words: 'Consider the night as it veils [the earth] in darkness, [1] and the day as it rises bright! [2] Consider the creation of the male and the female! [3] Verily, [O men,] you aim at most divergent ends! [4]' (*al-Layl*: 1-4)

Night and day are complementary and contrasting but without being contradicted. The same applies to males and females: each type has its own role and task that is specific to it. If you were to try to make the night into day or vice versa, or to make a man into a woman or vice versa, you would be going against the natural form chosen for it by Allah *the Almighty*.

We have already told you the story⁽¹⁾ of the man who passed by the chief of his village, found him beating his guard, so stood up in defence of the

(1) *The story of the village Mayor who used to beat his guard*

guard, saying, 'Why are you beating him, uncle of Abraham?' The chief replied, 'I found him sleeping on the job', so the man said, 'He was sleeping because he spent the whole day irrigating your fields. An irrigator cannot also be expected to guard!'

So, under every species there are types; types are not equal with each other, for if they were, they would simply be copies of each other and there would be no use in that. Every individual is different and has his own distinguishing characteristics. Therefore, do not think yourself superior to others since Allah *the Almighty* has distributed His gifts amongst all His creation: you might be superior in one thing but someone else will be superior in something else.

The reason for this is so that the connection formed between people in everyday life is one of mutual need, not one of some being preferred over others.

Therefore, a man who cleans the streets is superior to you by the fact that he performs a job that you have an aversion yourself to doing. If this worker were to perform a job for you, you would have to pay him a wage, whereas if he were to ask you a question – and you were a scholar, a dignitary or something similar – you would give him an answer without asking him to pay you something in return, even though you spent so many long years acquiring knowledge, reading books and listening to others until you reached the level, and obtained the distinction, whereby you were able to answer his query. Therefore, every single one of us, male or female, has his own unique personal individuality that sets him apart from others.

It is in this light that Allah *the Almighty* says to the wives of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*: '...you are not like any other [*ahad*] woman...' (*al-Ahzab*: 32). This is the special quality that sets them apart from other women. It is not women in general who role models are. No, rather that is a special characteristic of the wives of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*: they are the role models for all other women; they are the ones whose examples are there to be followed.

After this negation comes the proviso: Allah *the Almighty* says: '... If you are truly mindful of Allah...' (*al-Ahzab*: 32). In other words, it is not your marriage to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that sets you

apart, it is the strength of your *taqwa* 'piety' of Allah *the Almighty* for there were wives of other Prophets who did not have *taqwa*.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says: '...not speak too softly in case the sick at heart should lust after you...' (*al-Ahzab*: 32), i.e. 'Cut off the path of indecency at its source! Do not go near that which leads to it and leave those matters about which you have doubt!' What is meant by 'over-softness in speech' is either when a woman addresses a man with a soft, broken and quavering voice, or when her words are accompanied by enticing glances or by her drawing close to him.

If you are forced to speak to men then beware of characteristics such as these '...in case the sick at heart should lust after you...' (*al-Ahzab*: 32). This means, 'It is not that I am accusing you of anything, but the simple fact is that none of you can vouchsafe for any of the men with whom you speak, for some of them might have sickness in their hearts.'⁽¹⁾ Therefore, do not present them with any opportunity.'

Not being over-soft in speech does not mean that you should use harsh or crude words when you address people; rather, it means that you must keep things within the limits assigned to them. And this is why He *the Almighty* follows this with the Words: '...but speak in an appropriate manner...' (*al-Ahzab*: 32). The Quran, after prohibiting inappropriate unrestrained behaviour, presents us with the appropriate alternative, that is, *qawl ma'ruf* 'speaking in a kindly way'. When this term is being used to describe the speech of a woman, it means that she should moderate her words and listen with her ears without letting her eyes dwell upon the speaker because if she were to look at him like that, it might cause him to desire her and embolden him to proposition her, and that is what Allah *the Almighty* wants to prevent happening.

(1) Ibn 'Arafa said, 'Sickness of the heart is slackness with the truth; sickness of the body is slackness in the limbs, and sickness of the eye is slackness in the gaze – when an eye becomes sick it becomes lazy. An example of this is in His Words: '...in case the sick at heart should lust after you...' (*al-Ahzab*: 32), i.e. his heart is lax when it comes to carrying out the commands and prohibitions [of the Lord]' Ibn Manzur narrated this in (*Lissan Al-'Arab*: subject matter: (*marada*)). Ibn Kathir said in his (*Tafsir*), 'By sickness, it means (*daghal*) which is a form of defectiveness and corruption. The root meaning of *daghal* is a luxuriant and leaf bush within which the people of corruption conceal themselves.' (*Lissan Al-'Arab*): root: *daghala*).

That is why a story⁽¹⁾ is told of a man who saw his servant girl standing at the door of his house speaking to a handsome young man who was asking her about something. When he saw her remain there speaking with him for a long time, her master beat her and scolded her for her unbecoming conduct. Then, when another young man came the next day to ask her about the very same thing that the other man had asked her the previous day, she greeted him straight away with curses and imprecations, having been made aware of the sickness in the heart of that young man and those like him.

Later on, in another part of this same chapter, we find: 'O Prophet! Tell thy wives and thy daughters, as well as all [other] believing women, that they should draw over themselves some of their outer garments [when in public]: this will be more conducive to their being recognized [as decent women] and not annoyed. But [withal,] Allah is indeed much-forgiving, a dispenser of mercy!' (*al-Ahzab*: 59) The reason for this is because when a man comes upon a woman who is modest and covers up her physical endowments, he is not emboldened against her: he knows that she is not a cheap sort of woman, so he respects the boundaries she has set.

Wise people have said, 'As for those women whom you see flaunting their assets to men who are not their relatives and insist on exposing themselves to men, it is as if they were putting a sign round their necks saying, 'Open for customers'. It is as if they were telling those who paid them no heed to take note, thus arousing their passions and giving those men the courage to make a move on them.' Allah *the Almighty* wanted the wives of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* firstly, to speak to people from behind a curtain, and secondly, to speak to them in a correct fashion without using a soft and quavering voice. For, by doing that, they do not expose themselves to evil; give no encouragement to the bawdy or irresponsible to make a move on them.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says:

(1) The story of the she- servant and the lad

وَقَرْنَ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ وَلَا تَبَرَّجْنَ تَبَرُّجَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الْأُولَىٰ وَأَقِمْنَ
الصَّلَاةَ وَآتِينَ الزَّكَاةَ وَأَطِعْنَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ
لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا ﴿٣٣﴾

Stay at home, and do not flaunt your finery as they used to in the pagan past; keep up the prayer, give the prescribed alms, and obey God and His Messenger. God wishes to keep uncleanness away from you, people of the [Prophet's] House, and to purify you thoroughly [33] (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 33)

The meaning of: '... 'Stay at home...' (*al-Ahzab*: 33) is do not go outside a lot. This is, in fact, the proper behaviour for women in general since, if a woman busied herself with what is required of her when it comes to running the household, serving her husband and children and looking after their best interests, she would not have enough time in the day to go out as well. That is why it is often the case that husbands come home to find their wives completely engrossed in their household chores. That situation can be a source of annoyance to some husbands because that means their wives cannot devote all their time to them. So, the woman who is bankrupt in her own home is the one who goes out a lot and fulfils the requirements of her home from outside of it.

If she were, however, to learn a simple handicraft, then she could fulfil the requirements of her home and put a little money aside for her husband. For example, some people have told us about the women of the Egyptian city of Dumyat, how they do every sort of work and help their husbands. Some girls there are even taught a trade, so when they get married they do not place a huge financial burden upon their fathers. No, quite the reverse, In fact, they have enough money themselves to put some aside and help their husbands out after they have married. As for the verb *tabarraja* 'flaunt', used in the verse: '...and do not flaunt your finery as they used to in the pagan past...' (*al-Ahzab*: 33), it is derived from the word *burj* meaning 'fortress' so the root meaning of *tabarraja* is to emerge or jut out from one's fortress. The meaning of the verse, therefore, is 'Do not come out of the fortress that is your clothing that covers you, and do not expose your bodily charms and assets which you are obligated to cover up.' As for: '...as they used to in the pagan past...' (*al-Ahzab*: 33), it refers

to the way women – and by women, we mean slave girls and not freewomen – used to dress before the advent of Islam. In those days, they would expose their most alluring physical endowments for all to see – indeed, they often appeared to be almost naked and thought nothing of it. The situation was very much like what we have seen ourselves of the way women dress in sub-Saharan Africa. Freewomen in the time of paganism before Islam, however, were women of chastity and honour while at the same time slave girls were set up in brothels. This was the reason why the wife of Abu Sufyan⁽¹⁾ said to the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* when he asked the believing women to pledge an oath that they not fornicate, ‘Do freewomen ever fornicate, Messenger of Allah?’ In other words, ‘that is something that freewomen detested even in the time of ignorance before Islam.’

Another of the meanings of the word *burj* is becoming wide or extended. So, according to that interpretation, the verse would mean, ‘Do not extend the circle of what is exposed outside the area delineated by the *Shari'a*, that is, the face and the hands.’

Elsewhere in the Quran, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘And [know that] women advanced in years, who no longer feel any sexual desire, incur no sin if they discard their [outer] garments, provided they do not aim at a showy display of [their] charms...’ (*an-Nur*: 60).

It is astonishing to see women of the age of fifty or sixty today, putting powder and blusher upon their faces, feeling no embarrassment about the wrinkles thereon and having almost no feeling of their ages. Then He *the Almighty* says: ‘... keep up the prayer, give the prescribed alms...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 33). The Quran frequently joins together prayer and *zakat*. Prayer comes first because it is the central pillar around which all the other duties of Islam are built. The act of *zakat* entails that you expend some of your wealth. Wealth is a

(1) *She is Hind bint 'Utba ibn Ar-Rabi'a. The transmissions about her before she became Muslim are well-known – she took part in the battle of Uhud as an unbeliever and did what she did to Hamza. She became Muslim on the day of the conquest of Mecca after her husband, Abu Sufyan, did so, and she died during the Caliphate of 'Uthman. (Al-'Isaba of Ibn Hajar 8/206). Ibn Sa'd mentioned in his At-Tabaqat (10/226) that this comment was made by her when the women pledged allegiance to Messenger Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him. Hind was the mother of Mu'awiyya ibn abu Sufyan.*

derivative branch of action and action is a derivative branch of time and when you are in the prayer it is time itself that you expend and sacrifice. So, it is as if you expend 97.5% of it in the prayer, on top of the 2.5% you expend in *zakat*. Another thing that is understood from the payment of *zakat* being mentioned in this context is that women have their own individual financial responsibilities, separate from those of their fathers or husbands. The proof of this lies in the fact that Allah *the Almighty* commands them here to pay their *zakat*, 'to render their purifying dues'. However, modern society considers the money a woman has before marriage to belong to her father and after marriage to belong to her husband. Another thing modern society does when she gets married is to take away from her her father's family name and give her husband's family name instead. This is even harsher on the woman than taking away her money, since calling her by her husband's name neglects her own identity. Take a look at 'A'isha Allah *be pleased with her* for example, we still call her 'A'isha bint abu Bakr' – no one refers to her as 'A'isha wife of Muhammad'.

Then He *the Almighty* says: '...and obey Allah and His Messenger...' (*al-Ahzab*: 33) because the matter is not limited to simply performing the prayer and paying *zakat* – there are many other things that also require obedience to Allah *the Almighty* and His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*. It is interesting to note that this verse places Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* Apostle in conjunction with Allah *the Almighty* but only mentions the imperative verb 'pay heed' once: '...and obey Allah and His Messenger...' (*al-Ahzab*: 33). When we search through the Quran for this same command, we find that, on some occasions, the verb is repeated and, on other occasions, it is not.

So, one time, Allah *the Almighty* says: '...Pay heed, then, unto Allah, and pay heed unto the Apostle...' (*at-Taghabun*: 12). Another time, He *the Almighty* says: 'And pay heed unto Allah and the Apostle...' (*Al-Imran*: 132). Another time, He *the Almighty* says: '...Pay heed unto Allah, and pay heed unto the Apostle and unto those from among you who have been entrusted with authority...' (*an-Nisa*': 59). Each of these different forms of the command has its own sense and its own meaning: When it says, 'pay heed to Allah *the Almighty* and pay heed to the Messenger', it is as if it is saying that one must obey

Allah *the Almighty* in terms of His general commands, but obey His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* in terms of their specifics. So Allah *the Almighty* gave us the general command to pray and pay *zakat*, then the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* clarified the general command for us and taught us the specifics of how it is done by saying to us, 'Pray as you see me pray'⁽¹⁾, and 'Take your religious rites from me'⁽²⁾.

So, the reason that the verb was repeated here was because it deals with two forms of obedience: obedience to Allah *the Almighty* by fulfilling His general command, and obedience to the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* by taking from him its finer details. If the verb is only mentioned once, as in: 'And pay heed unto Allah and the Apostle...' (*Al- 'Imran*: 132), it means that the command of Allah *the Almighty* and the command of the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* happen to be identical, so only one act of obedience is necessary. Suppose that Allah *the Almighty* did an action and His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* did an action and that it was impossible to separate one's action from the other. The proof that this happens is found in the verse: '...And they could find no fault [with the Faith] save that Allah had enriched them and [caused] His Apostle [to enrich them] out of His bounty!' (*at-Tawba*: 74) Allah *the Almighty* did not say, 'and His Apostle enriched them' because some might say then that each one of them enriches according to his own ability. No, he only used one verb for both: '...save that Allah had enriched them and [caused] His Apostle [to enrich them]...' (*at-Tawba*: 74). Read also, the verse: '...the while it is Allah and His Apostle whose pleasure they should seek above all else, if indeed they are believers!' (*at-Tawba*: 62) Allah *the Almighty* did not use the dual pronoun and say *yardawhuma*, (seek their pleasure), no, He *the Almighty* used the singular pronoun and said *yardawhu*, (seek his pleasure).

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- (1) It is narrated by Bukhari in his *Sahih* (631); and by Ahmad in his *Musnad* (5/53) in a (*Hadith*) from Malik ibn Al-Huwayrith that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'When the time of the prayer arrives, call the (*adhan*) then call the *iqama*, then let the eldest amongst you lead the prayer. You should pray as you see me pray.'
 - (2) Jabir ibn 'Abdullah said, 'I saw the Prophet on the day of Sacrifice throwing (his stones) from the back of his camel, and telling us, 'Take your (*Hajj*) rites from me, for I do not know whether I will perform another *Hajj* after this one.' It is narrated by Ahmad in his *Musnad* (3/318); by An-Nasa'i in his *Sunnan* (5/270); and by Muslim in his *Sahih* (1297).

As for when He *the Almighty* said: '...Pay heed unto Allah, and pay heed unto the Apostle and unto those from among you who have been entrusted with authority...' (*an-Nisa'*: 59), the reason He did not repeat the verb 'pay heed' for 'those among you who have been entrusted with authority' is because we are not obligated to obey those who have been entrusted with authority unless their commands correspond to those of Allah *the Almighty* and Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Then He *the Almighty* says: '...Allah wishes to keep uncleanness away from you, people of the [Prophet's] House, and to purify you thoroughly' (*al-Ahzab*: 33).

The word *rijs* 'all that might be loathsome', is the same as the word *rijz* which means filth and impurity, regardless of whether the filth is physical such as corpses and alcohol or abstract such as sins and wrong actions. These different types of filth are gathered together in the verse: '...Intoxicants, and games of chance, and idolatrous practices, and the divining of the future are but a loathsome evil of Satan's doing: shun it, then, so that you might attain to a happy state!' (*al-Ma'ida*: 90) The word *rijs* can also be used to mean hypocrisy and sickness. Although the Arabic word *ahl* is said to originally refer to the clan or close relatives of the husband, it became customary to use it to refer to a man's wife. A remnant of this usage is the way we use the word today: when we go to visit a friend, for example, we might say to him, 'The *ahl* is with me' or 'The group is with me' or 'The children are with me' meaning by all of those expressions that we are accompanied by our wives. Why do we use these expressions?

Because, they say, being covered up is the principle around which a woman's life is built. If her name itself is built upon the principle of being covered up, then most of her duties too are covered up within those of the man. It is rare indeed for rulings to be directed specifically at women. This is exemplified by the story ⁽¹⁾ of 'Asma' bint 'Umayy ⁽²⁾ *Allah be pleased with her*

(1) The story of 'Asma' bint 'Umayy with the Prophet *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him*

(2) She is 'Asma' bint 'Umayy ibn Al-Harith Al-Khath'ami. She was a Companion who became Muslim before the Prophet *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* went into Dar Al-'Arqam in Mecca. She emigrated to Abyssinia with her husband Ja'far ibn Abu Taleb *Allah be pleased with him*. She was widowed when Ja'far was killed at the battle of Mu'ta in 8 AH and was then married by Abu Bakr As-Siddiq *Allah be pleased with him*=

the wife of Ja'far ibn abu Taleb *Allah be pleased with him* who was one of those who emigrated to Abyssinia. When she came back, she asked, 'has anything been revealed in my absence concerning women?' They replied that nothing had been revealed, so she went to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and said, 'Messenger of Allah, how great is our loss and disappointment! There are no rulings concerning us at all.' Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* replied to her, 'You are kept hidden and safe by your men.'⁽¹⁾ Still, despite that, the following verse of Quran was revealed: 'Verily, for all men and women who have surrendered themselves unto Allah, and all believing men and believing women, and all truly devout men and truly devout women, and all men and women who are true to their word, and all men and women who are patient in adversity, and all men and women who humble themselves [before Allah], and all men and women who give in charity, and all self-denying men and self-denying women, and all men and women who are mindful of their chastity, and all men and women who remember Allah unceasingly: for [all of] them has Allah readied forgiveness of sins and a mighty reward.' (*al-Ahzab*: 35)

You may also note in the verse: '... Allah wishes to keep uncleanness away from you, people of the [Prophet's] House, and to purify you thoroughly' (*al-Ahzab*: 33), that, although it is talking about women, it observes the principle of keeping women covered by making use of the masculine form of the pronoun, *kun*, and not the feminine form *kunna*, in the words, '...to keep uncleanness away...' (*al-Ahzab*: 33) as well as in the words, '...and to purify you thoroughly...' (*al-Ahzab*: 33). However, it would also be correct to say that He *the Almighty* intended the phrase *ahl al-bayt* as referring to all the members of his household, be they male or female.

= with whom she had a son called Muhammad ibn Abu Bakr. Then, after Abu Bakr died, she was married by 'Ali ibn Abu Taleb with whom she also had children. She died after 'Ali. Abu Nu'aym described her as one of those who emigrated twice and prayed to both (qiblas). (*Al-'A'lam of Az-Zirikli* 1/306)

(1) I could not find this particular (Hadith). However Ahmad narrated in his *Musnad* (6/256) in a (Hadith) from 'A'isha that, 'Women are the (other halves) of men.' This is also narrated by *At-Tirmidhi* in his *Sunnan* (113). *Al-Khattabi* said in (*Ma'alim As-Sunnan* 1/79), 'In other words, they are their equal in terms of character and natural attributes: it is as if they had been split off from men.'

وَأَذْكُرْ مَا يُتْلَىٰ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ مِنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ
وَالْحِكْمَةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ لَطِيفًا خَبِيرًا ﴿٣٤﴾

**Remember what is recited in your houses of God's
revelations and wisdom, for God is all subtle, all aware[34]
(The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 34)**

'Remember what is recited in your houses...' (*al-Ahzab*: 34), O wives of the Prophet, '...of Allah's revelation...' (*Al-Imran*: 34), i.e. the verses of the Noble Quran '...and [His] wisdom', i.e. the Hadiths of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Another interpretation is that the verse is making use of the Arabic stylistic device of having the adjective appear as a noun in conjunction with the word it is describing, so the meaning would be 'of the wise messages of Allah'. However, the first interpretation is preferable as long as there is some leeway in the matter. As for the meaning of *wa-dhkurna*, 'Remember...' (*al-Ahzab*: 34), we have already said that *dhikr* is the process of taking a piece of information from your subconscious and bringing it into your conscious mind. So the meaning of the verse is, 'Bring remembrance of Allah *the Almighty* into your mind and be constantly mindful of it. That is why Allah *the Almighty* says: '...and remembrance of Allah is indeed the greatest [good]...' (*al-Ankabut*: 45), i.e. greater than any other type of worship since, as we mentioned before, other acts of worship require time, preparation and that you be free of distraction and responsibility, and entail a degree of hardship. The same is not true of *dhikr*: it can be on your lips at any time of day or night and without any preparation or hardship –your tongue can occupy itself with it regardless of the time and regardless of the state in which you are. This is indicated *al-Jumu'a* chapter: 'and when the prayer is ended, disperse freely on earth and seek to obtain [something] of Allah's bounty; but remember Allah often so that you might attain to a happy state!' (*al-Jumu'a*: 10) So, as long as *dhikr* is being mindful of Allah *the Almighty* no form of work or endeavour should prevent you from doing it. And, although *dhikr* is the lightest form of worship there is and the easiest for yourself to bear, it also weighs the heaviest for you in the balance.

Now reflect on this verse: 'Verily, in the Apostle of Allah you have a good example for everyone who looks forward [with hope and awe] to Allah and

the Last Day, and remembers Allah unceasingly.' (*al-Ahzab*: 21) Part of the greatness of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* lay in the fact that never once, not even for an instant, did his heart cease to be engaged in the remembrance of his Lord. That is why it has come down to us that He *peace and blessings be upon him* said about himself, 'My eyes sleep, but my heart never sleeps.'⁽¹⁾ Then the verse is finished off by the words: '...for Allah is all subtle, all aware' (*al-Ahzab*: 34). *Lutf* (subtlety) is dealing with matters with delicacy and finesse and doing them well no matter how difficult they are to accomplish. We clarified this meaning previously when we mentioned that the smaller something is *latufa*, the greater its capacity for violence. The metal you place over your windows to protect yourself from wolves is different from that which you use to protect yourself from snakes and that which you use to protect yourself from mosquitoes and flies and so on and so forth. That is why we find that the deadliest diseases come from microscopic viruses that take us unaware. Doing things well entails penetrating deep into the heart of things no matter how slight or insignificant. So, for example, there might be an object that you want to get, but in order to access it you have to pass your hand through an opening which is too narrow for it. So, finding that your own hand is incapable of carrying out the task, you either enlist the help of a young boy to do it because his hand is much smaller and finer than your own, or you use a tool that is narrow enough to fit through the gap.

The attribute of Allah, *al-Latif*, the 'Unfathomable', is complemented by His attribute *al-Khabir*, the 'All-aware'. If *lutf* is dealing with matters with delicacy and finesse and doing them well, then *khibra* knows the place in which they are found. *Lutf* is not possible without *khibra*. Then Allah *the Almighty* says⁽²⁾:

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- (1) *This Hadith is agreed upon. It is narrated by Al-Bukhari in his Sahih (2113) in Kitab Salat At-tarawih; and by Muslim in his Sahih (738) in Kitab Salat Al-musafirin in a Hadith from 'A'isha Allah be pleased with her that she said, 'Messenger of Allah, do you go to sleep before you pray the Wet prayer?' He replied, 'A'isha, my eyes may sleep but my heart never sleeps.'*
- (2) *The reason for the verse being revealed: It is narrated by Ahmad in his Musnad (6/ 301 & 305) that Umm Salama Allah be pleased with her said, 'I said, 'Messenger of Allah, why are we not mentioned in the Quran in the same way that men are mentioned?' Then, I heard nothing of it until one day I heard him call out from the pulpit, 'O people!' I was combing my hair at the time so I wrapped a cover round it, approached the door of the=*

إِنَّ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْقَنِينَ وَالْقَنِينَ وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالصَّادِقَاتِ وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّابِرَاتِ وَالْخَاشِعِينَ وَالْخَاشِعَاتِ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقَاتِ وَالصَّامِتِينَ وَالصَّامِتَاتِ وَالْحَافِظِينَ وَالْحَافِظَاتِ وَالذَّاكِرِينَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا وَالذَّاكِرَاتِ أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٣٥﴾

For men and women who are devoted to God – believing men and women, obedient men and women, truthful men and women, steadfast men and women, humble men and women, charitable men and women, fasting men and women, chaste men and women, men and women who remember God often – God has prepared forgiveness and a rich reward [35] (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 35)

We say that this verse was revealed in order to set the mind of ‘Asma’ bint ‘Umays *Allah be pleased with her* the wife of Ja’far ibn Abu Taleb *Allah be pleased with him* at rest, after her conversation with Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* regarding rulings, during which she had made the observation that those that had been revealed were mainly directed at men. It appears that she brought up the topic of women with Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and mentioned that there were Muslims and believers etc. amongst them just like men. In this verse, we notice that it mentions Islam first and then mentions faith. But which of these two comes first with regard to people? We find an answer to this question in the Words of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘The Bedouin say, ‘We have attained to faith.’ Say [unto them, O Muhammad]: ‘You have not [yet] attained to faith; you should [rather] say, ‘We have [outwardly] surrendered’ – for [true] faith has not yet entered your hearts...’ (*al-Hujurat*: 14).

= mosque and stood to listen next to the palm branches, and I heard him say, ‘Allah says: Verily, for all men and women who have surrendered themselves unto Allah, and all believing men and believing women...’ Until the end of the verse’

It is narrated by At-Tirmidhi in his *sunnan* (3211) in a Hadith from Umm ‘Ammara Al-‘Ansariyya *Allah be pleased with her* that she went to the Prophet Allah’s *peace and blessings be upon him* and said, ‘Everything I see seems to be for the men: I have not seen anything mentioned about women.’ Then this verse: ‘For men and women who are devoted to Allah– believing men and women, obedient men and women, truthful men and women, steadfast men and women, humble men and women...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 35) was revealed. At-Tirmidhi classified the (Hadith as (*hasan gharib*).

Islam is carrying out the obligatory acts of Islam regardless of whether one has or does not have belief in them. Islam is simply obeying rulings. Faith, on the other hand, is believing in the One Who made those rulings and affirming the One Who conveyed them to you. According to this, faith precedes Islam. This is why this verse was revealed, exposing those Bedouins who hid themselves behind their outward performance of acts of Islam that they did not believe in. But Islam can come after faith when you start to find the performance of those acts sweet and enticing – the acts themselves can attract you towards faith and affirmation. And that is why those Bedouins rejoiced and said, 'Praise belongs to Allah', when they heard, the verse says: '...for [true] faith has not yet entered your hearts...' (*al-Hujurat*: 14). The word in the verse *lamma*, not yet, is only used for things that have a possibility of happening. It is like when you say, 'Our orchard has not borne fruit yet although orchards have borne fruit.' What you mean is that it will bear fruit at some point in the future. About this matter, they say, 'That is because there are many rulings whose maker you do not believe in until you have first tasted their sweetness. For example⁽¹⁾, there was a man who came to Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* and asked permission to stay the night at his house and partake of his hospitality, so Ibrahim *peace be upon him* asked him what religion he followed.

He replied that he was a Magian 'Fire-worshipper', so Ibrahim *peace be upon him* shut the door in his face. His Lord *the Almighty* however, reprimanded him for that and said, 'Ibrahim, do you really expect him to change his religion in exchange for one single night of your hospitality when I have provided for him his whole life despite the fact that he does not believe in Me?' So Ibrahim *peace be upon him* hurried after the man and, when he caught him up, invited him to his home. So the man asked him, 'Did you not turn me away just a short while ago? What happened?' Ibrahim *Allah's peace be upon him* replied, 'My Lord reprimanded Me because of how I treated you.' So the man said, 'What an excellent Lord! A Lord who reprimands His loved ones for their treatment of His enemies! I bear witness that there is no God but Allah.' This verse makes mention of ten attributes: it begins with that of Islam

(1) *The story of the guest of Abraham Allah's peace be upon him with his disbelieving guest*

surrendering to Allah when it says men and women who have surrendered themselves unto Allah *the Almighty* and finishes with that of *dhikr* remembrance when it says men and women who remember Allah *the Almighty* unceasingly. It is as if Allah *the Almighty* had brought the desire of ‘Asma’ bint ‘Umayy *Allah be pleased with her* into being through these ten attributes which men and women share and which contain the bases for all types of religious duty. This is a message from Allah *the Almighty* to show that women’s rulings are hidden within those of men, and that the bases for all those rulings are these ten attributes. The meaning of: ‘... obedient men and women...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 35) are those who are constant in their worship of Allah *the Almighty* and obedience to Him, and do so with humbleness and humility. As for His Words: ‘...charitable men and women...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 35), they indicate that women have their own independent financial obligations and are free to use their money how they wish without needing permission from their husbands to do so. If money comes into a woman’s possession through inheritance, a gift from her husband or any other means, no one has the right to dictate to her how she uses it. We clarified this matter previously when we discussed the topic of *zakat*. These are some of the distinctions that Islam grants women who, before Islam – and indeed in certain contemporary societies – were considered to be completely under the financial authority of either their fathers or their husbands. The Arabic word *sadaqa*, ‘alms’, is inclusive of *zakat*, ‘the obligatory alms tax’, since Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘the offerings given for the sake of Allah are [meant] only for the poor and the needy, and those who are in charge thereof...’ (*at-Tawba*: 60) using the word *sadaqa*.

Sadaqa is the more general word, and it means that you affirm Allah *the Almighty* when He entrusts you with wealth which derives from your striving in the earth that He created. It is as if you were putting into practice what Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* did when he was asked by Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* what he had done with his share of the booty they had collected from the war and he replied that he had given it all away as *sadaqa*. Then, when the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* asked him what he had left for his family, he replied, ‘Allah and His Messenger.’ When the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* asked the

same question of 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* he replied that he had given away half of it as *sadaqa* and kept half of it for his family.⁽¹⁾

So each of them disposed of their money in a logical way that best befitted their respective characters, while one desires the growth and purification of one's wealth by paying *zakat*, the only thing one desires when giving *sadaqa* is the face of Allah *the Almighty* and a reward in the Hereafter, It is as if the one who gives *sadaqa* desires nothing except to do good for another and acknowledge that the favour is from Allah *the Almighty* the Giver, since it was Allah *the Almighty* who granted him a level of wealth that he had not granted to the weak or incapacitated. Then Allah *the Almighty* mentions the religious duty of fasting: '...fasting men and women...' (*al-Ahzab*: 35). In all of the rulings in Islam, fasting is unique: Allah *the Almighty* put the reward for every single religious duty in the hands of its own specific cadre except for fasting for which there was no specific cadre. This is why Allah *the Almighty* says, '...except for fasting – it is Mine and I will reward people for it.'⁽²⁾ In other words, it holds a high rank over all the other duties. But why is such a high rank granted to fasting?

They reply that it is because fasting is the only form of worship which human beings have never used to worship other human beings. It is possible, for example, when it comes to the testimony of faith, 'there is no Allah except Allah', for someone to use statements like it to praise others, such as when a person says to another, 'there is no one in the universe except you: you are the one who brings benefit and you are the one who brings harm', or to use statements like it to praise themselves, such as when a person says about himself, 'I am the one and only leader.' Similarly, when it comes to the prayer, we see people bowing and prostrating to other than Allah *the Almighty* in the same way that we bow and prostrate to Allah *the Almighty* and when it comes to *zakat*, we try and draw close to the great and mighty of this world by giving them or those around them money and gifts.

(1) *It is narrated by Abu Dawud in his Sunnan (1678); by At-Tirmidhi in his Sunnan (3675); and by Al-Hakim in his Mustadrak (1/414). Al-Hakim considered it (Sahih), and At-Tirmidhi classified it as (hasan sahih).*

(2) *An agreed-upon Hadith It is narrated by Al-Bukhari in his Sahih (1904); and by Muslim in his Sahih (2/806) in a Hadith from Abu Hurayra. This is a (Qudsi Hadith) from the Lord of Might.*

But, has any human being ever said to another, 'I will fast a month – or even a day – in order to draw closer to you'? No, this has never been said because fasting for one who is not your equal would be a source of bother to the one for whom the fast is being done, not the one doing the fasting. Do you not see that he would be forced to place the one doing the fasting under constant observation to check whether he had eaten or not?

No, this has never been said, because fasting is the only act of worship which human beings cannot use to draw closer to other human beings. Allah *the Almighty* says about it in a Qudsi Hadith, 'Every action that the son of Adam does is for his sake except for fasting – it is mine and I will reward people for it.'⁽¹⁾ In other words, its reward is outside those that have been fixed, as we mentioned earlier. The greatness of the religious duty of fasting lies in another direction too. This is that Allah *the Almighty* has made some things lawful for us and other things forever unlawful for us. So the one who takes on his religious responsibilities becomes accustomed to what is lawful but not to what is unlawful, thereby helping this doctrine to take firm root in his soul. And this continues until such a time that it no longer even occurs to him to partake of what is unlawful. So, for example, he never once thinks of drinking alcohol or eating carrion – with respect to him such things are anathema and completely finished with. Allah *the Almighty* wanted to make the pleasure of taking one's religious responsibilities last for people, so He *the Almighty* made fasting obligatory on them, an act of worship during which people deny themselves during one day what had been lawful for them and what they had grown accustomed to the previous day in order that such self-denial should become habitual for them. There is a difference between the continuance of a habit and the pleasure that an act of worship brings. Reflect on the day of *Eid of Fitr*, for example: *fitr* (eating during the daytime) is something that is usual for you to do on other days throughout the year when you are free to either fast or not as you wish. However, when the day of *Eid of Fitr* comes, your Lord takes you out of the world of habit into the world of worship and makes a religious duty for you to have something to eat during the daylight hours

(1) *An agreed-upon Hadith. It is narrated by Al-Bukhari in his Sahih (1904); and by Muslim in his Sahih (2/806) in a (Hadith) from Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him*

before you go out to the *Eid* Prayer.⁽¹⁾ Then He *the Almighty* says: '...chaste men and women...' (*al-Ahzab*: 35). So the topic of guarding one's private parts comes immediately after that of fasting because fasting is abstaining from the appetites of both the stomach and the private parts: Allah *the Almighty* gave us the appetite of the stomach so that we could preserve our lives by means of eating and drinking. He gave us the appetite of the private parts so that we could preserve our species by means of marriage and procreation. We say that Allah *the Almighty* satisfied the wish of 'Asma' bint 'Umayy *Allah be pleased with her* the representative of womankind, by mentioning the various different types of religious duty once in the masculine form and once in the feminine form. However, in doing that, He *the Almighty* took into account the need to keep women shielded. He *the Almighty* is still taking that consideration into account when He *the Almighty* says here '...chaste men and women...' (*al-Ahzab*: 35): when He *the Almighty* speaks of the men, He *the Almighty* says, '... '...chaste men and women...' (*al-Ahzab*: 35), but when He *the Almighty* speaks of the women, He *the Almighty* does not say 'all women who are mindful of their chastity' since matters relating to women should be protected and shielded from the public gaze. Then He says: '...men and women who remember Allah often—' (*al-Ahzab*: 35) Then, once again, returns to the matter of keeping women shielded when He says: '...Allah has prepared forgiveness and a rich reward (*al-Ahzab*: 35) using the masculine pronoun *hum* 'them', subsuming the matters of women within those of men. The reason this is done is to honour and protect women, not to disregard or ignore them as some have claimed. A form of this protection can be found in the words that we ourselves use to describe our wives when we refer to them saying, 'My family is with me' or 'The children are with me', or 'The gang are with me'. By saying those things, we seek to protect them and shield from harm, not to disregard or belittle them.

(1) From Burayda Al-Aslami who said, 'Messenger Muhammad Allah's peace and blessings be upon him did not used to go out (to the prayer) on the day of the Eid of Fitr until he had eaten something; and he did not use to eat on the day of the (Eid) Sacrifice until he had returned (from the prayer), whereupon he would eat from the meat of the animal he had sacrificed.' It is narrated by Ahmad in his Musnad (5/353). Sheikh Sayyid Sabiq said in (*Fiqh As-Sunna* 1/268), 'Ibn Qudama said, 'With regards to hurrying to eat (before the prayer) on the day of the Eid of Fitr, I know of no difference of opinion (among the scholars).'

It is as if Allah *the Almighty* had satisfied Asma' bint 'Umays *Allah be pleased with her* by including her on behalf of all the Muslim women in the same reward that will be provided for those male believers whose characteristics are mentioned in the verse in question so as to indicate women are also legally responsible.

We notice in the context of this verse that 'forgiveness' is mentioned before 'reward'. This is because of the principle that reads: 'The prevention of harm takes priority over the attraction of benefit'. Allah *the Almighty* prepares a reward for His worshippers for the good actions that they do even though He *the Almighty* derives no benefit whatsoever from those actions. No, the benefit that results from those acts returns solely to the one who is responsible for doing them – it is he who derives benefit from his acts of obedience and receives his reward for them in the Hereafter. As for Allah *the Almighty* He has no need of us, nor does our obedience avail Him anything, a point which is clear in the following Qudsi Hadith: 'O My slaves, if the first of you and the last of you, the jinn amongst you and the men, were all to have a heart the like of that of the most Allah-fearing person amongst you, that would not increase My kingdom in any way whatsoever. O my slaves, if the first of you and the last of you, the jinn amongst you and the men, were all to have a heart the like of that of the most immoral person amongst you, that would not decrease from My kingdom in any way.'⁽¹⁾

So, we ourselves benefit from the religious duties for which we are responsible: they safeguard our well-being in this world and then we receive a reward for doing them on the Day of Resurrection. That is why we find so many of the messengers saying to their people, 'And no reward whatever do I ask of you for it...' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 109). It is as if they were saying, 'It would be reasonable for me, according to the customs of economics and exchange, to take some sort of reward for the task I am performing for you, that is, conveying Allah's Message to you, since I am doing you all a service. But what is there that you could give me, O poor ones, when I have a reward that is so high that no human being is capable of granting it? The verse says: '...my reward rests with none but Allah...' (*Yunus*: 72).

(1) See *Muslim, Sahih*, no. 2577; and *At-Tirmidhi, Sunnan*, on the authority of *Abu Dharr Allah be pleased with him*.

Allah *the Almighty* alone is capable of rewarding me in the manner that I deserve. The describing of the reward in the verse as being 'mighty' indicates that it will be large in size, valuable in nature and will last for a long time. These are the elements by which something is defined as being *`azhim* (great). How could any reward be greater than the one Allah *the Almighty* prepares for His worshippers in the Hereafter? Then Allah *the Almighty* says⁽¹⁾:

وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَلَا مُؤْمِنَةٍ إِذَا قَضَى اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَمْرًا أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ
مِنْ أَمْرِهِمْ وَمَنْ يَعْصِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَالًا مُبِينًا ﴿٣٦﴾

When God and His Messenger have decided on a matter that concerns them, it is not fitting for any believing man or woman to claim freedom of choice in that matter: whoever disobeys God and His Messenger is far astray [36]
(The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 36)

The saying of Allah *the Almighty* '...it is not fitting for any believing man or woman...' (*al-Ahzab*: 36) includes both men and women. Thus, this verse acts as an extension to the previous one, that is, it supports what comes before it. It also serves what comes after it, for it contains the main cause of that whole issue. It is narrated that this verse was revealed about 'Abdullah ibn Jahsh *Allah be pleased with him* and his sister Zaynab *Allah be pleased with her* when they refused to marry Zaynab to Zayd ibn Haritha *Allah be pleased with him*. So, from the point of view that they were the reason why the verse was revealed, the believing man referred to in the verse is 'Abdullah ibn Jahsh *Allah be pleased with him* while the believing woman is his sister Zaynab *Allah be pleased with her*. But in its more general meaning, the verse refers to all believing men and all believing women alike.

(1) *The cause of revelation of the verse. See Ibn Kathir, Tafsir Al-Quran Al-`Azhim, vol. 3, p. 489 and As-Suyuti, Asbab An-Nuzul, p. 220. As-Suyuti says: 'It is narrated on the authority of Ibn `Abbas Allah be pleased with him that he said, 'Messenger Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him married Zaynab bint Jahsh Allah be pleased with her to Zayd ibn Haritha Allah be pleased with him but she looked down on him and said, "I am better than him in terms of lineage." She was a woman of passion prone to bouts of anger, so Allah the Almighty revealed: "When Allah and His Messenger have decided on a matter that concerns them, it is not fitting for any believing man or woman to claim freedom of choice in that matter..."' (al-Ahzab: 36).*

We mentioned the story⁽¹⁾ of Zayd ibn Haritha *Allah be pleased with him* previously, but it can be summarised as follows: he was stolen away from his family and sold as a slave in the slave market of Mecca, where he was bought by Hakim ibn Hizam who gave him to Khadija *Allah be pleased with her* the Mother of the Believers.

Khadija then gave Zayd to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who made him his freedman. Then, one day, while he was in the marketplace, a group of people from Zayd's tribe saw him and knew him at once, so they went and told his father that they had seen Zayd in the city. So, his father and his uncles came at once, told their story to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and asked him to allow Zayd to go back with them. So he *peace and blessings be upon him* said to them, 'Leave the choice to him: if he chooses you then, you can take him, but if he chooses me, then it will not be for me to hand him over to you.' Then, when Zayd returned, he said, 'By Allah, I would not choose anyone before Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.' For this reason, Messenger Muhammad wanted to honour Zayd for the way he had acted, so he adopted him in the manner that was practised by the Arabs at that time and called him 'Zayd ibn Muhammad'.⁽²⁾ Then, when Allah *the Almighty* wanted to bring an end to this practice, as well as the practice of *zihar* (equating one's wife with one's mother), He *the Almighty* revealed the following words: 'Never has Allah endowed any man with two hearts in one body: and [just as] He has never made your wives whom you may have declared to be 'as unlawful to you as your mothers' bodies' [truly] your mothers, so, too, has He never made your adopted sons [truly] your sons...' (*al-Ahzab*: 4). As man may only have a single heart, so too he may only have a single father, Allah *the Almighty* wanted to begin with the adopted son of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* so that he might be a practical example to other people of what they should do. The adopted children, at the time, were to inherit from the adoptive parents after they passed away. In addition, it was forbidden for women who had been married to adopted children to marry their adoptive parents.

(1) *The story of Zayd ibn Haritha Allah be pleased with him*

(2) *See As-Sirat An-Nabawayya of Ibn Hisham, vol. 1, pp. 248 – 249.*

It's true that ending this practice was, in effect, an end of a corrupt social order that had engulfed the entire Arab peninsula, but at the same time, it was a proof that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* practised adoption in exactly the same way as the rest of the Arabs and that it was Allah *the Almighty* Who rendered these actions of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* invalid.

This opens the door for those who oppose him *peace and blessings be upon him* to set their tongues wagging and gloat over his misfortune, so Allah *the Almighty* handled the situation in the manner of a Lord Who sends out a command to bring aid to someone beloved to him: Allah *Glorified is He* did not revile the action of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. No, on the contrary He *the Almighty* classified his action as equitable and just. But His judgement was more equitable and more just, so He *the Almighty* says: '[As for your adopted children,] call them by their [real] fathers' names: this is more equitable in the sight of Allah...' (*al-Ahzab*: 5). It means, 'if you have made it part of justice and love to make yourselves the legal guardians of these children and give them your names, then know that it is not human justice, but that judgement of Allah *the Almighty* is more equitable and more just'. It is a great honour for Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to bring back his ruling to that of his Lord. It was a great honour for him *peace and blessings be upon him* that the matter of prohibiting adoption started with him: he *peace and blessings be upon him* made a ruling and then Allah *the Almighty* abolished it and replaced it with another, which is viewed as an extraordinary tribute to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*; He *the Almighty* says: '...this is more equitable in the sight of Allah...' (*al-Ahzab*: 5) meaning that the action of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was equitable and just with respect to the laws of mankind, but he *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent to replace the laws of mankind with the laws of the Lord of mankind. This was how he *peace and blessings be upon him* was able to find his way out of this issue.

As for Zayd, Allah *the Almighty* recompensed him for the distress that he experienced as a result of losing his ascription of paternity to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* since he had reverted to simply

being called Zayd ibn Haritha after being called Zayd ibn Muhammad; Allah *the Almighty* recompensed him and did justice to him by making his name the only name from amongst all the companions to be mentioned word-for-word in the Noble Quran; He *the Almighty* says: ‘...[But] then, when Zayd had come to the end of his union with her, We gave her to thee in marriage...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 37). So the mention of Zayd Allah *be pleased with him* will remain forever in the Book of Allah that is recited out loud and whose recitation is used for the acts of worship until the Day of Resurrection. As for the connection of Zayd to the verse under discussion, ‘...it is not fitting for any believing man or woman to claim freedom of choice in that matter...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 36), it is that he was married to Zaynab bint Jahsh Allah *be pleased with her* - Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had married him to her - and this verse was revealed about Zaynab and her brother ‘Abdullah⁽¹⁾.

As for the saying of Allah: ‘...it is not fitting for any believing man or woman to claim freedom of choice in that matter...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 36), it means that it is this act of disobeying Allah and His Messenger is inconceivable to take place on the part of the true believers. The use of negation indicates that this matter is totally rejected, that is, as long as belief remains in their hearts (the hearts of believers), it is not possible for believing men and women to abandon the commands of Allah and His Messenger and put their own choices first; He *the Almighty* says: ‘It is not fitting for any believing man or woman to claim freedom of choice in that matter...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 36). If this were not so, then they could be said to possess any belief in either Allah *the Almighty* or His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*.

If you were to ask, ‘How can that be so when Allah *the Almighty* has confirmed that we do indeed have choice?’, we would respond by saying, ‘There is a difference

(1) He is ‘Abdullah ibn Jahsh ibn Ri‘ab Al-Asadi Allah *be pleased with him* a Companion who was one of the early converts to Islam. He migrated to Abyssinia and then went to Medina. He was one of the commanders of the battles and was the brother-in-law of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* since he was the brother of Zaynab bint Jahsh Allah *be pleased with her* the Mother of the Believers. He was killed as a martyr on the day of the Battle of Uhud and was buried along with Hamza Allah *be pleased with him* in a single grave in 3 A.H. See Az-Zirikli, *Al-‘Alam*, 4/76. Hamza ibn ‘Abd Al-Muttalib, the paternal uncle of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was the maternal uncle of ‘Abdullah ibn Jahsh since his mother was Umayma bint ‘Abd Al-Muttalib.

between choice in terms of doing one's religious duties - you can choose to do them or to not - and choice in terms of determining what is or is not a religious duty: the worshippers of Allah *the Almighty* have no say whatsoever in determining what their religious duties consist of. If I were to charge them with the performance of certain religious acts, then I would be the one determining their religious duties, whether or not they obey me, this would be an entirely different matter. Worshippers cannot suggest religious acts for themselves. No, I would be the one who imposes their duties on them. Then, they would have the choice of either obeying or rejecting what I have imposed on them'. However, as long as it is established that they believe in Allah *the Almighty* and in His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* it is inevitable that they will be content with what they have been commanded and will not turn away from it to something else. The story of the divorce of Zayd and Zaynab *Allah be pleased with them* and how Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* then married her is a one that has been exploited by orientalist and prejudiced scholars alike. They have had the nerve to say things about Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that should not be said of one such as him. For example, they say that he *peace and blessings be upon him* loved Zaynab *Allah be pleased with her* and wanted her for himself, so he commanded her to act badly towards Zayd so that he might divorce her and thus leave the way open for him to marry her. We say, in response, to them that, first of all, Zaynab bint Jahsh Al-Asadiyya was the daughter of the paternal aunt of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. He himself was responsible for looking after her money and arranging her affairs. She grew up under his supervision, so if he had indeed wanted her for himself, he could have married her first. The textual evidence for this is found in the Quran itself where Allah says: '...you hid in your heart what Allah would later reveal...' (*al-Ahzab*: 37). If you want to know that which Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was hiding within his heart, then your answer is to be found in the verse under study; He *the Almighty* clearly shows the profound wisdom behind this law in His saying, '...so that there might be no fault in believers marrying the wives of their adopted sons after they no longer wanted them...' (*al-Ahzab*: 37). This destroys all the false claims they make about Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

As for the claim that his heart was preoccupied with Zaynab, we reply by asking why they make out the preoccupation of the heart of Messenger Muhammad a sexual one? If they were to have followed the story right from the very beginning, it would have been obvious to them that it was nothing of the sort. For when he *peace and blessings be upon him* first sent someone to propose to Zaynab, both her brother, `Abdullah, and her sister, Hamna, thought that he had come to propose on behalf of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Then, when they found out that he had come to propose on behalf of his freedman, Zayd, they all became very angry, for how could a noblewoman from Quraysh, and indeed a cousin of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* marry a slave? But when they found out that it was a command from Allah *the Almighty*, they immediately submitted and agreed to the marriage. But even after Zayd and Zaynab *Allah be pleased with them* were married, she continued to look down upon him. Indeed, Zayd *Allah be pleased with him* felt as if she despised him because of the disparity between their classes, so he used to go to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to complain about how badly his wife was treating him and that she was making his life a difficult. He complained that the married life they shared was an empty shell, void of all substance or feeling. It was only his love for Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that prevented him from divorcing her, as well as the fact that he did not want to lose the tremendous honour he had acquired by being married to a woman who was a cousin of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Every single time Zayd *Allah be pleased with him* complained to him *peace and blessings be upon him* he used to say to him: ‘...Keep your wife and be mindful of Allah...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 37). If he *peace and blessings be upon him* had truly wanted her for himself, then he would have told him to divorce her when he had the opportunity to do so and then the way would have been open for him. At this point, it is necessary for us to examine what the relationship between men and women: The Creator created men for women and women for men. This is why we find the Arab woman, Umm Iyas giving her daughter the following advice when Al-Harith proposed to her, ‘My daughter, if one could be left without advice, then you of all people would be the least in need of it. If a woman were able to do without a husband by virtue of her parent’s

wealth and the strength of their need for her, then you of all people would be the least in need of him, but women were created for men, while men were created for them. If this advice could be dispensed with because of a person's good manners, then it would be dispensed with in your case. However, this advice can still serve as a reminder to those who are heedless, and a help to those who are heedful.'

We say, 'A man can live a life of the highest luxury in terms of food, drink, clothing and lodging, but despite all of that he will still himself be unable to do without a wife. The same is true for women. That is why Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'If I were to command any human being to prostrate to another, I would command a wife to prostrate to her husband.'⁽¹⁾ This is because her husband gives her what her father, mother and siblings give her and, on top of that, gives her things that they are all not able to give her. It is a demonstrable fact that women are for men and men are for women, no matter how many walls of power or might they build around themselves.

With regard to Zayd *Allah be pleased with him* the matter was a difficult one because Allah *the Almighty* had made three different stages in marriage, which are mentioned in His saying: 'And among His Wonders is this: He creates for you mates out of your own kind so that you might find tranquillity in them, and He engenders love and tenderness between you...' (*ar-Rum*: 21).

The first stage is when the husband finds tranquillity with his wife and begins to feel at peace with her. He feels at ease with her when she wipes the sweat from his brow and takes him into her embrace at the end of a day full of hardship and toil. If peace and tranquillity prove impossible due to the trials of everyday life, then there is love and affection to bring them together. Why should it not be so since, when you remain in the company of a friend for a long time, you will find affection towards him growing in your heart. You will find that there is a value in this affection that enables you to bear his

(1) See Ahmad, Musnad, 4/381, on the authority of `Abdullah ibn Abu Awfa that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'If I were to command any human being to prostrate to another, I would command a wife to prostrate to her husband. A woman has not fulfilled all the rights Allah has over her until she has first fulfilled all the rights her husband has over her. Even if he were to ask her to give herself to him, while she was on top of the camel-saddle, she should give herself to him.'

mistakes and forgive him his trespasses. And if it is so with a friend, then how should it be with a wife? Is she not more deserving of this love and affection?

If this love is lacking in their relationship, then there is still compassion between them, meaning that they treat one another with mercy and tenderness when they grow old and infirm. However, Zayd *Allah be pleased with him* had reached a stage in his marriage wherein all three of these qualities, i.e. tranquillity, love and compassion, were absent because of the social differences between him and his wife. Another matter is that if we accept that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did indeed have thoughts (of marrying) Zaynab *Allah be pleased with her* then why do you interpret those thoughts to be his natural instincts? Why do you not interpret them in the light of the act of fairness? For he was the one who forced Zaynab *Allah be pleased with her* to marry Zayd *Allah be pleased with him* even though she was a noblewoman of Quraysh and he was a slave. So, because he was the one who got her into her predicament, he wanted to make it up to her by marrying her himself and making her one of the Mothers of the Believers.

Anyway, why should a messenger whom Allah *the Almighty* has described as being a human being not have desires of this sort when all of the messengers who preceded him had such desires. This is based on supposing that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did desire Zaynab *Allah be pleased with her*. However, people are lacking in good opinion.

This law was for sure a divinely revealed one, a point which is crystal clear by the fact that there was no enmity whatsoever among the three main figures in this story, namely; Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* his freedman Zayd *Allah be pleased with him* and his cousin Zaynab *Allah be pleased with her*. All of them were brought together through a bond of faithful purification, which enabled every one of them to meet defeat with high spirits without any feeling of hostility or resentment and to submit to the command of Allah *the Almighty*. As for those who understand the verse: ‘...you were afraid of people, but it is more fitting that you fear Allah...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 37) as a source of disgrace to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* they should know that there are two types of *khashya* (standing in awe): standing in awe of something that you fear might harm you

and standing in awe in the sense of feeling shy. As for the act of 'standing in awe' referred to in '...you were afraid of people...' (*al-Ahzab*: 37), it is that of feeling shy. It is enough that Allah *the Almighty* said regarding His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*⁽¹⁾: '...that, behold, might give offence to the Prophet, and yet he might feel shy of [asking] you [to leave]: but Allah is not shy of [teaching you] what is right....' (*al-Ahzab*: 53). So the act of 'standing in awe' referred to Messenger Muhammad's fear of what the disbelievers might say about him concerning his marriage to the ex-wife of his adopted son. However, those people did not know that Allah *the Almighty* had abolished the practice of adoption and so they had no case against him *peace and blessings be upon him*.

It was perfectly natural for Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to be afraid of what the disbelievers might say about him since he had come to abolish the customs and practices of the pre-Islamic period. He, also, was the first one to have to suffer the consequences of that change since it was firstly implemented on him personally. Such feeling of shyness that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* experienced regarding his marrying Zaynab *Allah be pleased with her* or to what the people might say, was only prompted by his desire to keep his reputation and honour clean of anything that might sully it or detract from it. As a matter of fact, Messenger

(1) This came about because when Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* moved in with Zaynab bint Jahsh *Allah be pleased with her* he prepared a feast of bread and meat and invited the people to come and partake of it. So, a group of people came, ate their fill and left; then another group came, ate their fill and left; (and this continued) until only three people remained who had not left yet. They sat therein chatting with each other while Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* wanted to be alone with his bride, Zaynab *Allah be pleased with her*. So he *peace and blessings be upon him* went out, then returned, then went again, then returned and continued doing that until he was informed that the people had left, for he was an exceedingly shy man. It was then that Allah *the Almighty* sent down the words: 'O you who have attained to faith! Do not enter The Prophet's dwellings unless you are given leave; [and when invited] to a meal, do not come [so early as] to wait for it to be readied: but whenever you are invited, enter [at the proper time]; and when you have partaken of the meal, disperse without lingering for the sake of mere talk: that, behold, might give offence to the Prophet, and yet he might feel shy of [asking] you [to leave]: but Allah is not shy of [teaching you] what is right....' (*al-Ahzab*: 53). See *Al-Wahidi, Asbab An-Nuzul*, p.205 and *Ibn Kathir, Tafsir*, 3/503.

Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* always sought to protect himself against suspicion. This was why when some of his companions saw him with a woman and so steered clear of him in order not to cause him any embarrassment, he *peace and blessings be upon him* said to them, 'Be at ease! She is Safiyya.' When they replied, 'We did not doubt you, O Messenger of Allah.' He *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Satan is in the blood of the sons of Adam, flowing where it flows.'⁽¹⁾

Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* wanted to shake off any doubts or suspicions with regards to his character. He wanted to make sure that no one needed to do him a good turn by covering for him. There is no greater proof of the shyness of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* than the story of 'Abdullah ibn Sa'd ibn Abu As-Sarh, which reads: 'When Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* entered Mecca after his victory over Quraysh, he ordered 'Abdullah ibn Sa'd ibn Abu Sarh to be murdered, since he was wanted by Muslims for major crimes.'⁽²⁾ Then 'Uthman ibn 'Affan *Allah be pleased with him* stood up and begged Messenger Muhammad to have 'Abdullah ibn Sa'd ibn Abu Sarh pardoned- i.e. he asked that he give him safe passage- but he *peace and blessings be upon him* did not respond and continued to wait for someone amongst the people to get up and go and kill him. 'Uthman *Allah be pleased with him* however, repeated his request again and again until he *peace and blessings be upon him* felt shy in the presence of 'Uthman *Allah be pleased with him* and so granted him his request, guaranteeing the safety of 'Abdullah. Then, after his safety had been guaranteed, 'Uthman *Allah be pleased with him* took hold of 'Abdullah and led him away from the salon of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. After he left, he *peace and blessings be upon him* said to his Companions, 'Was there not a single right-acting man among you who would have stood up and

(1) See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 6219; and Muslim, Sahih Hadith no. 2175, on the authority of Safiyya bint Huyayy Allah be pleased with her.*

(2) See *Ibn Sa'd At-Tabaqat Al-Kubra, 9/502; he said: 'Abdullah ibn Sa'd ibn Abu Sarh was one of the early converts to Islam and had served as a scribe for Messenger Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him writing down the revelation. Then he was tempted from the path, reverted and left Medina to Mecca, so Messenger Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him ordered the shedding of his blood on the day of the conquest of Mecca.'*

killed him?' He meant that he wished if this man could be killed by his companions, yet after 'Uthman *Allah be pleased with him* had asked pardon for him, the opportunity had been missed. So 'Abdullah ibn Bishr *Allah be pleased with him* stood up and said, 'Messenger of Allah, your eye was fixed upon mine and I was looking into it waiting for a green light from you that I should kill him. But you did not give one' whereupon he *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, 'The treachery of the eye does not befit a Prophet.'⁽¹⁾ I would like to mention a story⁽²⁾: we used to have a professor called Sheikh Musa Sharif *Allah rest his soul* who was a pious man. He taught us the interpretation of this verse. Before attending his class, we, students, used to get together to discuss previous lessons. He used to choose me from amongst all my fellow students, including the likes of Sheikh Hasan Jad, Dr. Khafaja Abu Al-'Aynayn and others, to tell him about the difficult points that had confronted us in the course of our discussions. So, one day, he called me by my mother's name which he had known from my father. So, I went up and stood before him, whereupon he struck me on the back of my neck in such a way that the problem which had been confronting us completely and suddenly resolved itself. It was exactly like when you strike someone suffering from hiccups on the back, so it goes away just like that. Then, the following day when the Sheikh told us this story of 'Uthman *Allah be pleased with him* he said, 'My boys, I saw 'Uthman last night with all of his shyness, so I said to him, 'How could you beg pardon for a man who said such-and-such about Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*?' He replied, 'Do you not know that Allah *the Almighty* loves those who repent and seek forgiveness?' Then I said to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* - and notice that he did not say, 'I saw Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*' - 'What made you accept the intercession of 'Uthman?' He replied, 'Should I not feel shy in front of a man in whose presence the angels feel shy?'⁽³⁾

(1) See Abu Dawud, *Sunnan*, Hadith no. 4359 and An-Nasa'i, *Sunnan*, Hadith no. 7/105 & 206, on the authority of Sa'd ibn Abu Waqqas *Allah be pleased with him*. The wording of Abu Dawud and An-Nasa'i is as follows: 'It is not proper for a Prophet to make use of treachery of the eye.'

(2) The story of Sheikh Musa Sharif with Sheikh Ash-Sha'rawi, *Allah rest their souls*.

(3) This expression is used by Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to refer to 'Uthman *Allah be pleased with him*. On another occasion, Imam Muslim narrated=

So Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was, by nature, an exceedingly shy man.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger is far astray’ (*al-Ahzab*: 36). In this verse, there are three literary particles that are used for emphasis: the particle *qad* which is used to indicate assertion, especially when it is followed by a verb in the perfect tense; the use of the cognate accusative of *dalal*; and the use of the adjective ‘far’ to describe this act of *dalal* (going astray).

Dalal is defined as lacking the guidance necessary to find the path that leads to the goal. However, it is possible for someone to go astray from the path and then for someone else to come and guide him back to it. Those who rebel against Allah *the Almighty* and His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* however are described as going clearly astray, meaning that they are unable to ever find anyone to guide them back. The reason for that is because this path that we follow leads to the Hereafter and there is nothing of that sort allowed there. This is a glimpse of the interaction of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with 'Uthman ibn 'Affan *Allah be pleased with him*. 'Abdullah ibn Bishr *Allah be pleased with him* has served to clearly show us the quality of shyness possessed by Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Now, we can return to the topic under discussion which is the quality of faithful purification that linked Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to both Zayd and Zaynab *Allah be pleased with them*. Messenger

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- = that 'Aisha *Allah be pleased with her* said, ‘While Messenger Muhammad, was reclining on the bed in my apartment with his upper-leg or lower-leg uncovered, Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* came and sought permission to enter. So, he bade him enter, remaining in the same position that he was in, and talked with him. Then 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* came and sought permission to enter. So, he bade him enter, again remaining exactly as he was, and talked with him. Then 'Uthman *Allah be pleased with him* came and sought permission to enter. So, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* sat up and straightened out his garments (and covered his leg properly). Then, after he had left, 'Aisha *Allah be pleased with her* said, ‘When Abu Bakr came in, you did not stir or seem particularly bothered; when 'Umar came in, you did not stir or seem particularly bothered; but when 'Uthman came in, you immediately sat up and straightened out your clothes. Why was that? Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, ‘Should I not feel shy in front of a man in whose presence the angels feel shy?’

Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* always used to go and ask after Zayd *Allah be pleased with him* whenever he was absent. One time, when he *peace and blessings be upon him* went to ask after Zayd, he saw Zaynab *Allah be pleased with her* busy with her household chores, looking very pretty, so he said out loudly, 'Blessed be Allah, the best of creators', in exactly the same way, for example, that one of us might say: '*Masha` Allah*' (What Allah wills!), when you see a daughter of yours looking very pretty. It was as if Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* wanted to make her feel good and give her spirits a boost that was large enough to counter the drop in spirits she had felt as a result of being forced to marry Zayd and live with him against her will. Then, when Zayd *Allah be pleased with him* came back, she said to him, 'Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came to ask after you and said to me, "Blessed be Allah, the best of creators."' So Zayd said to her, 'Zaynab, I think that you should be married to Messenger Muhammad, since he loves you. I think that I should divorce you so that he could then marry you.' When he said this, she appeared joyful, but also looked amazed as if she could not believe that, 'If you divorce me, I will marry Messenger Muhammad?'

This conversation between them amounted to no more than words, but by Allah, if such had been uttered elsewhere to someone other than Zayd *Allah be pleased with him* they would have made that person jealous and he would not have acted like this! So, reflect deeply on this faithful purification with which Zayd *Allah be pleased with him* was endowed.

Allah *the Almighty* says about this matter:

وَإِذْ تَقُولُ لِلَّذِي أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَأَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِ أَمْسِكْ عَلَيْكَ زَوْجَكَ وَاتَّقِ اللَّهَ
وَتُخْفِي فِي نَفْسِكَ مَا اللَّهُ مُبْدِيهِ وَتَخْشَى النَّاسَ وَاللَّهُ أَحَقُّ أَنْ تَخْشَاهُ فَلَمَّا
قَضَى زَيْدٌ مِّنْهَا وَطَرًا زَوَّجْنَاكَهَا لِكَيْ لَا يَكُونَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ حَرَجٌ فِي أَزْوَاجِ
أَدْعِيَائِهِمْ إِذَا قَضَوْا مِنْهُنَّ وَطَرًا وَكَانَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ مَفْعُولًا ﴿٣٧﴾

When you [Prophet] said to the man who had been favoured by God and by you, 'Keep your wife and be mindful of God,' you hid in your heart what God would later reveal: you were afraid of people, but it is more fitting that you fear God.

**When Zayd no longer wanted her, We gave her to you in marriage so that there might be no fault in believers marrying the wives of their adopted sons after they no longer wanted them. God's command must be carried out [37]
(The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 37)**

The meaning of the saying of Allah: 'When you [Prophet] said to' (*al-Ahzab*: 37), is, 'Remember, O Prophet Muhammad, the matter of Zayd well and think of it carefully. Remember when you said to the one to whom Allah *the Almighty* showed favour by granting him, i.e. Zayd faith and to whom you showed favour, first by granting him his freedom, then by using human law to make him your son, third by marrying him to a noblewoman from Quraysh who was your own cousin despite his being a slave and finally by saying to him when you did: "Keep your wife and be mindful of Allah..." (*al-Ahzab*: 37).

But why did you say those words to him, O Prophet Muhammad? Was it out of fear that people might say that you married your adopted son's wife? How could that be when this is what Allah *the Almighty* himself intends to come to pass? He *the Almighty* wants to bring an end to the custom of adoption and wants to bring about its end through you. So, you have hidden a matter within yourself that Allah *the Almighty* brought out into public when He *Glorified is He* told you about this matter, affirming you that it will end through your hands by you marrying the ex-wife of your adopted son. Allah *the Almighty* then says, '...it is more fitting that you fear Allah...' (*al-Ahzab*: 37), meaning to stop fearing people! This is what made Allah *the Almighty* say in another verse: '... [and such will always be His way with] those who convey Allah's Messages [to the world], and stand in awe of Him, and hold none but Allah in awe...' (*al-Ahzab*: 39). We have previously made it clear that the fear felt by Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was not the type of fear that one experiences when he is afraid of something that might harm him, but was a feeling of shyness by which he *peace and blessings be upon him* would deflect any doubts with regard to his character. Then the verse says: 'When Zayd no longer wanted her We gave her to you in marriage...' (*al-Ahzab*: 37). The word *watar* is used to refer to the things in a man's life that fit in with his lifestyle, but literally means 'aim' or 'need'. As we mentioned previously, a

man's *watar* with respect to his wife (i.e. what he needs from her) is tranquillity. If that is absent, then it is love which keeps them together and if that is absent then there is a mutual feeling of tenderness. Zayd *Allah be pleased with him* went through all these stages and looked for all these qualities within his wife but did not find a single one - he found neither tranquillity nor love nor tenderness. So why then did he remain married to her? That was why he used to go to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to complain to him about what he had to endure from Zaynab *Allah be pleased with her*. In response, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would say to him: 'Keep your wife and be mindful of Allah...' (*al-Ahzab*: 37).

Now reflect again on the faithful purification of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* Zayd and Zaynab *Allah be pleased with them*: 'after Zayd divorced Zaynab, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* left her to complete her *'idda* (period of waiting). Then, when she completed her period of waiting, he said to Zayd, 'Go to Zaynab and propose to her on my behalf.'⁽¹⁾ How incredible is that? Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* sent the divorcer to propose on his behalf to the divorcee! This indicates how much Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* trusted Zayd; it also indicates that Zayd's desire for Zaynab had run its course and that he no longer had any need of her, which is why he went in to see Zaynab and said to her, 'Rejoice, Zaynab, for Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has sent me to propose to you on his behalf.' She replied, 'By Allah, I will give no reply until I have first prostrated to Allah in

(1) See Ibn Sa'd, *At-Tabaqat Al-Kubra*, vol. 10 p.101. Anas *Allah be pleased with him* said, 'When the period of waiting of Zaynab bint Jahsh came to an end, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to Zayd ibn Haritha *Allah be pleased with him* 'I can find no one in my family whom I trust as much as you, so go to Zaynab and propose to her on my behalf.' Zayd *Allah be pleased with him* said, 'Rejoice, Zaynab, for Messenger Muhammad, has mentioned you.' But Ibn Sa'd is narrated to have said that when the waiting period of Zaynab ended, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* fainted. Then he came to, smiling, and said, 'Who will go to Zaynab to give her the good news that Allah the Almighty has married her to me from Heaven.' 'Aisha *Allah be pleased with her* said, 'So Salama, the servant of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* rushed out to tell her about that, and so she gave her anklets.' See Ibn Sa'd, *At-Tabaqat Al-Kubra*, vol. 10 p.99.

thanks.’ So Zaynab stood up to make her prostrations and Zayd returned to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to tell him what Zaynab had said. So, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* went to Zaynab’s home and went in to see her without seeking her permission.’⁽¹⁾

Perhaps you wonder why Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* went in to see her without seeking her permission first? He did that, they say, because at that moment she had become his wife: as Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘When Zayd no longer wanted her We gave her to you in marriage...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 37). In other words, Allah *the Almighty* had married him to her from above the seven heavens.

This was why Zaynab, when she sat with the other wives of the Prophet- and this is another example of faithful purification- she used to say to them, ‘I have a source of pride over the rest of you, for while all of you were given in marriage by your guardians, I was given in marriage by my Lord. So, do not any of you dare answer me back?’⁽²⁾ This was not all; she also used to act boldly towards Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying, ‘Messenger of Allah, there are three matters which allow me to act boldly towards you.’ He would laugh and reply, ‘What is the first matter?’ So, she would say, ‘The first is that I have the same grandfather as you; the second is that Allah *the Almighty* married me from above Seven Heavens; and the third is that my messenger in the marriage was not Zayd but was Jibril (Gabriel)’⁽³⁾

(1) This was said by Anas ibn Malik *Allah be pleased with him* who said that Zaynab *Allah be pleased with her* replied to Zayd *Allah be pleased with him* saying: ‘I will not do anything until I receive a command from my Lord.’ So, she got up and went to her place of prostration. Then the verse: ‘When Zayd no longer wanted her We gave her to you in marriage...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 37), was revealed. So, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came and went in to see her unannounced.’ See Ibn Sa’d, *At-Tabaqat Al-Kubra*, vol. 10 p.101; and Ibn Al-A’tbir, *Usdu Al-Ghaba* vol. 7 p.125.

(2) See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih*, Hadith no. 7420, on the authority of Anas ibn Malik *Allah be pleased with him* who said that Zaynab *Allah be pleased with her* used to boast in front of the other wives of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* saying, ‘Your families married you, but Allah *the Almighty* married me from above seven heavens.’

(3) See Ibn Hajar, *Fath Al-Bari* vol. 13, p. 412 as part of a *mursal* Hadith narrated on the authority of Ash-Sha’bi, using some of the words mentioned here. In this narration, Zaynab *Allah be pleased with her* said, ‘Messenger of Allah, my right to you is greater than that of all your other wives, since I had the best man, the noblest Messenger and am the closest of them in lineage to you: it was the Most Merciful who married me to=

What greatness we have witnessed in this story! What faithful purification demonstrated by Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and his companions! So he *peace and blessings be upon him* did not marry Zaynab *Allah be pleased with her* out of his own accord, but rather, he was married to her by the command of his Lord. That is why we say to those who love to dwell on this matter, thinking that it brings dishonour upon Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'You must understand the difference between *zuwwij* and *tazawwaj*: *tazawwaj* is when you marry someone yourself according to your own wishes, while *zuwija* means that somebody else gives you away in marriage. The Quranic phrase: 'We gave her to you in marriage' (*al-Ahzab*: 37), includes the verb *zawwaja* (to give in marriage); the pronoun *na* (we) which is the subject and which refers to Allah *the Almighty*; the pronoun *ka* (you) which is the first object and which refers to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who is the one being addressed in the verse; and the pronoun *ha* (her) which is the second object of the verb *zawwaja* and which refers to Zaynab.

So, in this matter and with respect to his marriages to all his wives, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* never went against the command of his Lord. So be fair in how you judge him since the matter was not decided by him *peace and blessings be upon him* but by his Lord *the Almighty* a fact which is clear in His saying, '[O wives of the Prophet!] Were he to divorce [any of] you, his Lord might well give him in your stead spouses better than you – women who surrender themselves unto Allah, who truly believe, devoutly obey His will, turn [unto Him] in repentance [whenever they have sinned], worship [Him alone], and go on and on [seeking His goodly acceptance] – be they women previously married or virgins.' (*at-Tahrim*: 5)

Then suppose, falsely, that Muhammad did so. What would have been wrong with him doing that? Polygamy was commonly practised at the time; it was not Muhammad who instituted it. Polygamy was also practised by the prophets and messengers who preceded him and you yourselves still practise it today.

= *you from above seven heavens and it was Jibril (Gabriel) who brought news of that. As I am the daughter of your paternal aunt, there is not one other wife who is more closely related to you than me.* See *At-Tabari* and *Abu Al-Qasim At-Tahawi* in his book *Kitab Al-Hujja Wa At-Tibyan*.

As for those who accuse Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* of expanding the parameters of the law for his benefit by marrying nine wives while constricting its parameters for his nation by only permitting them four, the response to them is that his wives are the Mothers of the Believers, thus it is impermissible for anyone to marry them after him *peace and blessings be upon him*. But that is not the case with other believing women, so, for example, if a man had seven wives, he would be obliged to divorce three and then those three would be free to marry someone else if they so wished. Therefore, it was incumbent upon him *peace and blessings be upon him* to hold onto all of his wives, while it was incumbent upon others to separate from any wives they had over the four that were permitted them.

Another thing: you think that Allah *the Almighty* was expanding the parameters of the law for Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in these matters, whereas the truth was that He was constricting them. Compare his position with that of all the other believers: they were allowed to hold on to four wives at any one time and then, if they divorced one or one of them died, they could replace her with another. Indeed, even if a believer divorced all of them or they were all to have died, he could still continue replacing them until he reached his divinely defined number. This means that ordinary believers had the right to marry a huge number of women, which is not allowed for Prophet Muhammad himself.

Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* on the other hand, despite the fact that he married nine, was addressed by Allah *the Almighty* with the following words: ‘No [other] women shall henceforth be lawful to thee – nor art thou [allowed] to supplant [any of] them by other wives, even though their beauty should please thee greatly...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 52). So, who has truly been restricted - Muhammad or his *ummah*?!

Another thing to be aware of is the difference between an exception in terms of the number and an exception in terms of the specified women themselves. Did Allah *the Almighty* except Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* from the ruling in terms of its number, allowing him nine instead of four, or did He limit the exception to those specific women whom he married and no one else? The answer is that the exception was in terms of

the specified women themselves, not the number, since, if it had been in terms of number, he would have been permitted to replace them with other women if any of them had died. No, the exception was limited to the specified women to whom he was married, so even if they were to have all died, he still would not have been permitted to marry any other wives after them.

Did the ruling remain thus for Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* until he passed away? The answer is 'No': it was like this at the beginning of his prophethood and then, when things settled down and Allah *the Almighty* had made His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* reach a significant position, He said to him, 'Do what you want, for you are a guarantor from your nation.'⁽¹⁾

There is something else we want to say: 'Even suppose that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had had a choice in this matter and that it was not something already decided, did his action not lead to the abolishment of the practice of adoption? There is the matter of his mission: did Allah *the Almighty* strip him of it after he did what he did? Of course not, because there is no contradiction whatsoever between what Allah *the Almighty* wants and what His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* wants. Those who take Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to task for this matter are like those who take Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* to task for what is said of him in Allah's words: 'And, indeed, she desired him,

(1) As is mentioned in the verse: '[know that] you may put off for a time whichever of them you please, and may take unto you whichever thou please...' (al-Ahzab: 51). However, Al-Qurtubi, in his Tafsir, stated that he considered the position of those who considered this verse to abrogate the verse: 'No [other] women shall henceforth be lawful to you...' (al-Ahzab: 52), to be weak, which is why he favoured the interpretation that the purpose of the verse was to allow Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* leeway with respect to how much time he gave each wife - this verse meant that he no longer had to divide his time between them equally. Al-Qurtubi said, 'This interpretation best fits what came before, and that is what is established in the Sahih from 'Aisha Allah be pleased with her who said, 'I used to be jealous of those women who gave themselves to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and say about them, 'Does a woman give herself to a man?!' Then, when Allah *the Almighty* revealed the verse: '[know that] you may put off for a time whichever of them you please...' (al-Ahzab: 51), 'Aisha Allah be pleased with her said, 'By Allah, I do not see your Lord do anything except rush to fulfil your desires.' See Al-Qurtubi, Tafsir, vol. 8, p. 5483.

and he desired her...’ (*Yusuf*: 24) acting as if they were even more jealous of Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* than his Lord. Yes, it is true that Yusuf (Joseph) *peace and blessings be upon him* desired her, i.e. that he thought about her. We will not say to you that it is right for you to remain in the state of confusion in which you find yourselves, but we will ask you this: did Allah *the Almighty* strip Yusuf (Joseph) *peace and blessings be upon him* of his mission after he desired her? No, He did not, so we must conclude that his desire of her did not contradict his mission in any way. So, what you say about this matter is nothing more than a set of interpretations you have added yourselves.

Then the reason for the entire matter is mentioned: ‘...so that there might be no fault in believers marrying the wives of their adopted sons after they no longer wanted them...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 37). Then the verse concludes in such a way that leaves no room for doubt with respect to the motives of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: ‘...Allah’s Command must be carried out’ (*al-Ahzab*: 37). In other words, this matter had to happen and could not have been left to any other person since that would have undermined the ruling abolishing the practice of adoption. So, the only reason for the marriage of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to the ex-wife of his adopted son was to remove the restriction from the Muslim community that prevented Muslim men marrying the ex-wives of their adopted sons and to show them that it was now permissible.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

مَا كَانَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ مِنْ حَرَجٍ فِيمَا فَرَضَ اللَّهُ لَهُ سُنَّةَ اللَّهِ
فِي الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَكَانَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ قَدَرًا مَقْدُورًا ﴿٣٨﴾

**The Prophet is not at fault for what God has ordained for him.
This was God’s practice with those who went before – God’s
command must be fulfilled [38] (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 38)**

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘The Prophet is not at fault...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 38), it means that there is no sin or blame upon him *Allah’s peace and blessings upon him* ‘...for what Allah has ordained for him.’ (*al-Ahzab*: 38) In other word, how can you blame Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings*

be upon him for doing something that Allah *the Almighty* ordained for him. Reflect on what He *the Almighty* says here: Allah says '*farada lahu*' (Allah ordained for him) and does not say '*farada 'alayhi*' (Allah made obligatory on him). As long as Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who ordained this, He is the One with whom the matter should be raised- Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* bears no sin in this regard.

This matter is almost like that of the Night Journey - when Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* gave his people an account of what he had done on his Night Journey, they said to him, 'Muhammad, are you claiming that you went all the way to Jerusalem in a single night when we have to flog our camels half to death in order to get there in a month!'⁽¹⁾ This was a pretty senseless thing for them to say since Muhammad did not say, 'I journeyed', rather he said, 'I was taken on a journey.' The One Who took him on the journey was his Lord. So, it was not a matter of what Muhammad did, it was a matter of what Allah *the Almighty* did.

When we talked about this matter earlier, we gave a likeness or example to illustrate it - and the Highest Likeness belongs to Allah *the Almighty*. Our example went as follows: Suppose a man told you that he took his baby boy to the summit of mount Everest, would you then say to him, 'How can a baby boy climb mount Everest'?

However, we ourselves can now benefit from the statement of those who rejected the Night Journey, 'Muhammad, are you claiming that you went all the way to Jerusalem in a single night when we have to flog our camels half to death in order to get there in a month!' since the foolishness of a denier inevitably leads to the opposite of what himself intended by his inanity. Today, we take this statement of theirs as evidence against those who claim that the Night Journey was no more than a dream, or that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* travelled in spirit alone. For, if

(1) *Ibn Hisham, As-Sira An-Nabawiyya*, vol. 2, p. 4; says: 'On the morning after he had been taken on his Night Journey, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* went out to Quraysh and told them what had happened. Whereupon most of the people replied, 'By Allah, that is plain foolishness! By Allah, a caravan takes a month to go to Syria and a month to come back, so how can Muhammad go there and back in a single night?'

Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* were to have said to them, ‘I saw in a dream that I went to Jerusalem’, they would not have said what they said.

So, the people must have understood Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to mean that he had gone to Jerusalem in body and spirit. If that were not the case, then why did they compare the way he went there with the way they went there themselves? This is what those who lived at the time of this event said, so how can people come along today and say that the Night Journey took place in his sleep, or that he travelled to Jerusalem in spirit and not in body?

The verse: ‘This was Allah’s practice with those who went before –’ (*al-Ahzab*: 38) either refers to the Prophet’s fellow messengers who came before him, or to those who practised polygamy before Islam. Therefore, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was not an innovator when it came to this matter.

As for the saying of Allah, ‘Allah’s Command must be fulfilled’ (*al-Ahzab*: 38), you will notice that the previous verse finished with the words: ‘...And [thus] Allah’s will was done.’ (*al-Ahzab*: 37) So, based on that, it might be possible for someone to say, ‘Yes, His will was done at the time during which these events took place, but what about at other times?’ So, Allah *the Almighty* says here: ‘...Allah’s Command must be fulfilled’ (*al-Ahzab*: 38), to indicate that what happened to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was pre-destined to come to pass, and that there is nothing that happens outside of Allah’s decree. It has been narrated in a sound Hadith that the pen has become dry from writing what has been written and what has been decreed.⁽¹⁾

Allah *the Almighty* subsequently says:

(1) See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 1904, on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him who said to Messenger Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him ‘I am a young man and I am afraid to commit fornication since I cannot find any women to marry.’ He remained silent, so I repeated what I had said. Again, he remained silent, so again I repeated what I had said. Yet again he remained silent, so yet again I repeated what I had said. So, he said to me, “Abu Hurayra, the pen has become dry with regard to what you shall meet.”* See Ibn Abu `Asim, *As-Sunna*, vol. 10, pp. 50 - 51; and *An-Nasa’i, Sunnan*, vol. 6, p. 59.

الَّذِينَ يَلْمِزُونَ رِسَالَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَخْشَوْنَ أَحَدًا إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ حَسِيبًا ﴿٣٩﴾

[And with all] those who deliver God's messages and fear only Him and no other: God's reckoning is enough [39]
(The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 39)

It is as if Allah *the Almighty* were taking us back to what He said about Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: '...you were afraid of people, but it is more fitting that you fear Allah.' (*al-Ahzab*: 38) So the messengers fear nothing when it comes to conveying what they are charged to convey from Allah *the Almighty*.

It is as if Allah *the Almighty* is denying that the fear felt by Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was a fear of conveying the message. On the contrary, the fear he felt was merely his feeling shyness and embarrassment about what the people might say about him, since they had no power whatsoever to harm him or cause him terror.

In this verse, it is noteworthy that the phrase: '[and with all] those who deliver Allah's messages and fear only Him and no other...' (*al-Ahzab*: 38), is a *mubtada'* (subject)⁽¹⁾ without a *khavar* (predicate) since the phrase: '...Allah's reckoning is enough' (*al-Ahzab*: 39) is not actually its predicate, but is merely a commentary on it. So where is this subject's predicate? They reply that it is hidden and that the implicit meaning of the verse is, 'as for those who convey Allah's messages...it is not possible to level the accusation against them that they fear people when it comes to conveying what they are charged to convey'.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty* '...Allah's reckoning is enough' (*al-Ahzab*: 39), it means that you will never bring them to account, for only Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who will bring them to account. In this vein, we should know that one of the necessary consequences of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* being held to account is that, if he were to have done something that was not right for him to do, he would have

(1) It is permissible to consider the verse: 'those who convey Allah's messages [to the world]...' (*al-Ahzab*: 39), to be an adjective describing Allah's words: '...those that have passed away afore time...' (*al-Ahzab*: 38).

been stripped of his mission and Allah *the Almighty* would have replaced him with another prophet. But none of that actually happened. Then the chapter returns to the subject of adoption, but in an entirely different context.

Allah *the Almighty* says:

مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِّن رِّجَالِكُمْ وَلَٰكِن رَّسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ
النَّبِيِّينَ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا ﴿٤٠﴾

**Muhammad is not the father of any one of you men; he
is God's Messenger and the seal of the prophets: God
knows everything [40] (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 40)**

Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Muhammad is not the father of any one of your men...' (*al-Ahzab*: 40) because it was more important for the matter of adoption to be dealt with than for Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to be able to claim paternity over any of you (men). The benefit that a man derives from Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* lies not in the fact that he is his father, but rather in what Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* conveys to him from Allah and the divine program he brings that guarantees success and happiness in both the religious and temporal aspects of his life.

So, the joy you feel about Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* on account of him being a messenger is preferable to the joy you feel about him on account of him being a father. If this is not how you feel, then simply look around you and see how many people there are in the world who have fathers, and yet still their lives are wretched and without value.

The particle of negation in this verse, *ma kana*, implies denial and rejection - in other words, it rejects and denies that Muhammad is the father of any of your men. Now, reflect on the greatness of the literary structure used by the Quran in the phrase: '...of you men...' (*al-Ahzab*: 40) since Allah *the Almighty* did not say, as He *the Almighty* might have done, 'the father of one of you'. Why is that? They say that it is because Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was father to 'Abdullah, Al-Qasim and Ibrahim - they were all from them and the Prophet *peace and blessings*

be upon him was their father. So, in order to exempt those three from the generality of the statement, the verse used the words: 'you men' (*al-Ahzab*: 40) since none of them had lived long enough to actually become men. So, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was never a father to any of your men, even if he had been a father to some young boys who never reached adulthood or became men.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says, 'but' (*al-Ahzab*: 40) meaning Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* being a Messenger of Allah is more important than being a father of anyone of you. Allah *the Almighty* then says, 'but is Allah's Messenger' (*al-Ahzab*: 40), and not only that but also 'the Seal of Prophets' (*al-Ahzab*: 40) meaning that he *peace and blessings be upon him* is the Messenger and Prophet who completes the chain of divine messages - no one will come after him with a new Message to rectify and amend what he brought.

This issue is one about which the Orientalists like to object. They say, 'It says elsewhere in the Quran: 'And, lo, Allah accepted, through the prophets, this solemn pledge [from the followers of earlier revelation]: "If, after all the revelation and the wisdom which I have vouchsafed unto you, there comes to you an apostle confirming the truth already in your possession, you must believe in him and succour him..."' (*Al-Imran*: 81). And Muhammad is amongst those messengers with whom this pledge is made, as is proven by the verse: 'And [remember] We did accept a solemn pledge from all the prophets – from you, [O Muhammad,] as well as from Nuh (Noah)...' (*al-Ahzab*: 7).

So, one of their prime responsibilities of the prophets in the pledge Allah *the Almighty* made with them was to inform their people about the coming of a new Messenger and extract an oath from them that they would believe in him and succour him. An example of this is found in the good news 'Isa (Jesus) *peace and blessings be upon him* gave his people about the coming of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* when he said: '...and to give [you] the glad tiding of an apostle who shall come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad...' (*as-Saff*: 6).

So how could Allah *the Almighty* possibly state that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was the Seal of the Prophets when he was one of them? Our response is this, 'Yes, it is true that he was one of them, but while they

were commanded to give their people the good news of a messenger coming after them, he was commanded to give his people the news that he was the Seal of the Prophets and messengers’.

That is why when a man claimed⁽¹⁾ prophethood during the reign of the caliph Al-Ma`mun, the caliph arrested him. Then, some months later, when another man appeared claiming prophethood, Al-Ma`mun thought it might be a good idea to have the two men meet face-to-face. So, he summoned the first claimant and said to him, ‘This man claims that he is a prophet. What do you say about him?’ The man replied, ‘He is a liar: I have not sent anyone.’ So, the man had ascended in his own eyes to the level of being a god, not simply a prophet!

Also there was a woman who claimed prophethood in the time of Al-Ma`mun: when he tried her, saying: ‘Do you not know that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, “there will be no prophets after me⁽²⁾?”’ She replied, ‘Yes, but he did not say that there would not be any prophetesses after him!’

Then Allah *the Almighty* brings this topic to an end with His words: ‘...Allah knows everything...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 39). Since Allah *the Almighty* has full knowledge of everything, none may object since it was He who sent the appropriate messenger to the appropriate place at the appropriate time and it was He who knew that the message of Muhammad would encompass every place and every time.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says:

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- (1) *The story of the man who claimed to be a prophet during the time of Al-Ma`mun*
(2) *Ahmad, Musnad, vol. 1, p.182; said: ‘One of the Hadiths that are narrated as proof that no prophets will come after Messenger Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him is that of Sa’d ibn Abu Waqqas. He said, “Messenger Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him asked `Ali ibn Abu Taleb to stay behind in Medina when he went on the expedition to Tabuk, so `Ali said to him, ‘Messenger of Allah, are you leaving me behind with the women and children?’ Messenger Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him replied, ‘Are you not content that you enjoy a position to me like that of Harun (Aaron) to Musa (Moses), with the only difference being that there shall be no prophets after me?’” See Ahmad, Musnad, vol. 1, p. 182.*

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ ذِكْرًا كَثِيرًا ﴿٤١﴾ وَسَبِّحُوهُ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلًا ﴿٤٢﴾

Believers, remember God often [41] and glorify Him morning and evening [42] (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 41- 42)

Our Lord *the Almighty* commands us to remember Him a great deal since *dhikr* ‘remembrance’ is the central pillar around which all the other acts of worship are built and is the easiest of them for the believer to do. That is why we find our Lord *the Almighty* commanding us to do it upon the completion of other acts of worship such as the prayer, Fasting and *Hajj* and that is why He *the Almighty* termed it the greatest in His saying: ‘...and remembrance of Allah is indeed the greatest [good]....’ (*al-’Ankabut*: 45).

‘Remembrance’ is the job of *dhakira* (the memory) which is a specific area of the brain. As we said before, when a human being receives information, it enters into his conscious mind, then, if he wants to store that piece of information for a time at which he might have need of it, he deposits it into either his memory banks (*hafizha*) or his subconscious. An example of this would be when you encounter someone you have met before: as soon as you see him, you remember and say to yourself, ‘I have not seen this man for over twenty years - the last time I saw him was in such-and-such a place’. Therefore, ‘remembrance’ is for things that are already present in a person’s conscious mind. ‘Remembrance’ is for matters which already actually exist in your mind having entered it at a particular time and place, but of which you have then been unmindful thereby relegating them to your subconscious mind or to your memory banks. So, what we want from you is that you do not leave these matters lost or forgotten in the subconscious or a distant region of the brain so that it would require a tremendous effort on your part to extract them, but rather that you place them in a region of the brain which is close to your conscious mind so you can recall them easily and without difficulty or strain.

This is exactly how your remembrance of Allah *the Almighty* should also be, for that is the vital matter of which you should always remain in constant remembrance. How could you forget to remember your Lord *the Almighty* when He took a solemn oath from you when you were still in your atomic state that you would remember him and got you to acknowledge that He was your Lord?

Allah *the Almighty* created intellect to take in information by making use of the means of perception available to us, as is mentioned in the Quran: ‘And Allah has brought you forth from your mothers’ wombs knowing nothing – but He has endowed you with hearing, and sight and minds so that you might have cause to be grateful.’ (*an-Nahl*: 78).

It is as if hearing and sight are the leaders for all other the senses. It is only through them that we come to know that which we did not know when we came forth from our mothers’ wombs. When it comes to actually taking in information, many people assume that people’s capacities vary according to the level of intelligence with which they are endowed, so one person might absorb a piece of information in one go while another might require several goes to absorb the same piece of information. This assumption is false: intellect is very much like a camera - it takes in information in a single go, but on condition that it is empty, ready to receive and not occupied with something else, since the conscious mind only has the capacity to handle one thought at a time. This matter is what we dealt with earlier when we commented on the verse: ‘Never has Allah endowed any man with two hearts in one body...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 4).

An intelligent person is one whose mind is not occupied with two matters at the same time; he does not think of one thing when his mind is busy with something else. When the conscious mind is empty, all people are exactly alike in their capacity to take in information. That is why successful teachers are those who are able to attract the full attention of their students, and give them no opportunity whatsoever to become preoccupied with something unrelated to the lesson at hand. And the only way they are able to do this is by treating their students with kindness and courtesy and actively involving them in the class by asking them questions from time to time. This keeps the student on his toes and does not allow him to become distracted since he is expecting to be questioned about the topic at any moment. That is why we see that the most successful form of teaching is that which involves discussion and debate. As for the method whereby the teacher does all the talking and the students simply listen, it places the teacher in one valley and the students in another, with each of them engaged in their own individual lines of thought.

We said previously that when a student knows how important a particular lesson is, he revises it while on his way to the exam and even while he is going up the stairs to the exam hall. Then, if that lesson comes up in the exam, he is able to repeat it word for word. Why is that? Because the time period he had for revision was so short and limited that it would not have allowed his mind to wander or become occupied with anything else. So, his intellect focused solely on the lesson, took in every single word, and recorded it into the conscious part of his brain. Then, when he needed to recall the lesson, it was there exactly as it was when he revised it. Why? Because the lesson had encountered a brain that was empty and free of distraction. Look at how our memory works and reflects on the greatness of the Creator: despite that the *dhakira* (memory) is only a tiny part of the brain, we find children under the age of eight who have memorised the entire Quran and are able, at any time, to recite it back to you. Yet we are amazed when a tape records a single lesson or two! The Quran is not simply a matter of mere memorisation; rather, one must carefully ponder over its letters and verses while reading it. This is because every letter of the Quran is entrusted to an angel, and these angels love those who love them. When you have a connection to the Quran, you recite it a lot which means that you love those angles. Then when you want to recall the Quran that you have memorised, the angels crowd together for you and the words of the Quran flow from your tongue very smoothly. But if you leave (reciting) the Quran, then it leaves you and slips from your memory, and that is why Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* warned us against leaving the Quran, saying: 'Maintain (your recitation) of the Quran, for by Him in whose Hand is my soul, it slips away faster than a camel from its rope.'⁽¹⁾

We also said previously that 'remembrance' is the only form of worship which costs you nothing and leaves your limbs free to do whatever it is you were doing: you do not have to put aside a particular time for it nor do you have to make a special effort for it, for there is no specified time for remembrance. One may remember Allah *the Almighty* standing, one may remember Him sitting and one may remember Him lying on his side, but all are counted among the people of remembrance. This is regarding the physical position

(1) See Ahmad, *Musnad*, 1/423; and Muslim, *Sahih*, Hadith no. (791), *Kitab Salat Al-Musafirin*.

that you adopt; the same is also true with regard to the time at which you do it: one may remember Allah *the Almighty* in the morning and one may remember Him in the evening, one may remember Him early and one may remember Him late, but all are counted among the people of remembrance. So, anyone who says, ‘Glory be to Allah, praise be to Allah, there is no god but Allah, Allah is the greatest and there is no power and no strength except through Allah *the Most High* the Magnificent’ thirty times in one day is written as one of the People of Remembrance. Also, anyone who gets up in the night, wakes up his family and prays two *rak’as* (units) is one of the People of Remembrance. So, remembrance of Allah is a simple matter: you can remember Him while chopping wood with an axe or writing down something with a pen; you can also remember Him *Glorified is He* while eating or while drinking, that is, whatever you are doing you can remember Allah *the Almighty*. So even though His remembrance, He is the greatest, it is also extremely easy for a believer to do. Then Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘...and glorify Him morning and evening.’ (*al-Ahzab*: 42) As for the word *tasbih* (glorification), it means declaring it to be holy. As a matter of fact, to declare something to be holy means to declare it to be exalted. But what are we declaring Allah to be exalted above? We declare Him *Glorified is He* to be Exalted in His Essence, Attributes and Actions. So, while He has Existence, you have existence and so do the rivers and so do the mountains, yet His Existence is not like the existence of everything other than Him: Allah’s Existence, unlike any other thing, is not preceded by non-existence. This is with respect to His Essence. As for His Actions, He has actions just as you have actions. However, your Lord is Exalted above having actions that are like yours. This is what we were saying when we talked about the Night Journey and the Ascent. We mentioned the difference between making a journey and being taken on a journey. If Allah *the Almighty* is the One doing the action then do not look at the time it takes, since it is not you doing the action, it is He. Also, Allah’s Actions do not involve Him manipulating anything; rather, He simply says, ‘Be!’, and it is! We also said: ‘Even when we look solely at human beings, we find that the amount of time a particular action takes depends on the strength of the one doing the action. So, a small child might take an entire hour to move something that a large man might move in only a minute.

Therefore, by analogy and given the limitless nature of Allah's Power, it logically follows that His Actions would take no time whatsoever'. In the same way, we declare Allah *the Almighty* to be Exalted in terms of His Attributes: Allah has Hearing which is Exalted above being like your hearing, and a Face which is Exalted above being like your face and so and so forth. All of this is understood within the framework of the verse in which Allah says, '...There is nothing like Him: He is the All Hearing, the All Seeing.' (*ash-Shura*: 11) When you consider the verses dealing with glorification in the Quran, you will find that there are many of them. But glorification has a particularly special quality when it is used to open a chapter of the Quran, as in the beginning of the chapter of *al-Isra*' wherein Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Glory to Him who made His servant travel by night...' (*al-Isra*': 1). The chapter begins by declaring Allah *the Almighty* to be exalted above the strange and marvellous events that are mentioned in it, which is why the verse says at the very beginning: 'Glory to Him who made His servant travel by night...' (*al-Isra*': 1). Allah's Transcendence and Holiness are established before His Acts. As well, He is Glorified before any glorifier has even been brought into being. In the same way, He is the Creator even before anything has even been created, that is, His Being a Creator came first before He even embarked upon creation. It is like when we talk about a poet: when we say, 'So-and-so is a poet', are we saying that out of the fact that we have actually heard one of his poems, or because he is a poet even before composing a poem? The answer is that he himself is a poet even before he composes a poem, because if he were not, he would never have composed it. So, if we follow the sequence of the glorification phrases used in the Quran, we find that Allah's Glorification was first established before any glorifiers actually existed, as shown in His saying: 'Glory to Him who made His servant travel by night...' (*al-Isra*': 1), that it was established again after He had created creation, as shown in His following saying: 'Everything in the heavens and earth glorifies Allah...' (*al-Hashr*: 1), and that creation continues to constantly glorify Him up to the present day, as shown in the following verse: 'Everything in the heavens and Earth glorifies Allah...' (*al-Jumu'a*: 1). Allah *the Almighty* was glorified, still is glorified and will continue to be glorified until the Last Hour, and that is why the True Lord commanded Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and his *ummah* (followers of Muhammad) not to step

outside of the ranks of those who glorify Him. Allah *the Almighty* says, '[Prophet], glorify the name of your Lord *the Most High*.' (*al-A'la*: 1)

The command to remember Allah *the Almighty* is followed immediately by the command to glorify Him, so it is if Allah were saying to you, 'Whenever you remember Him, also remember that He is Exalted above everything else in terms of Essence, Attributes and Actions'. It is in your own best interests as you journey through life that Allah does not have a partner, peer, or equal since that means that everyone will be under His Justice. So, O glorifier, declaring Allah *the Almighty* to be transcendent is in your own best interest.

We previously mentioned the saying of the country folk in this regard which reads: 'Whoever does not have a leader ought to have a larder'. So, the existence of one who is bigger than all the rest protects you from one of them arrogantly lording it over you. Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* being described with greatness and magnificence, is one of the greatest blessings with which we have been blessed. So, at the same time that you glorify and exalt Him *the Almighty* for being Exalted, praise and thank Him for not having a partner and for making all people equal before Him, praise and thank Him *Glorified is He* for the fact that His sayings and His commands apply to absolutely everyone, praise and thank Him for not taking a wife or having a son and for not having a familial link to anyone in His creation. How could we not remember Allah *the Almighty* glorify Him and praise Him when He is the One Who created all creatures?! And even before creating them, He assigned them purposes and goals, for creation is to bring something into life for a particular purpose. Allah *the Almighty* also created all what helps man in the fulfilling of his mission on earth, that is to say that mankind came into a universe that had already been readied to receive them and had been created for them before they were even brought into being. Then, instead of making you responsible for following His way of guidance, Allah *the Almighty* let you live and enjoy His Blessings without responsibility from the moment you were born until you reached the age of adulthood. When we say 'age of adulthood', we mean the age of maturity when you are able to make your way to Allah *the Almighty* intellectually by means of reflecting on His signs. The religion of Islam is not based on *taqlid* (the blind following of others), but rather on belief and conviction. We previously compared the maturing of a human being to the ripening of a

fruit: a fruit does not become sweet until its seeds reach maturity and become fertile so that if they were to be planted in the ground, they would grow into plants. This is one of the signs of the Greatness of the Creator *the Almighty* for if fruits were to ripen and become sweet before their seeds had reached full maturity, all species of fruit would only be eaten once, and no one who came along after us would ever be able to benefit from them. The example we gave of this was the seed of the watermelon: when you find a seed that is hard and black, you know that the fruit is sweet, ripe, and fit to eat. The reason the Creator *the Almighty* made it like this was to ensure the preservation of species. Another thing: after you reached puberty, were you held responsible for absolutely every movement you make in the course of your life? And were your responsibilities a cause of restriction for you? When you reflect on the matters for which you are held responsible, you will find that they all fall within a narrow band of actions that Allah *the Almighty* has commanded you to do and not to do. Also, you will find that those actions represent less than five percent of the total actions that a man performs in the course of his life. So, with respect to the remaining ninety-five percent of your actions, Allah *the Almighty* has given you total freedom to either do them or not as you wish. How incredible is that! What compassion our Lord shows us by dealing with us in that way! If this proves anything, it conclusively proves that the Creator Loves His creation. So, does this not oblige us not to be unmindful of remembering Him? Does this not oblige us to glorify and thank Him every morning and every evening? In addition, greater still than everything we have mentioned here is the fact that Allah *the Almighty* made it in your own best interests to remember Him and glorify Him; He made it something that weighs heavily in the balance in your favour, and that is why He says in the very next verse:

هُوَ الَّذِي يُصَلِّيْ عَلَيْكُمْ وَمَلَائِكَتُهُ لِيُخْرِجَكُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ
إِلَى النُّورِ وَكَانَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَحِيمًا ﴿٤٣﴾

It is He who blesses you, as do His angels, in order to lead you out of the depths of darkness into the light. He is ever merciful towards the believers [43] (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 43)

As for Allah's saying: 'It is He who blesses you' (*al-Ahzab*: 43), the word used for bestowing blessings is *salat* which literally means supplication. The

act of supplication takes place when someone asks another for something good. But someone only asks another who is capable of providing that good, so if this is the reality of *salat*, how are we to interpret it here? Does our Lord *the Almighty* supplicate to Himself?!

They reply: ‘If the outcome of *salat* is asking for good, and if this good comes to pass when it is asked for, then the True Lord is the Duplicator and the One Who possesses all the keys to good; He is the One Who calls down Blessings on you, He is the One Who bestows blessings on you and He is the One Who treats you with compassion’.

The angels also call down blessings upon you since Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘and His angels’ (*al-Ahzab*: 43). Elsewhere in the Quran, Allah *Glorified is He* has told us about them saying that they are ‘...honoured servants: they do not speak before He speaks and they act by His Command.’ (*al-Anbiya*: 26-27) Allah *Glorified is He* also says about them ‘...who never disobey Allah’s Commands to them, but do as they are ordered.’ (*at-Tahrim*: 6) There are different groups of angels: some are charged with serving us and our interests upon the earth, some protect us from events that might come upon us suddenly, having been given power over those events by Allah *the Almighty* and some are noble, recording guardians. It is these very-same angels connected to us who were commanded to prostrate to Adam *peace be upon him* as is mentioned in the saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘When I have fashioned him and breathed My Spirit into him, bow down before him.’ (*al-Hijr*: 29) This is an indication that they would later serve him, i.e. Adam. It is as if Allah *the Almighty* were saying to Satan: ‘I asked you to prostrate to Adam and I asked the angels whom you are with (to prostrate to him), so if you are one of the angels, then you should comply; and if you are not one of them, but one whom I have placed in their company because of his obedience, then you must obey and prostrate since that is what those who are more exalted than you have done’. We provided an example to clarify this matter, saying: ‘If it was announced in a governmental department that the president was going to visit this department on such-and-such a day and that the ministers also had to be there, lined-up to greet him, should that instruction not apply equally, if not more so, to the ministers’ deputies’?

So, when Allah *the Almighty* told the angels to ‘prostrate to Adam’, out of the fact that Satan was there with them and was of a lower rank than them, it

was obligatory for him to also prostrate. Even if your obedience had raised you to a rank higher than the angels, Satan, your obedience to Allah *the Almighty* must continue to be worthy of that rank. So, whichever way you look at it, you are to be blamed. But Satan was one of the jinn, a group of beings who were granted freedom of choice, and maliciously deviated from his Lord's Command. There is a further category of angels who have no interaction whatsoever with human beings or with the world of human beings; they are the exalted angels, the ones who are infatuated with love of their Lord. It was to this group of angels that Allah *the Almighty* was referring when He said to Satan after refusing to prostrate, '...Are you too high and mighty?' (*Sad*: 75) These exalted angels were not included in the command to prostrate to Adam *peace be upon him* since they had no knowledge of Adam *peace be upon him* and no connection to him. The most special of all these exalted angels are the Throne-bearers, for they are the noblest of them all. It is these angels who call down blessings upon you after Allah *the Almighty* has called down blessings upon you. Indeed, the True Lord gives us a clear indication of this role that they play in calling down of blessings and forgiveness upon us when He describes them in the Quran, saying: 'Those [angels] who carry the Throne and those who surround it celebrate the praise of their Lord and have faith in Him. They beg forgiveness for the believers...' (*Ghafir*: 7).

So, the noblest and the most special of all the angels glorify their Lord with praise and believe in Him. Here arises the following question, which is, 'what is the point of saying "...have faith in Him" (*Ghafir*: 7), after it has already been stated that they glorify Him'? They reply: 'It is because glorification can sometimes stem from fear and so the verse wants to make it clear that the glorification of these angels stems from faith and love, and that Allah *the Almighty* merits their glorification. The verse also mentions a further task of these angels, which is asking forgiveness for all those who believe. Even though they have no connection with people and are not charged with serving them, they still call down blessings upon them and ask for their forgiveness'. So, to sum up, we say that the *salat* of Allah *the Almighty* Who owns the call and has the power to respond, is His Mercy and Compassion to the believers; and that *salat* of those beneath Him is their asking Him, the All-Powerful

Owner *the Almighty* for good. So, they call on Allah *the Almighty* for the believers and ask Him to forgive them, even going to great lengths in their supplication and making impassioned pleas on their behalf, saying: ‘...Our Lord, You embrace all things in mercy and knowledge, so forgive those who turn to You and follow Your path. Save them from the pains of Hell.’ (*Ghafir*: 7) They do not stop at merely asking Allah to save the believers from hell-fire, but also ask Him to grant them paradise as Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘...and admit them, Lord, to the lasting Gardens You have promised to them, together with their righteous ancestors, spouses, and offspring: You alone are *the Almighty*, the All Wise.’ (*Ghafir*: 8)

Then, on top of all of that, the angels add the following as Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Protect them from all evil deeds: those You protect on that Day from [the punishment for] evil deeds will receive Your Mercy – that is the supreme triumph.’ (*Ghafir*: 9) By Allah, even if he had wanted to and even if he were asking for himself, no believer could have come up with a supplication as inclusive or comprehensive as that of the angels, for after asking for them to be forgiven and kept safe from the hell-fire, they did not simply leave them standing on the ramparts, neither in paradise nor in hell, but yet asked Allah *the Almighty* to admit them into paradise, in accordance with His saying: ‘...Whoever is kept away from Hell and admitted to Paradise will have triumphed.’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 185)

This matter is one of those that the orientalist like to dwell on, claiming that it contradicts the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in which he says: ‘There is no day which dawns without two angels calling out (to their Lord), one of them saying: “O Allah, give compensation to those who give out (from their wealth)” and the other saying: “O Allah, give ruin to those who withhold (their wealth).”’⁽¹⁾ They say: ‘How can you say that the angels ask good for people and that they ask bad for people?’ In a sense, their objections are justified since the faculties with which they have been endowed make it impossible for them to correctly understand the subtle observations of the meaning of the Noble Hadith. In their view, the contradiction lies in the saying of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: ‘O Allah, give

(1) See Muslim, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 1010.

ruin to those who withhold (their wealth)', since the first supplication is clear and contains no contradiction as it asks for good. The second one, on the other hand, asks for bad: 'O Allah, give ruin to those who withhold (their wealth).' If you were to reflect, however, on the way this expression is worded, you would find your answer. Is the 'ruin' that is mentioned given or taken? 'Ruin' is something that is normally assumed to be taken, but by the fact that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* says, 'O Allah, give ruin to those who withhold (their wealth)', we know that it was something given, not taken, even though on the surface it appeared to be ruin and destruction. What the supplication is actually asking is for you to be rid of that thing which preoccupies you, captivates your attention, and brings down calamity upon you, so that you may then return to your Lord. So, while it appears on the surface to be a request for something to be taken away, it is in actuality a request for something to be given. Then the True Lord *the Almighty* reveals the reason why He and His angels call down blessings upon the believers, saying: '...in order to lead you out of the depths of darkness into the light.' (*al-Ahzab*: 43) It is if the way adopted by Allah *the Almighty* in telling us to do this and not to do that was the first part of His calling down blessings upon us, since it was the means by which He took us from the darkness into the light. Although the phenomena mentioned in this verse are physical, they are meant to be taken as a metaphor for the spiritual world. So, this is actually an example to what happens in the worldly life, that is, when there is light, you are able to see the path and follow it to its end without hindrance, but when there is darkness, you grope about blindly, quickly lose your way and wander around without direction or clarity of purpose, crushing those who are weaker than you and being crushed by those who are stronger. One of the things Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* instructed us to do was to turn off our lights before we go to sleep at night, saying: 'Extinguish your lamps when you go to sleep.'⁽¹⁾

(1) See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih*, Hadith no. 3280. It is narrated on the authority of Jabir ibn `Abdullah that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'When night falls - or when the darkness of night has set in - hold back your children (from going out), for that is when Satan's minions are abroad, and only release them after an hour of the night has passed. Then close the door and mention Allah's Name, extinguish your lamps and mention Allah's Name, tie the mouth of your water-skin and mention Allah's Name, and cover over your utensils and mention Allah's Name, even if you lay something on top of them.'

Modern science has proven that sleeping under bright lights adversely affects a person's health, and prevents him from ever truly being at rest. It also warns against overexposing ourselves to the lights and rays that emanate from our televisions. Therefore, in the physical world, light has an important function as does darkness. Similarly, Allah's way of telling you to do this and not to do that is the spiritual light that protects you from injury, and gives you the necessary illumination to find the right way through life's myriad paths. That is why Allah *Glorified is He* says immediately afterwards: '...He is Merciful towards the believers.' (*al-Ahzab*: 43) But if this is how Allah *the Almighty* is *raheem* (a dispenser of mercy) towards the believers, then how is He towards the disbelievers? They reply that towards them, He is *Rahman* (Merciful) since the word *rahman* relates to Allah's Mercy in this world. In this world, Allah's Mercy and Bounty encompass believers and disbelievers alike. As for the word *Raheem*, it relates to Allah's Mercy in the Hereafter; it indicates that His Mercy in the Hereafter is only for the believers and no one else. Also, when He says: '...Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth...' (*an-Nur*: 35), He does not mean it in the sense that it is an Attribute of His Essence, but rather in the sense that He is the One Who illuminates them. It is like when we call the lamps in the mosque 'the mosque's lights'. When we discussed this matter previously, we clarified it by mentioning what Abu Tamam says in a poem praising Al-Mu'tasim:

(He has) the bravery of `Amr and the generosity of Hatim,

The clemency of Ahnaf and the intelligence of Iyas

Amongst the Arabs, `Amr was held up as the epitome of bravery; Hatim as the epitome of generosity; Ahnaf ibn Qays as the epitome of clemency; and Iyas ibn Mu'awiyya as the epitome of intelligence. When Abu Tamam said these words, one of the men present in the court of the Caliph stood up and said to him, 'The commander of the faithful is greater than you say; how can you compare him to those uncivilised Arabs?' Then he started to say the following lines of poetry:

The panegyrists compare him in courage and generosity

With those who would be the least of servants if seen by him.

There are fifty thousand like `Antar in his army,

And a thousand like Hatim in his treasure houses

When he heard that, Abu Tamam bowed his head for a short while, then stood up and said:

Do not criticise me for finding in those beneath him,

A passing likeness in terms of courage and generosity

For Allah Himself compared the least of things to His Light,

Using the example of a niche and a lantern

So, spiritual light keeps you out of spiritual harm's way just as physical light keeps you out of physical harm's way, and that is why Allah *Glorified is He* says about His Light: '...light upon light!' (*an-Nur*: 35), i.e. physical light protects from physical harm and hindrance while spiritual light protects you from spiritual harm and hindrance, a point which is clear in His saying, '...Allah guides whoever He wills to his Light...' (*an-Nur*: 35); the light referred to here is the spiritual light by which believers are guided and by which they travel along the path. As for the disbelievers, the only sort of light they know is the physical light. If you were then to ask your Lord: 'Where can we find this light'? He would reply to you: '...shining out in houses of worship. Allah has ordained that they be raised high and that His Name be remembered in them, with men in them celebrating His Glory, morning and evening: men who are not distracted, either by commerce or profit, from remembering Allah...' (*an-Nur*: 36-37). If you desire the true light, then you will find it when you spend time alone with your Lord *the Almighty* in His House, for that is when His Light flows over you and illuminates your heart.

Before leaving this topic of Allah *the Almighty* and His angels calling down blessings on the believers behind, we should mention the blessings that we ourselves call down upon Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in accordance with the saying of Allah: 'Allah and His angels bless the Prophet- so, you who believe, bless him too and give him greetings of peace.' (*al-Ahzab*: 56) *Salat* of Allah *the Almighty* means mercy, tenderness and compassion, whilst *salat* of the angels means supplicating and entreating the One Who owns (everything), i.e. Allah *Glorified is He*. As for our own *salat* on Messenger

Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* it is thought by some to be a supplication which we make for him. That is not what it is, however, because when you say the prayer on Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* you say: ‘O Allah, bless Muhammad’. So, you do not bless him yourself, rather, you ask Allah *the Almighty* to bless him. But this begs the question: ‘how is it that you can ask Allah to bless Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*’? They reply that we can do that because every good that Allah gives Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is distributed amongst his *ummah*. Also, you should know that the True Lord does not leave Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to receive the blessings of all those who believe in him, without requiring him to respond in kind by making a similar prayer for them. He says: ‘...and pray for them- your prayer will be a comfort to them...’ (*at-Tawba*: 103). It is as if this prayer was Messenger Muhammad’s *peace and blessings be upon him* way of returning the greetings and prayers of those believers who prayed for him.

Allah *the Almighty* subsequently says:

يَحْيِيهِمْ يَوْمَ يَلْقَوْنَهُ، سَلَامٌ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ أَجْرًا كَرِيمًا ﴿٤٤﴾

**When they meet Him they will be greeted with ‘Peace’–
and He has prepared a generous reward for them [44]
(The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 44)**

This verse refers to what happens in the Hereafter, and the greeting that is mentioned, the *salam* (peace), is not given by us but rather is given to us by Allah *the Almighty*; it is like when He says elsewhere in the Quran: “‘Peace’, a word from the Lord of Mercy.” (*Ya Sin*: 58)

The mercy, compassion and tenderness that we receive from Allah *the Almighty* in this world shows itself in our doing the right thing at the right time, conducting ourselves with probity, feeling at ease and enjoying peace of mind. But despite all of this, we are still, sometimes, beset by trouble and misfortune. As for Allah’s Mercy in the Hereafter, it is perfect peace and nothing whatsoever happens to disturb it. Then there is enjoyment: human beings do derive enjoyment from the Blessings Allah *the Almighty* Who has

bestowed upon them in this worldly life, but their enjoyment is spoiled somewhat by their fear that they will pass away. As for the enjoyment of the Hereafter, it is pure and completely unspoiled since the blessings in that abode are eternal, everlasting and never came to an end. They went from living in this life in a world of causes to living in the Hereafter with the Primary Causer; *Glorified is He* Who says with regard to Himself: 'Who has control today? Allah, the One, the All Powerful' (*Ghafir*: 16). But what is meant by the saying of Allah: 'when they meet Him...' (*al-Ahzab*: 44)? Is it referring to the Day of Resurrection? Or is it referring to the day their life comes to an end and they meet Him in death using the common idiom for death of 'So-and-so met his Lord'? They reply: 'The Angel of Death never comes to take the soul of a believer without first greeting him with the word, 'peace', which is why if he does greet someone in that way, then this means that that person is one of the people of peace. This is the first degree of peace. It is also possible, however, that 'peace' refers to the perfect peace which the believers encounter on the Day of Resurrection, for nothing will ever happen thereafter to disturb the peace they find on that day'.

That is why when Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was suffering from the throes of death, Fatima *Allah be pleased with her* having seen the pain he was in, said to him: 'Oh what sorrow you are undergoing, my father!', whereupon he *peace and blessings be upon him* said to her, 'No sorrow will ever again afflict your father after today.'⁽¹⁾ What sorrow could Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* possibly feel after being transported to the vicinity of his Lord, to an abode of ultimate peace wherein fear no longer exists!

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...and He has prepared a generous reward for them.' (*al-Ahzab*: 44). The adjective used to describe *ajr* (reward) is *karim* (generous). This adjective is normally used to describe the one who readies

(1) See Ibn Majah, *Sunnan*, Hadith no. 1629, on the authority of Anas ibn Malik Allah be pleased with him who said that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to Fatima Allah be pleased with her after hearing what she said: 'No sorrow will ever again afflict your father after today, for that (time) has come for him which will come for every man until they come (before their Lord) on the Day of Resurrection.' See the origin of this Hadith in *Al-Bukhari*, Hadith no. 4462.

the reward, not the reward itself, so the fact that it is used here to describe the reward means that the Lord's Generosity spread from Him into the reward that He prepared until it too became generous. Another example of that is found in His saying, '...and have prepared a generous provision for her.' (*al-Ahzab*: 31) Here, the generosity spread from the Provider to the provision because while provision in this world comes to you by means of some other creatures, provision in the Hereafter comes to you without any means whatsoever, that is, no one else plays a role in bringing it to you. So, since it comes to you without any effort on your behalf at the merest thought of it, it immediately appears in front of you, thus why should it not be described as being generous?! Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ شَهِيدًا وَمُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا
وَدَاعِيًا إِلَى اللَّهِ بِإِذْنِهِ وَسِرَاجًا مُنِيرًا

**Prophet, We have sent you as a witness, as a bearer of
good news and warning [45] as one who calls people to
God by His leave, as a light-giving lamp [46]
(The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 45 - 46)**

A witness is one who validates a claim or confirms a right on behalf of the one to whom it is due; and that is why judges always ask to hear the testimony of witnesses before delivering their judgement; they want to make sure that when they rule on a matter, their rulings are accurate and based on solid evidence and proof. That is why they say that judges do not rule according to what they know, but only according to the evidence that is laid before them. So, if a case came before a judge dealing with matters about which he had prior knowledge from his own private life, he would be required to leave that case and refer it to another judge in order to ensure that the eventual ruling was not based on what he knew but only on evidence alone. When you reflect on this matter, you will find that Allah *the Almighty* desires to distribute the responsibility for making the ruling amongst many people so as to ensure that the ruling is only issued after due process and proper weighing up of the evidence, thereby guaranteeing that justice is established.

For example, when an incident happens in our society, we go to the records office which makes a record of the event. That record is then transferred by a police officer to the district attorney's office, which in turn transfers it to the judge, so that he can make a judgement concerning it. Then the ruling is sent back to the executive authority who then carry it through. This process is circuitous but it has a point, that is, making sure that justice is done. If this is how it is with us, then how must it be when Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who bears witness, the One Who judges, and the One Who carries through the judgement? There is no doubt that this would guarantee that absolute justice is achieved. If you were to say, 'Then what is Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* bearing witness to'? They would reply: 'He *peace and blessings be upon him* is bearing witness to the fact that he conveyed his Message to his *ummah* in the same way that all the other messengers conveyed their messages to their people, as is shown in the saying of Allah: "What will they do when We bring a witness from each community, with you [Muhammad] as a witness against these people?"' (*an-Nisa'*: 41) So, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* will be a witness against this *ummah* to which he conveyed the Divine Message, just as all the previous messengers and prophets will witness against their nations. But you are singled out from your entire fellow messengers who came before you by the fact that you are their 'Seal', that is, no prophet will come after you. So, for that reason, I will assign people from amongst your *ummah* to play the same part with respect to you as the prophets played with respect to the messengers who preceded them.

That is why Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said in a Noble Hadith: 'The scholars of my *ummah* are like the prophets of the tribe of *Isra'il*.'⁽¹⁾ So, Allah *the Almighty* has guaranteed that there will be people in the *ummah* of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who would take on the task that the prophets had with respect to conveying the Message. This is the

(1) *Ash-Shawkani said, 'Ibn Hajar and Az-Zarkashi said that this Hadith had no basis.' Similarly, As-Suyuti said in Ad-Durr Al-Manthur, p. 309 that Al-'Ajluni said in Kashf Al-Khafa', 1744: 'Some people added that (this Hadith) was not known to figure in any book of any note...' However, At-Taftazani, Fath Ad-Din Ash-Shahid, Abu Bakr Al-Mawsuli and As-Suyuti in Al-Khasa' is all indicated that its meaning was sound.*

meaning of the saying of Allah: ‘...so that you may bear witness [to the truth] before others...’ (*al-Baqara*: 143).

The word ‘others’ is used in its most general sense here, including Adam *peace be upon him* and every single one of his descendants until the Final Hour comes. If you were to ask how that could be, then we would reply: ‘With respect to those people who came before you, you bear witness against them according to the testimony of the Quran that the messengers had actually conveyed their messages to their respective peoples. As for those who are yet to come, you are required to testify against them that you conveyed the Message to them just as Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is required to witness against you that he conveyed the Message to you’.

Therefore, in the *ummah* of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* there is a portion of prophethood represented in the fact that its members will be called upon to testify against people on the Day of Resurrection. That is why Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* prepared his *ummah* for this task by saying to them: ‘Allah illuminates the man who hears my words, understands them and then conveys them to others to hear them, for perhaps the one to whom they are conveyed will understand them better than the one who hears them directly.’⁽¹⁾ In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* also says, ‘We have made you [believers] into a just community...’ (*al-Baqara*: 143), so why? The answer is ‘...so that you may bear witness [to the truth] before others and so that the Messenger may bear witness [to it] before you...’ (*al-Baqara*: 143). This *ummah* is on the middle course in the sense that it is not characterised by extremes, neither going to excess nor falling short. It is very much like a set of scales whose two hands are in perfect balance, neither hand outweighing the other until something is placed into it. This is exactly how the community is perfectly balanced and neither tending to this side nor to that. Then Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘...as a bearer of good news...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 45) meaning that he *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent to those who believe in their reward from Allah *the Almighty*. The word *bishara* (glad tidings) is giving people the news of something good that is going to happen

(1) See Ahmad, *Musnad*, 1/437; At-Tirmidhi, *Sunnan*, p. 2657-2658; Ibn Majah, *Sunnan*, 232.

before it happens. As for the saying of Allah: ‘and warning’ (*al-Ahzab*: 45), the word ‘a warner’ means that he was also sent to those who do not believe in him to warn them against the punishment that will afflict them be Allah *the Almighty*. The Arabic word *indhar* is instilling fear in people’s hearts about something bad that will happen before it happens. As for Allah’s *Glorified is He* saying: ‘as one who calls people to Allah by His leave’ (*al-Ahzab*: 46), it means according to what He commands you to do, not according to what you come up with yourself, for many leaders and reformers throughout history have come up with programs and ideologies which they have promulgated amongst their societies in order to bring about reform. So, in order to clearly differentiate between these people and Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘by His leave’ (*al-Ahzab*: 46). In other words, the way of guidance brought by Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was directly from Allah *the Almighty* and it was only by a command from his Lord that he *peace and blessings be upon him* conveyed the Divine Message to you. There are three conditions that anyone calling others to the way of guidance must meet:

The first condition is that the one calling others to the way of guidance does not profit from what he is calling people to. But as we have seen, no human being (not sent by Allah *the Almighty*) has ever met this condition: when the capitalists made their laws, they short-changed the workers; when the socialists made their laws, they short-changed those with capital and so on and so forth. The reason for this is that human beings have many conflicting desires, which shows itself in the fact that every single human being who comes to make a law does so according to his own personal desires or according to what serves his best interests. Then inevitably, even if it is after a long period of time, the deficiencies in those laws are shown up by everyday practice and the realities on the ground, which is why the legislators themselves come to recognise the shortcomings in the laws they have passed. So, they themselves revolt against them, rise up against themselves and go back to the laws in order to amend them.

The second condition is that he should have full knowledge of the likely repercussions of his laws being passed; and that not one single detail of the

area he is legislating for escapes his attention, since that would necessitate him having to amend that law.

The third condition is that he should be wise with respect to the laws that he legislates - in other words, he puts things in their rightful place, not treating people with a double standard law. In addition, he should treat everyone who comes before him equally. When you reflect on these conditions, you will find that no one except for the True Lord fulfils all the three. Therefore no one should legislate laws for mankind except for the Lord of mankind.

We previously demonstrated this fact very clearly with an example we gave from real life: when it is dark, people need a bit of light in order to carry out the tasks they need to perform, so each person brings out what best suits him for producing that light. So, one person lights a candle, another lights a 'model 5' paraffin lamp and another lights a 'model 10' paraffin lamp. Yet, after the advent of electricity, we began to also see ordinary lights, fluorescent lights, neon lights, crystal chandeliers and so on.

So, you light up the darkness around you making use of whatever means are available to you. But what do you do when the sun rises and daylight appears? Do you continue to use those artificial lights? No, of course you do not. You switch them off because the light that the sun brings is according to the capacity of your Creator *the Almighty* not your own capacity. That is why we say: 'Switch off your lights for the sun of Allah has risen'. If this is how things are with respect to material light, then the same must also be the case with respect to spiritual light. So, when the light of divine legislation and the light of Allah's way of guidance come, then extinguish all other programs and all other forms of legislation.

Then He says, 'as a light-giving lamp' (*al-Ahzab*: 46). Here, the True Lord likens Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to a lamp or beacon. But do not think that this description belittles him *peace and blessings be upon him* since the type of lamp referred to here is not like one that lights up your room, for example, but is like the one mentioned in the saying of Allah: '...and make a blazing lamp' (*al-Ahzab*: 46), where the word 'lamp' refers to the sun. If you were to then ask: 'Why is Prophet Muhammad *peace and*

blessings be upon him not being described as a sun'? The sun is described by the saying of Allah: "It is He Who made the sun a shining radiance..." (*al-Ahzab*: 46), and is clearly more powerful than a lamp'.

If you were to ask that, then they would reply: The words used here are the words of the Lord and they demonstrate a very precise and miraculous turn of phrase: it is true that the sun lights up the entire world. But the situation with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was different, since his *ummah* took on the responsibility of promulgating the religion after his lifetime. So, the analogy of a lamp for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is more apt since light can be taken from a lamp without decreasing its light in any way (i.e. you can use its light to light up another lamp or torch) but light can never be taken from the sun.

When the lights of guidance brought by Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* they shone out upon the world, earlier systems of law no longer had any zone in which to operate. This fact is well expressed in the following line of poetry:

It is as if you were a sun and the kings' planets,

Since when it rises not even a single planet may be seen

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says⁽¹⁾:

وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ بِأَنَّ لَهُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ فَضْلًا كَبِيرًا

**Give the believers the good news that great bounty
awaits them from God [47] (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 47)**

We say in our supplications: 'O Allah, treat us with bounteous *fadl* (grace) and not with '*adl*, (justice)' because justice is that you receive a reward

(1) Ibn 'Attiyya said, 'Ubayy Allah be pleased with him said to us, 'In my view, this is the most hopeful verse in the Book of Allah since in it Allah Himself commands Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to give the believers the good news that He set aside for them a great bounty. And the nature of this great bounty is clarified elsewhere in the saying of Allah: "you will see them fearful because of what they have done: punishment is bound to fall on them- but those who believe and do good deeds will be in the flowering meadows of the Gardens. They will have whatever they wish from their Lord: this is the great bounty" (*as-Sajda*: 27).' See *Al-Qurtubi, Tafsir* 8/5470.

equivalent to the action you did or that you get what is yours by right, while bounteous grace that you get more than is yours by right. Something of this sort is mentioned in the saying of Allah: ‘Say [Prophet], “In Allah’s Grace and Mercy let them rejoice...”’ (*al-Ahzab*: 47).

And there is the statement of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: ‘None of you will enter paradise on account of his actions.’ The companions said: ‘Not even you, Messenger of Allah?’ He replied: ‘Not even me, unless Allah covers me with His Mercy.’ Since when I weigh up my actions against the blessings that my Lord bestowed on me, both before I was created and up until the moment that I reached the age of responsibility, I find that even if I were to spend my entire life in perfect obedience to Him, I would never be able to pay off the debt that I owe Him.

And then there is also the fact that all the benefits for performing acts of worship and obeying our Lord reflect back on us - Allah *the Almighty* Himself derives no benefit from anything that we do. So, if we, not Allah *the Almighty*, are the ones who benefit from our worship and obedience, then His rewarding us for doing them is an act of pure bounteous grace on His part. The example of this that we gave - and to Allah belongs the Highest Example - was that of a son whom you encourage to revise throughout the year, presenting him with the necessary books and tools and financially supporting him. Then, when he succeeds in the exams at the end of the year, you give him some sort of prize or gift. That gift that you gave him was out of your bounty. Therefore, if you come across two people involved in a quarrel or feud and want to reconcile them with one another, say to them: ‘Would you like me to judge between you with justice or with bounteous grace?’ They will then reply to you: ‘There is nothing better than justice’, so say to them: ‘No, that’s not true. Bounteous grace is better than justice since justice is that you take your right from your opponent while bounteous grace is that you leave the right you have over your opponent in order to receive it from your Lord’. This is exactly what we see practised in the story of the slander between Abu Bakr and Misttah⁽¹⁾ when Abu Bakr

(1) *He was Misttah ibn Athatha ibn `Abbas ibn Al-Muttalib whose name was actually `Awf. As for Misttah, that was merely a nickname. His mother was the maternal aunt of Abu Bakr Allah be pleased with him and so, because of their close family connection,=*

peace be upon him pardoned him after Allah *Glorified is He* revealed the verse: 'Those who have been graced with bounty and plenty should not swear that they will [no longer] give to kinsmen, the poor or those who emigrated in Allah's way: let them pardon and forgive. Do you not wish that Allah should forgive you? Allah is Most Forgiving and Merciful.' (*an-Nur*: 22) So, whoever wants Allah *the Almighty* to forgive him his wrong actions should first forgive his Muslim brother for the slips and wrong actions that he has committed.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَا تُطِيعِ الْكَافِرِينَ وَالْمُنَافِقِينَ وَدَعْ أَذُنَهُمْ
وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا

**Do not give in to the disbelievers and the
hypocrites: ignore the harm they cause you and put
your trust in God. God is enough to trust [48]
(The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 48)**

At the beginning of this chapter, Allah *the Almighty* addresses Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by saying: 'Prophet, be mindful of Allah and do not give in to the disbelievers and the hypocrites...' (*al-Ahzab*: 3), while here, He addresses him with saying, 'do not give in to the disbelievers and the hypocrites: ignore the harm they cause you and put your trust in Allah. Allah is enough to trust.' (*al-Ahzab*: 48) The first verse was revealed at the beginning of Prophet Muhammad's Mission when the disbelievers first started plotting against Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. So, if that was the case then, how do you think it was when Prophet Muhammad's Mission became much stronger and his call to Islam much more open? They

= Abu Bakr Allah be pleased with him used to send him provisions. Then when he became involved with the slanderers in spreading the lie about 'Aisha Allah be pleased with her, Abu Bakr Allah be pleased with him made an oath that he would no longer support him financially. Then Allah *Glorified is He* revealed the verse: 'Those who have been graced with bounty and plenty should not swear that they will [no longer] give to kinsmen...' (*an-Nur*: 22). So Abu Bakr Allah be pleased with him went back to supporting him. Misttah died in the year 34 A.H. during the caliphate of 'Uthman Allah be pleased with him. It is also said that he died in the year 37 A.H. and participated in the battle of Siffin on the side of 'Ali. See *Al-Isaba fi Tamyiz As-Sahaba*, p. 7929.

plotted against him all the more, of course! And that is why Allah *Glorified is He* refers to this matter once again: ‘Do not give in to the disbelievers and the hypocrites: ignore the harm they cause you...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 48). But that does not mean that I will forsake you; no, it merely means that I will be your representative as Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...and put your trust in Allah. Allah is enough to trust.’ (*al-Ahzab*: 48). If you were to say: ‘How could Allah be a representative when the representative is beneath the principal?’ We would respond: ‘The principal only appoints another to represent him when he finds himself unable to the task at hand and so chooses someone stronger than himself to do it on his behalf’.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِذَا نَكَحْتُمُ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ ثُمَّ طَلَقْتُمُوهُنَّ
مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ تَمْسُوهُنَّ فَمَا لَكُمْ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ عِدَةٍ تَعُدُّوْنَهَا
فَمَتَّعُوهُنَّ وَسَرَّحُوهُنَّ سَرَاحًا جَمِيلًا ﴿٤٩﴾

Believers, you have no right to expect a waiting period when you marry believing women and then divorce them before you have touched them: make provision for them and release them in an honourable way [49] (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 49)

This verse discusses a sociological institution that is dedicated to the preservation of the species, for the preservation of humans is only truly feasible through marriage, since it is the means for propagation. The first stage of marriage is engagement. However, many people do not understand what engagement means nor where its limits lie with respect to the man or the woman. An engagement is simply when a girl’s suitor goes to her guardian and says to him: ‘If I were to put forward a request for your daughter’s hand in marriage, would I be worthy of acceptance?’, and the guardian replies ‘You are welcome to do so’. This is what is classified as an engagement and it may well be that he never actually asks for her hand. However, if he does ask for her hand then he has the right to see her a single time in the presence of her *mahram* relatives, since Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to a young man who wanted to get engaged to a girl: ‘Look at her (first), for it may produce

love between you.'⁽¹⁾ It is astonishing that many people mix up the engagement with the actual marriage contract and think that it needs to be carried out in the same way. So, when the girl's guardian accepts the suitor, he agrees with him upon a certain amount of jewellery as dowry co-ordinates with him all the details of the marriage, allows him to sit beside his daughter and talk with her, and perhaps even allows him to spend time alone with her in private. If only they were to have made the engagement a contract, they would have extricated themselves from this difficult situation and made things much easier upon themselves! The advantage of an engagement is that if a suitor wants to break it off, all he has to do is go to the girl's guardian and say to him: 'I did ask you for the hand of your daughter, but I now release myself from what I asked you'. As for an actual contract, that can only be annulled, even before consummation, by divorce. So, do not make an arrangement which is an engagement in form, but a contract in substance.

In this noble verse, Allah *the Almighty* clearly tells us what the rulings are for when a man divorces his wife before moving in with her and consummating their marriage: 'Believers, you have no right to expect a waiting period when you marry believing women and then divorce them before you have touched them: make provision for them and release them in an honourable way...' (*al-Ahzab*: 49). The word *nikah* (marriage) is only used here to refer to the marriage contract since, if another meaning had been intended, Allah *Glorified is He* would not have said: 'before you have touched them' (*al-Ahzab*: 49), for the word *mass* (touching) is an indirect allusion to sexual intercourse, an activity that the Quran never mentions directly but always hides by using other words to allude to it. As for the ruling mentioned in the saying of Allah: '...you have no right to expect a waiting period' (*al-Ahzab*: 49), it means that a man who divorces⁽²⁾ his wife before consummating his marriage with her cannot expect

(1) *Al-Mughira ibn Shu'ba narrated: 'I asked for a woman's hand in marriage, so Messenger Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him asked me if I had looked at her. When I replied that I had not, he said: "Then look at her, for it may produce love between you."'* See Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 4/ 245 & 246; At-Tirmidhi, Sunnan, Hadith no. 1087 and Ibn Majah, Sunnan, Hadith no. 1865. *Al-Busayri said in Az-Zawa'id: 'Its chain of narrations is Sahih and its narrators are all trustworthy.'*

(2) *This applies when the husband divorces the wife before consummating the marriage with her. However, if he dies before consummating the marriage with her, then she must wait the=*

her to undergo a waiting-period. This is because there are several wisdoms behind the waiting-period: it gives a husband the chance to take his wife back in the case of a revocable divorce; and it allows enough time to be sure that the wife is not carrying a child in her womb. But sometimes the waiting-period is for neither of these reasons but rather for the fact that her husband has died and left her a widow. So, there is one ruling which governs the waiting-periods for divorces in unconsummated marriages and another ruling which governs the waiting-periods for divorces in consummated marriages. This difference is also clearly shown when we look at what happens with respect to the dowry. If a woman is divorced before consummation then she only gets half of the dowry as Allah *Glorified is He* says in the chapter of *al-Baqara*: ‘...then give them half of what you had previously fixed...’ (*al-Baqara*: 237), and as He says here: ‘...make provision for them and release them in an honourable way.’ (*al-Ahzab*: 49) If the (amount of the) dowry was mentioned in the contract, then she gets half of what was mentioned, but if it was not, then she gets half of the dowry that a woman of her sort would normally get. As for the waiting-period for a divorce that takes place after a marriage has been consummated, some elaboration is necessary since its length varies from case to case according to what best fits the case for which the waiting-period was legislated. As we mentioned before the Arabic word *`idda* (waiting-period) indicates that is something that is counted. So, if the woman is capable of menstruation, the waiting-period is three menstrual periods in order to make sure that her womb is empty. But surely one menstrual period would be enough to ascertain that, so why did Allah *the Almighty* make her have to wait three menstrual periods?

They reply that the reason for her having to wait three periods is to give the husband the opportunity and time to calm down, reconsider, and take his

= normal waiting-period of a woman whose husband died after consummation because of the saying of Allah: ‘If any of you die and leave widows, the widows should wait for four months and ten nights before remarrying...’ (*al-Baqara*: 234). The only reason she still must wait this waiting-period even though he did not consummate the marriage with her, is out of loyalty to him and in consideration of his rights. See *Fiqh As-Sunna* 2/342. Ibn Qudama said in *Al-Mughni* 9/78: ‘Every non-pregnant woman whose husband dies leaving her a widow, regardless of whether he consummated his marriage with her or not, and regardless of whether she is free or a slave girl, has a waiting-period in months.’

wife back. So, in this particular matter, the law is made with the integrity of the family in mind. Do you not see that Allah *the Almighty* has prescribed the coming together of a husband and wife by means of a single phrase: 'Marry me (to her)', (to which the guardian replies): 'I have married you (to her)', but when it comes to divorce or separation, He has made there be three stages. Allah *the Almighty* has done this because He does not want to leave the way open for a moment of fleeting anger to revoke Allah's saying when it comes to marriage. I remember that there was a tricky question that they used to ask: it was either 'Do men having waiting-periods?' or 'Is there a waiting period that women can expect from men?' The answer was: 'Yes, there is a set of circumstances in which men have a waiting-period, and that is when he marries a woman, divorces her and then wants to marry her sister. In such a case, he must wait for the waiting-period to pass in order to marry her'. As for the waiting-periods of the other sorts of women, the one who has gone past the age of menopause must wait three months, the one who is pregnant must wait until after she gives birth and the one whose husband has died must wait four months and ten days. But what if a woman's husband has died and she is pregnant, how long must she wait then? They reply that in such a circumstance her waiting-period is whichever of those two periods of time is longer-her pregnancy running its course or four months and ten days.

A question that might well have occurred to you is why the waiting-period of a divorced woman is only three months while the waiting-period of a woman whose husband has died leaving her a widow is four months and ten days. The reason, they reply, is because there is a difference between divorce and death in terms of the relationship of a man to his wife. The source of this difference lies in the phrase that the One Who created the male and the female made to join them together. That phrase is 'Marry me. I have married you', but on condition that it is uttered out loud in the presence of witnesses. And do not underestimate this phrase, for although you do not know what it does to the human form at an atomic level, you do know the effects it leaves behind. And we said, 'Suppose, for example, that it came to your attention that a young man was in the habit of making improper advances to your daughter (behind your back). What would you do? There is no doubt whatsoever that you would be furious. Your blood would boil; you would feel

jealously protective of her and would perhaps even go as far as to harm him. If, however, he were to have knocked on your door and asked you for her hand, you would have welcomed him with open arms, felt happy and everyone would have been pleased. So, what changed? What is the difference between the two scenarios? It is clear that the thing which really made you angry was the fact that he snuck up on her without the permission of her Creator and that is why Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* says, ‘Have *taqwa* (fear) of Allah with respect to women, for you have taken them on the security of Allah, and intercourse with them has been made lawful for you by the saying of Allah.’⁽¹⁾

When a famous man known for being very jealous of his daughters came to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to invite him to marry one of them, he *peace and blessings be upon him* laughed and said, ‘The lawful has cut off the nose of jealous protectiveness!’

By means of the marriage contract that joins the husband and the wife together in the light of the word of Allah, He causes a lawful impulse to come into being in each of the two parties. These two impulses then meet by virtues of a lawful act and under the law which joined the couple in matrimony.

Divorce is ordinarily accompanied by feelings of hatred; either the two parties hate each other or just one of them hates the other. Out of the fact that hatred resulting from divorce may cause the two parties to hate one another, Islam legislates that the waiting-period shall last for three months, or until the woman gives birth to her child.

But usually, in cases when the husband dies, the marriage is thus brought to an end by a divine decree; the wife still loves her husband and feels great sadness at his loss. Indeed, the tragedy of his death often causes her love for him to grow. In circumstances such as these, the impulse that linked them does not easily nor quickly fade away, so the Creator extended the length of the waiting-period so as to give the impulse enough time to die, thus ensuring that no fresh impulse comes into her heart while she still feels an impulse

(1) See Muslim, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 1218; Ibn Majah, *Sunnan*, Hadith no. 3074 and Abu Dawud, *Sunnan*, Hadith no. 1905.

towards her late husband and leaves her feeling conflicted inside. That is why the waiting-period of the woman whose husband has died is longer than the waiting-period of the woman who has been divorced. The verse: 'then divorce them before you have touched them' (*al-Ahzab*: 49) indicates that the practice of divorcing women before the consummation of marriage had already existed among the previous nations, just as it exists today. In fact, it happens when the couple rush to contract their marriage even though the husband does not have the financial means necessary to support the wife or fulfil the costs of marriage. The man only hastens matters because of the personal benefit that such a tie will bring him.

History tells us of many families, especially purebred Arab families, who have done this for that reason. However, under such circumstances, those families never used to permit the husband to spend time alone with the wife even though he was contractually married to her. There are some wonderful stories of girls who conducted themselves with great honour in this matter. One that is typically related in this regard is the story of Buhaytha bint `Aws ibn Haritha At-Ta`i and Al-Harith ibn `Awf, one of the noblemen of the Banu Murra. Al-Harith ibn `Awf had a close friend called Ibn Sinan. One night, when he was sitting and chatting with him, Al-Harith asked Ibn Sinan, 'Do you suppose that even one man exists amongst the entire Arab race who would deny me the hand of his daughter if I asked for it?' He said these words boastfully, proud of the position of nobility he enjoyed amongst his people. When his companion saw the state he was in, he replied, 'Yes, there is someone who would deny you.' 'Who is that?' asked Al-Harith, so Ibn Sinan replied, 'It is `Aws ibn Haritha At-Ta`i.' When he heard that, Al-Harith immediately summoned his servant and said to him, 'Prepare the carriage and take us to the house of `Aws ibn Haritha At-Ta`i.' So, they went to see `Aws and found him sitting in the courtyard of his home. When `Aws saw Al-Harith, he bade him welcome, so Al-Harith went up to him. Then `Aws said, 'Shame on you! What has brought you here?' He left Al-Harith sitting on his camel. Al-Harith said, 'I have come to ask for your daughter's hand in marriage.' `Aws replied, 'You are not here!' meaning that he did not think that he was worthy of her. So Al-Harith turned his mount around and went away, while an expression of relief came over the face of Ibn Sinan because what he had said to his

companion had proven to be true. Then, when `Aws went back indoors and saw his wife, she said to him, 'Who was that man with you who only stayed for a short time and did not dismount from his camel?' He replied, 'It was Al-Harith ibn `Awf, one of the noblemen of the Banu Murra.' She then asked, 'Why did you not invite him to dismount?' He replied, 'He was acting like a fool!' She asked, 'How is that?' He replied, 'He came to ask for my daughter's hand in marriage!' She said, 'Amazing! Do you not want your daughters to get married?' He replied, 'Of course, I do,' so she said, 'If you will not allow them to marry the noblemen of the Arabs, `Aws, then who will you allow them to marry? Go and set things right with him!' He replied, 'How can I do that when I said what I said?' She said, 'Go after him and say, "When you came to see me, I was very angry about something that had nothing to do with you personally. Then, when I came to myself after you left, I realised what I had done. So I have come to apologise and to ask you to come back with me. You will have what you desire".' So, the man went outside but found that the riding party had already left. So, he set out after them until he had caught up with the riding party, whereupon Ibn Sinan turned around and said to Al-Harith Ibn `Awf, 'Here comes `Aws. He has come after us.' So Al-Harith said, 'What will I do with him. Tell him to go away.' So Aws called out to him: 'Harith, stop for a moment' - meaning, 'wait' - 'and you will get what you want from me.' When he heard that, Al-Harith rejoiced and went back with him. When `Aws got back to the house, he said to his wife, 'Call down your eldest daughter.' Then, when she came, he said to her, 'My daughter, Al-Harith ibn `Awf, the nobleman from the Banu Murra, has come to ask your hand in marriage.' She replied, 'Don not do it, father.' He asked her, 'Why not?' She replied, 'I am a woman with a repulsive face', i.e. a face that is so ugly that it repulses people - 'and my manners are lacking', i.e. defective. 'He is not a cousin of mine who will honour the marriage because of his close family connection, nor is he a neighbour of yours who will honour it because he would be ashamed not to, so I am scared that he might see something in me that he does not like and divorce me. Then I would be left with that stigma.' So Aws said to her, 'Get up then and may Allah bless you.' Then he said to his wife, 'Call down your middle daughter.' Then, when she came, he said to her exactly what he had said to her sister. She replied, 'Don not do it, father.'

He asked her, 'Why not?' She replied, 'I am a clumsy woman, a woman who does not do things well and I have not learnt any craft, so I am scared that he might see something in me that he does not like and divorce me. And then I would be left with that stigma.' So 'Aws said to her, 'Get up then and may Allah bless you. Call your younger sister to come to me.' This younger sister was Buhaytha, about whom the story is told. When her father presented the matter to her, she said to him, 'Do as you see fit, father.' He replied, 'My daughter, I presented this matter to your sisters and they both refused.' She said, 'But I am the one who has the beautiful face, who is good with her hands and who has the noble character, so if he divorces me, Allah will not recompense him.' So he said to her, 'May Allah bless you.' Then he went to Al-Harith and said to him, 'You have been blessed, Harith, for I have married my daughter Buhaytha to you. May Allah bless both of you.' Al-Harith replied, 'I accept the marriage.'

Then Aws said to his wife, 'Get your daughter ready and make a tent for her in the house courtyard.' Then, when the tent was finished, Buhaytha was carried inside. Then Al-Harith went in after her. However, after only a very short time had passed he came back out, so Ibn Sinan said to him, 'Have you completed your business with her?' He replied, 'No, by Allah, Ibn Sinan, I have not.' Ibn Sinan asked him why he had not. He replied, 'When I tried to get intimate with her, she said to me, 'In the house of my father and my brothers? By Allah, that will never happen.' So I came back out.' When he heard this, Ibn Sinan said, 'As long as she remains in the house of her father and brothers, she is never going to consent. Let us leave.' So Al-Harith ordered that they leave. Then, after they had been riding for some time, Al-Harith said, 'Ibn Sinan, you and the others go ahead', i.e. and give us an opportunity to be together. So Ibn Sinan and the rest of the riding party went ahead, while Al-Harith stayed back with his wife and set up a tent. Then, when he went inside with her, she said to him, 'O Allah! Do you want to treat me like some woman whom you have captured in war or a foreign slave girl?! By Allah, that is not going to happen! Nothing is going to happen until we reach your home and until you have held a party in my honour. You must sacrifice some animals for me, invite the Arab nobility and do what people like you normally do for people like me.'

The moral of the story is that today's girls could do well to learn from it; Buhaytha did not give herself to her husband, nor did she accept his advances while she was in her parent's home or while she was on the road. She did not climb down from anything that she felt was hers by right, even though she was already his wife. Everything did indeed come to pass as she wanted - the animals were sacrificed and the Arab nobility was invited. Then, when he came in to see afterwards and tried to get intimate with her, she said, 'You mentioned your nobility to me, but I have yet to see any trace of it.' He said, 'How do you mean?' so she replied, 'Are you one who spends his time with women when the Arabs are killing one another?' By this statement, she meant the war that was going on at that time between the tribes of `Abs and Dhubyan - 'Go and make peace between them, then come back to your family. I am not going anywhere.' So Al-Harith and Ibn Sinan went and made peace between `Abs and Dhubyan and took upon themselves the payment of the blood money of three thousand camels, which they paid over a period of three years to the families of those who had been killed. Then, when Al-Harith finished doing that, he went back to her and she said to him, 'Now you may have what you want.' This verse: 'Believers, you have no right to expect a waiting period when you marry believing women and then divorce them...' (*al-Ahzab*: 49) simply gives a way out to some of those people who want to disentangle from certain religious rulings that have placed them in a spot of bother, such as, for example, a man who has divorced his wife three times and thus has completely used up all of the divorces permitted to him by Islamic law. The ruling on such a man is that he is not permitted to marry this wife again until she has first married another man. Someone could come along basing his position on the verse above, and say that, as the word *nikah* (marriage) refers to the contract⁽¹⁾, the contract alone is enough for a woman who has been divorced

(1) See Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir*, vol. 3, p. 497. Ibn Kathir says, 'This noble verse contains several rulings, one of which is using the word *nikah* (marriage) to refer to the contract alone, and on that particular matter, there is no verse in the *Quran* which is clearer. There is a difference of opinion about the literal meaning of the word *nikah* and whether it refers to the contract, to the sexual act or to both. All three opinions exist. As for the way the word is used in the *Quran*, it is used everywhere else to refer to the contract and the sexual act that follows, except for this one verse where it is used to refer to the contract alone.'

three times. In other words, in order to make herself lawful once again for her first husband, she need only enter into a marriage contract with another man and does not need to consummate it. In response to this, we say, 'But it has escaped your attention that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was entrusted by his Lord with the task of legislation, and it was his job to clarify the rulings that came down in the Book of Allah *the Almighty* and elaborate on them. For Allah *the Almighty* says, addressing his Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* '...And upon you [too] have We bestowed from on high this reminder, so that you might make clear unto mankind all that has ever been thus bestowed upon them...' (*an-Nahl*: 44). If the *Sunnah* of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had not had anything to say on this matter, then your understanding of the verse - that the marriage contract alone is enough to permit a wife to go back to her first husband again - would have been permissible. However, Prophet Muhammad is the one to whom Allah *the Almighty* entrusted the task of clarifying the Quran and about whom Allah *the Almighty* says, '...whatever the Apostle gives you [thereof], and refrain from [demanding] anything that he withholds from you...' (*al-Hashr*: 7), that is, he *peace and blessings be upon him* is the one who has the right to legislate, and he did provide us with some clarification as to what is meant by Allah's saying: '...unless she first takes another man for husband...' (*al-Baqara*: 23). So, although Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* explained the word *nikah* as meaning the marriage contract, he provided further clarification of the true meaning of the verse when he *peace and blessings be upon him* said to the man, 'Not unless she tastes his sweetness and he tastes her sweetness'⁽¹⁾ Therefore, a full understanding of the verse does not make it permissible for anyone to say that the contract alone is enough to allow a man to take back in

(1) See Muslim, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 1433, *Kitab An-Nikah*, chapter 17 from a Hadith on the authority of 'Aisha Allah be pleased with her 'When the wife of Rifa'a Al-Qurazhi came to the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him and said, "I was Rifa'a's wife, but he divorced me and the divorce was irrevocable. Then I married 'Abd Ar-Rahman ibn Az-Zubayr, but his penis is like a limp edge of cloth (he is impotent)." [In another narration, it is added that when she said that, she took hold of the edge of her dress.] Messenger Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him smiled and said, "Do you want to go back to Rifa'a? You cannot do that until you have tasted his sweetness and he has tasted your sweetness."'

marriage a wife who he has divorced three times. No, she must first taste the sweetness of her second husband and he shall also taste hers. In other words, they must consummate the marriage. The reason that Allah *the Almighty* made the ruling thus was to punish and discipline those men who fall into the habit of divorce, those men who find it so easy to utter the words of divorce, to the extent that those words are almost always on their tongue. It is due to the Mercy of the Creator and the importance Allah *the Almighty* attaches to the bonds of marriage that while He made a single phrase, 'Marry me- I have married you' sufficient to make a woman lawful for a man. Allah *Glorified is He* did not make a single phrase sufficient to separate them. No, instead, He made divorce be in three stages in order to leave space for the love and mercy between the two parties to reassert itself. If the man uses up all these opportunities, however, and divorces his wife for a third time, then he must be made to pay. This is accomplished by his wife properly marrying another man and doing the act with him, since there is nothing harder for the first husband to bear than that. One thing we notice here is the subtlety of the law: the difficulties that the law creates in certain matters are not because Allah *the Almighty* wants to make those matters difficult for people, but rather because He wants to scare them away from doing them. Allah *the Almighty* wants you to keep away from the words that bring about divorce and not to resort to them unless it is an absolute necessity.

That is why Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* taught us that, 'The most hated lawful act with Allah *the Almighty* is divorce.'⁽¹⁾ Because of this, there are those who object to divorce being a part of our law and even express their astonishment that a man can divorce his wife with only a single word after years of close companionship, love and affection. But what these people fail to observe is that while divorce is hated, it is still lawful. So, it is enough that Allah *the Almighty* has made it be in three stages, and has instructed that it only be resorted to when absolutely necessary; it is enough that Allah *the Almighty* has warned men against speaking the words of divorce lightly and saying them so frequently that it becomes habitual for them.

(1) See *Ibn Maja, Sunnan, Hadith no. 2018*; see also *Abu Dawud, Sunnan, Hadith no. 2178, from a Hadith on the authority of 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar Allah be pleased with him.*

We also note here that Allah *the Almighty* specified believing women in this verse, saying: 'If you marry believing women' (*al-Ahzab*: 50), even though believers are also permitted to marry the women of the people of the Book⁽¹⁾, be they Jewish or Christian. So, it is as if the verse contains a subtle indication from Allah *the Almighty* that any believing man who wants to marry should marry a believing woman and not allow anyone else into his bed. This is a sensible precaution with respect to his religion, since a believing woman may be trusted with his life, reputation, children and wealth whereas a non-believing woman may not be trusted with any of those things. We have seen young men from this society who have gone to the West and married foreign women, and whose marriages have then been beset by insurmountable problems: mothers do not forget that they are Jewish or Christian and so they fill the children's heads with ideas and beliefs from their own faiths. So, believing men should choose believing women because they can trust them with their lives and homes. I would also like to mention when we ourselves travelled abroad and were asked when we got there, 'Why do you allow yourselves to marry women from the people of the Book while at the same time forbidding us from marrying Muslim women?' Some fathers used to bring their daughters who had been born abroad, such as in Germany for instance, back to Egypt with them, and those daughters used to argue this point and question why they were not allowed to go and marry German men in the same way that their fathers had gone and married German women. We used to respond to our daughters who lived there by saying to them, 'A Muslim man is permitted to marry a woman of the people of the Book because he believes in her Book and believes in her prophet. But as for you, how can you get married to a man of the people of the Book who believes in neither your Book nor your Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*?' Therefore, a Muslim man may be trusted with a woman of the people of the Book, while a non-Muslim man may not be trusted with a Muslim woman. Allah *the Almighty* then says: '...make provision for them and release them in an honourable way.' (*al-Ahzab*: 49)

(1) *Ibn Kathir* says, 'The saying of Allah 'Believing women' is an example of His using the majority to refer to the whole since all the scholars agree that, in terms of the ruling, there is no difference whatsoever between believing women and women of the people of the Book.' See *Ibn Kathir, Tafsir*, vol. 3, p. 497.

On the same topic, elsewhere in the Quran, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘And if you divorce them before having touched them, but after having settled a dowry upon them, then [give them] half of what you have settled...’ (*al-Baqara*: 237). Reconciling these two verses can be done as follows: the first one was revealed concerning those whose dowry had not yet been agreed upon, while the second was revealed concerning those upon whose dowry had been agreed. So, the one whose dowry has not been agreed gets a divorce gift: ‘make provision for them’ (*al-Ahzab*: 49), while the one whose dowry has been agreed gets half of it. Each verse deals with its own specific set of circumstances and so there is no abrogation involved here. There is nothing to prevent the man giving a woman whose dowry has been agreed a divorce gift on top of the half dowry that he is obliged to give her, according to some scholars. This opinion has much to recommend; justice entails giving her half of the dowry that had been agreed, while bounteous grace would be giving her a divorce gift as well as the half-dowry. Transactions between people should always be based on bounty, not just on justice, as our Lord Himself has taught us. As a matter of fact, Allah *the Almighty* deals with us on the basis of bounty, not justice. If Allah *the Almighty* were to have dealt with us with justice, we would all have perished and been destroyed.

This is why some of the most pious servants of Allah *the Almighty* say in their supplications, ‘O Allah, treat us with bounteous *fadl* (grace) and not with ‘*adl* (justice)’; treat us with kindness and not according to our scales; and treat us according to decree and not according to reckoning. Yes, if there was nothing in the Hereafter except for the reckoning, none of us would earn anything. It has been narrated in a Hadith, ‘He whose reckoning is argued about will be punished.’⁽¹⁾ Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Say, “In [this] Bounty of Allah and in

(1) See Muslim, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 2876, on the authority of ‘Aisha Allah be pleased with her that Messenger Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said, ‘Whoever will be called to account about his deeds on the Day of Resurrection will be punished.’ ‘Abdullah ibn Abu Mulaika said, ‘Does Allah not say, “he will in time be called to account with an easy accounting”’ (*al-Inshiqaq*: 8)?’ so the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him replied, ‘That is not the actual reckoning - that is merely when one is presented with one’s accounts. He whose reckoning is argued about on the Day of Resurrection will be punished.’ An-Nawawi said in his commentary, ‘The meaning is that most slaves fall short when their actions are weighed up, so if a person’s accounts were properly reviewed and=

His Grace – in this, then, let them rejoice: it is better than all [the worldly wealth] that they may amass!’” (*Yunus*: 58) One cannot experience joy unless one is first encompassed by the Bounteous Grace of Allah *the Almighty* and covered by His Mercy. We find in a Noble Hadith, ‘None of you will enter Paradise on account of his actions.’ The companions asked, ‘Not even you, Messenger Muhammad?’ He replied, ‘Not even me, unless Allah covers me with His Mercy.’⁽¹⁾ If you were to ask, ‘How can we reconcile the different statements in the Quran and *Sunnah* when it comes to the position and status of actions in Islam? For Allah *the Almighty* says in the Quran: “...Enter paradise by virtue of what you were doing [in life]!” (*an-Nahl*: 32) The reply would be, ‘It is true that action has a special status in Islam, but when you worship Allah *the Almighty* you are not doing Him a service. No, it is Allah *the Almighty* Who has done you the service by legislating that you do worship. Even if that were not so, there is still the fact that Allah *the Almighty* with all His Attributes of Perfection, created you and created the whole universe for you. So, if Allah *the Almighty* assigns some task for you to do after that, He only does that with your best interests in mind, just as you charge your son with diligence, revision and study.

Then, if you were to place all your actions in one hand, then puts the blessings that Allah *the Almighty* has bestowed on you in the other hand, you will find that your actions never even come close to counterbalancing the blessings of your Lord. So, if Allah *the Almighty* rewards you after that in the Hereafter, it is purely on account of His Bounty and Mercy to you. The example we mentioned to illustrate this - and to Allah belongs the highest example - was that of a man saying to his son, ‘If you succeed in your exams at the end of the year, I will give you a present or a reward’. Despite the fact that he is the one who derives all the benefit from his success, you still give him something extra because you love him and want the best for him. Therefore, we should deal with one other according to this principle, and we should make it part of our nature, especially in cases such as those when a

= he did not receive a pardon from His Lord, he would perish and enter the hellfire. However, Allah does pardon and forgive everything except for associating others with Him.’

(1) See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith No. 6463*; see also *Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 2816*, from a Hadith on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him.

woman has been divorced before her marriage has been consummated. If you were to ask, 'Why should a woman who has been divorced before her marriage has been consummated take a divorce gift as well as half of her dowry?' We would reply, 'They are to compensate her for the pain of separation. However, if she is the one who desires the divorce, she does not receive any part of the dowry or any divorce gift. On the contrary, she has to return to her husband everything that he gave her, as is mentioned in the Hadith of the woman who came to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to tell him that she no longer wanted to remain with her husband, so he *peace and blessings be upon him* said to her, 'Give back to him everything that he gave to you.'⁽¹⁾ Scholars call this type of divorce a *khul`*. Then, after mentioning the matter of the divorce gift, Allah *the Almighty* says, '...and release them in an honourable way.' (*al-Ahzab*: 49) *Sarh*, in its original meaning, is used to designate a particular type of fruit-bearing tree that is found in the desert. Sheep love to graze upon this tree, with the larger animals in the flock usually eating from the leaves at the top of the tree.

As for the smaller animals in the flock, the shepherd can make sure they are looked after if he is skilled in the art of shepherding. If he strikes the branches at the top of the tree with his staff, he can make some leaves from the tree fall to the ground, and these can then be eaten by the smaller animals. This is what is referred to in Allah's saying concerning the staff of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*: '...and with it I beat down leaves for my sheep; and [many] other uses have I for it.' (*al-Kahf*: 20) It has been narrated that one time when 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* passed by a shepherd, he addressed him, saying, 'O shepherd!' The shepherd looked up at the Commander of the

(1) See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 5273; from a Hadith on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas Allah be pleased with him that the wife of Thabit ibn Qays came to the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him and said, 'Messenger Muhammad, I do not have any complaints about Thabit ibn Qays with respect to his character or his religion. However, I dislike disbelief in Islam.' So, Messenger Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said, 'Will you give him back his orchard?' She replied that she would, so the Messenger Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said to Thabit, 'Accept the orchard from her and grant her a single divorce.'* See also *Ibn Maja, Sunnan, Hadith no. 2056. Ibn Maja mentioned the name of Thabit's wife, calling her Jamila bint Salul. In another narration no. 2057, he called her Habiba bint Sahl.*

Faithful and replied, 'Yes, O shepherd of ours' - meaning, 'I am a shepherd of sheep ,while you are the shepherd of shepherds, and shepherds do not act haughtily towards one another', so 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* said, 'At such-and-such a distance from here, there is a land in which there are some *sarh* (trees that are more beautiful and more fertile) than these, so take your flock there.' This is a fine lesson in taking the responsibility for one's flock upon oneself and showing concern for them. 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* was one of the best at bearing responsibility in this way. It is narrated that he and 'Abd Ar-Rahman ibn 'Awf *Allah be pleased with them* saw a group of travelling salesmen sheltering in the mosque, looking to spend the night there. When 'Umar and 'Abd Ar-Rahman *Allah be pleased with them* saw that some of the traders were carrying produce, while others were carrying the money they had made from the produce they had sold, they became frightened that that might persuade someone to try and steal from them. So, they themselves also spent the night in the mosque, staying awake the entire night until dawn in order to guard those travellers. And even today, it is common for farmers to say *nasrah* meaning to go out to the *sarh* (trees) when they go out to the fields in the morning; they also use the word *naruh* when they return from the fields in the evening. The word *nasrah* has entered common usage so that it is now used to describe any act of going out somewhere. This is where the common saying, 'Give me permission to leave', comes from: it is as if I was imprisoned and was asking you to release me. This is also how *tasrih* comes to mean releasing one's wife. However, this release of the wife is described by Allah *the Almighty* in the Quran as being: '... in an honourable way.' (*al-Ahzab*: 49)

Everything that is described in the Quran with the attribute of beauty, like this and like patience, Allah says, 'patience in adversity is most goodly' (*Yusuf*: 18), has some specific intrinsic worth. Since the release of a wife is usually accompanied by agitation and anger, the actual release should be carried out in a beautiful manner without any harshness or vehemence such as by saying to her, 'This is what was fated to happen. I hope that Allah *the Almighty* gives you one who is better than me in exchange' or whatever else the man thinks appropriate for helping to lessen her pain. The separation and tragedy of divorce are

painful enough for her to bear, so where is the beauty in insulting and cursing in the process and hurting her by denying her some of her rights?! This verse deals with a matter that is very important with respect to families. It is something that is desired by Allah *the Almighty* Himself. Allah *Glorified is He* created a human vicegerent, namely; Adam *peace be upon him* and then created his wife from him so that Allah *the Almighty* could bring about through them man's vicegerency upon the earth. But why did Allah *the Almighty* grant them this vicegerency? They reply, 'So that mankind could enjoy what their Lord brought into being in His creation by means of His Power and Wisdom. It is like when you bring some tasty food to your children and then rejoice when you see them eat and enjoy what you have brought them. The reason you rejoice is because you have passed something brought about through your power to someone else - and to Allah *the Almighty* belongs the highest example!' Since Allah *the Almighty* put the vicegerent on the earth and set him the task of inhabiting it, as indicated in His words: '...He brought you into being out of the earth, and made you thrive thereon...' (*Hud*: 61); He had to then guarantee for that vicegerent the means to live and survive, which depend entirely on the existence of the means for the preservation of his species, since he could not live on his own in the world until the end of time. The continuation of life is dependent upon food and sustenance. That is why your Lord, before creating you and summoning you into existence, first created certain things for you: Allah *the Almighty* created the sun, the moon, the stars, the planets, the earth, the air and the water, thus prepared the way for His vicegerent by putting into existence all of things necessary for his survival. Read the following verse: 'Say, "Would you indeed deny Him who has created the earth in two days? And do you claim that there is any power that could rival Him, the Lord of all the worlds?" For He [it is who, after creating the earth, placed firm mountains on it, [towering] above its surface, and bestowed [so many] blessings on it, and equitably apportioned its means of subsistence to all who would seek it: [and all this He created] in four days.' (*Fussilat*: 9-10) So the storehouses are full to the brim with food '...and nought do We bestow from on high unless it be in accordance with a measure well-defined.' (*al-Hijr*: 21) Since it is the Creator of mankind Who decrees mankind's provision in advance, you do not

have the right to say that there is a 'population explosion'. Rather, you should acknowledge that it is you, through your own laziness and poor planning, who has fallen short in extracting the provision that is available to you. We notice something of this sort in the parable mentioned in Allah's saying: 'And Allah propounds [to you] a parable: [Imagine] a town which was [once] secure and at ease, with its sustenance coming to it abundantly from all quarters, and which thereupon blasphemously refused to show gratitude for Allah's blessings: and therefore, Allah caused it to taste the all-embracing misery of hunger and fear in result of all [the evil] that its people had so persistently wrought.' (*an-Nahl*: 112) An aspect of being ungrateful for the blessings that Allah *the Almighty* has bestowed on you is leaving them hidden because of your laziness and disability of making any effort to extract them. A generation's laziness can make life miserable for the next generation. That is why when we first began to take note of this matter and started to irrigate and cultivate the deserts, our crisis, to a certain extent, even became worse. But if we had irrigated the deserts earlier, we would not be suffering from this crisis and would not be complaining of overpopulation and a lack of space. Allah *the Almighty* teaches that when a place becomes too small, we should not cling obstinately to it since there is plenty of space elsewhere, a fact which is clear in Allah's saying, 'Behold, those whom the angels gather in death while they are still sinning against themselves, [the angels] will ask, "What was wrong with you?" They will answer "We were too weak on Earth." The angels will say, "Was, then, Allah's Earth not wide enough for you to forsake the domain of evil?"' (*an-Nisa'*: 97) That is why Allah *the Almighty* addresses this matter to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* even during the part of the night that he spends alone with Him, when Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Behold, [O Prophet,] Your Lord knows that you keep awake [in prayer] nearly two-thirds of the night...' (*al-Muzzammil*: 20) until the words: '...He knows that in time there will be among you, sick people...' (*al-Muzzammil*: 20). 'Sick people' are those who are not able to work. Thus, those who are able to work should satisfy their own needs and the needs of those who are not able to work, '...and others who will go about the land in search of Allah's Bounty, and others who will fight in Allah's cause...' (*al-Muzzammil*: 20).

From this, we understand that the law that Allah *the Almighty* has made for putting the life of mankind in order is built upon two pillars: travelling through the earth and walking through its broad trails where the means for one's physical survival are found; and fighting in the way of Allah *the Almighty* in order to preserve the call of Islam. The first of these two pillars is for the outer vessel and it is by means of that which we eat, drink, live and breathe. The second is for our values. If the Muslim *ummah* stops fulfilling either of these two pillars or becomes lazy with respect to them, then it will wither and die. Its wealth will become coveted by its enemies. That is why, today, you find that the undeveloped nations are poor and only survive because of the handouts they receive from the rich nations. This is because they were ungrateful of the blessings that Allah *the Almighty* gave them, left them hidden and did not try to extract them or implement them in any way leaving their lands unsettled and uncultivated. As for the rich, they have a surplus. They do not give it to the poor, however, but rather throw it into the sea or destroy it in order to maintain their economic supremacy. That is why we are able to say that all of the evil and corruption in the world stems from people being ungrateful of Allah's Blessings, either by leaving them hidden and not extracting them or by being miserly with them and not giving them to those who do not have. A sign of the importance of food that comes at the front of the list of things that oblige the worshippers of Allah *the Almighty* is to be grateful to Him; He says, 'Let them, therefore, worship the Lord of this House, who has given them food against hunger, and made them safe from danger.' (*Quraysh*: 3-4)

In the same way that Allah *the Almighty* has guaranteed his vicegerent on the earth the means for his survival, so too has Allah *the Almighty* also guaranteed him the means for preserving his species and having offspring. This is carried through the marriage system which Allah *the Almighty* legislated for His slaves. Allah *Glorified is He* legislated marriage so that children come into the world in such a pure and noble way, not in a dirty and ignoble way. The difference between these two lies in the fact that a legitimate child is welcomed proudly by its parents, while the other is not. In fact, if its mother does not get rid of the illegitimate child before it is born, she quickly gets rid of it afterwards because it brings shame and dishonour down upon her and her

family. So, Allah *the Almighty* legislated marriage to keep Muslim society pure, clean, and healthy, to make it worthy of being boasted about by Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* on the Last Day. It has been narrated in a Hadith: 'Marry and procreate, for I will boast about you before the other nations on the Last Day'⁽¹⁾.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says⁽²⁾:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِنَّا أَحْلَلْنَا لَكَ أَزْوَاجَ الَّذِينَ ءَاتَيْتَ أَجُورَهُنَّ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ يَمِينُكَ مِمَّا أَفَاءَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكَ وَبَنَاتِ عِمَّتِكَ وَبَنَاتِ خَالَكَ وَبَنَاتِ خَلَّتِكَ الَّتِي هَاجَرْنَ مَعَكَ وَامْرَأَةً مُؤْمِنَةً إِن وَهَبْتَ نَفْسَهَا لِلنَّبِيِّ إِنْ أَرَادَ النَّبِيُّ أَنْ يَسْتَنْكِحَهَا خَالِصَةً لَكَ مِنْ دُونِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ قَدْ عَلِمْنَا مَا فَرَضْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ فِي أَزْوَاجِهِمْ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ لِكَيْلَا يَكُونَ عَلَيْكَ حَرَجٌ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ﴿٥٠﴾

Prophet, We have made lawful for you the wives whose bride gift you have paid, and any slaves God has assigned to you through war, and the daughters of your uncles and aunts on your father's and mother's sides, who migrated with you. Also any believing woman who has offered herself to the Prophet and whom the Prophet wishes to wed – this is only for you [Prophet] and not the rest of the believers: We know exactly what We have made

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- (1) See *Kashf Al-Khafa`* by Al-`Ajluni, vol. 1, p. 380; he says: 'It is narrated by `Abd Ar-Razzaq and Al-Bayhaqi as a mursal Hadith from Sa`id ibn Abu Hilal with the wording, "Marry and have many children, for I will boast about you before the other nations on the Day of Resurrection."' See Abu Dawud, *Sunnan*, Hadith no. 2050, on the authority of Ma`qal ibn Yasar who said, 'A man came to the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* and said, 'I have found a woman who possesses both beauty and nobility but cannot have children. Should I marry her?' The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, 'No.' Then the man came another time and asked him again and he again said 'No.' Then the man came and asked him a third time and the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* answered, 'Marry women who are loving and bear plenty of children, for I want your numbers to exceed that of other nations in the past.'
- (2) Ibn Kathir says, 'The ruling in this verse is balanced, being neither too strict nor too lax. While the Christians do not allow men and women to marry unless they are removed from each other by at least seven generations, and the Jews allow men to marry their nieces, our perfect pure law came and demolished the excessive laws of the Christians, allowing men to marry their cousins, and forbade the overly lenient laws of the Jews whereby they permitted the marrying of nieces.' See Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir*, vol. 3, p. 499.

**obligatory for them concerning their wives and slave-girls – so you
should not be blamed: God is most forgiving, most merciful [50]
(The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 50)**

The True Lord does not address Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by his first name (given name) as Allah *the Almighty* does with the other Prophets, like when He says, ‘O Nuh (Noah)!’, ‘O `Isa (Jesus)!’, ‘O Musa (Moses)!’, ‘O Ibrahim (Abraham)!’ and so forth. No, the Lord either addresses him *peace and blessings be upon him* by saying: ‘O Apostle!’ (*al-Ma`ida*: 41) or saying, ‘O Prophet!’ (*al-Ahzab*: 50) Calling someone by his first name indicates that he does not have any distinguishing characteristics since if he did have some distinguishing characteristic, he would be called by it. So, you would address him, saying, for example, ‘O brave one!’, ‘O poet!’ or something like that. Today, everyone shares the same names. So, addressing Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with ‘O Prophet!’ and ‘O Messenger!’ was to honour him. Then Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...We have made lawful for you the wives...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 50). But what does Allah *the Almighty* mean by ‘...We have made lawful...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 50), given that the discussion is centred on his wives?

Scholars reply, ‘It means that they had been unlawful for him and then Allah *the Almighty* made them lawful for him, and this meaning is clearly indicated by the words of Allah *the Almighty* that follow immediately after: ‘...whose bride gift you have paid...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 50). It is as if Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* worked firstly as matters are lawful, as proved by the fact that he paid them their dowries. Some scholars have an issue with calling a dowry an *ajr*, saying, ‘How can a dowry be called an *ajr* when the word *ajr* literally means, “payment for a service rendered by a hireling for a hirer in a set period of time”, and marriages do not have set periods of time, since a precondition of marriage is making the intention that the union be permanent?’ In answer to this question, we say, ‘It is not correct to read verses in isolation; rather, we should gather all the verses that are revealed on a particular issue and place them side by side so that we can arrive at a complete understanding of that issue’. Allah *the Almighty* says in another verse, addressing Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in regard to his wives: ‘[know that] you may put off for a time whichever of

them you please...' (put off your enjoyment of them) '...and may take to you whichever you please...' (*al-Ahzab*: 51), i.e. draw them to you. So, because you have the right to put off whichever of your wives you want and deny them their allotted turn and then bring others of them to you, it is as if the service rendered was only for a set period of time. So, it is fitting for the word *ajr* to be used for their dowries. In every phase and aspect of his life, Allah *the Almighty* granted Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the purest and noblest of positions. As for the saying of Allah, '... whose bride gift you have paid...' (*al-Ahzab*: 50), it indicates that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not benefit from any of his wives until he first paid them their dowries. This is even though it is permissible for men who have agreed upon a dowry with their wives to have sexual relations with them before actually paying them any part of it, since the whole or part of a dowry may be deferred. However, delaying the dowry does give the wife the right to refuse to sleep with her husband. And so, when she does permit him to sleep with her, it is an act of favour from her to him. So, the way chosen by Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was the most perfect.

He *peace and blessings be upon him* came in order to make it clear to people what has been sent down to them. Allah *the Almighty* made him a living example of how to behave in matters which people find difficult to confront by having him be the first one to do those things, as we already mentioned with regard to the matter of adoption. Similarly, with respect to polygamy, when he *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent, polygamy was a common practice amongst the Arabs and had even been practised by the prophets who came before him. Allah *the Almighty* however, wanted to limit the number of wives men were permitted in such a way that would still absorb the extra women in society but stop them from marrying as many as they wanted. So, Allah *the Almighty* commanded Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to say to his community, 'Any one of you with more than four wives should hold onto four of them and divorce the rest', while at the same time allowing him *peace and blessings be upon him* to keep the nine wives that he had. If this ruling were to have included Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as well, and he had held onto four and divorced the other five, those

five would have suffered greatly since they would have been left hanging, neither being married nor being free to marry. That is because being the wives of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and Mothers of the Believers, they were not permitted to marry any other man after him *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Therefore, the ruling was different when it came to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. However, it should be noted that the nine wives that he was permitted to marry were those nine he was married to and no other: if any of them were to have died or been divorced, he would not have been allowed to marry anyone else to replace them, since Allah *the Almighty* addresses him, saying: ‘No [other] women shall henceforth be lawful to you – nor are you [allowed] to supplant [any of] them by other wives, even though their beauty should please thee greatly...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 52). We have clearly demonstrated to those Orientalists who take this matter up that the exception of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* from the ruling was not in terms of number but was in terms of the specified women themselves. So he *peace and blessings be upon him* had to stop at those specific nine women to whom he was married and could not marry anyone else, while every other man in his community was free to marry many times that number so long as he did not have more than four at any one time. The verse: ‘...We have made lawful for you the wives...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 50), was revealed before the verse: ‘No [other] women shall henceforth be lawful to thee...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 52), and yet it has been narrated from ‘Aisha Allah *be pleased with her* that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not die until after Allah had first given him the permission to marry whomsoever he wished.⁽¹⁾ How could that be?

Scholars reply that it was because Allah *the Almighty* wanted to give Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the distinction of showing loyalty to his wives. For, even though Allah *the Almighty* had given him permission to marry others, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* never did out of loyalty to the wives he had. He *peace and blessings be upon him* did that

(1) See *At-Tirmidhi, Sunnan, Hadith no. 3216*; see also *An-Nasa’i, Sunnan, Hadith no. 656 in a statement from ‘Aisha Allah be pleased with her. At-Tirmidhi classified it as Hasan.*

because whenever he was greeted, he would either give a better greeting in response or respond in kind. He had previously seen a good gesture from his wives when he had offered them a choice and they had chosen him, preferring life with him to the baubles and finery of this world, so it was as if he wanted to return that gesture with one that was even better than it.

The verse: '...We have made lawful for you the wives...' (*al-Ahzab*: 50), coming before the verse: 'No [other] women shall henceforth be lawful to you...' (*al-Ahzab*: 50) was also a proof of how he *peace and blessings be upon him* was honoured and given special treatment, since Allah *the Almighty* made it lawful for him before making it unlawful. Another example of him being honoured in this way is found in Allah's saying: 'May Allah pardon you [O Prophet]! Why did you grant them permission [to stay at home]...' (*at-Tawba*: 43), for the rebuke is preceded by the pardon. Another thing we notice in the verse: '...We have made lawful for you the wives...' (*al-Ahzab*: 50) is that Allah *the Almighty* uses the masculine form *'azwaj* for wives and not the feminine form *zawjat*. This is because the word *zawj* (spouse) applies to both men and women. Linguistically, *zawj* means one for which another of its type exists, i.e. one of a pair. It does not mean 'two' as some people think. It is like the word *taw'am* (twin) which also means one for which another of its type exists. An example of this is found in Allah's saying: '[His followers would have it that, in certain cases, any of these] four kinds of cattle of either sex [is unlawful to man]: either of the two sexes of sheep and of goats...' (*al-An'am*: 143). Then Allah says: '... and any slaves Allah has assigned to you through war...' (*al-Ahzab*: 50). We know that 'what your right hand possesses' means slave girls, but Allah *the Almighty* added the words: '...Allah has assigned to you through war...' (*al-Ahzab*: 50), as a precaution in order to indicate that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* only obtained his slave girls by legally-accepted means, that is to say from those who were captured in the course of war. He *peace and blessings be upon him* was directly at hand when the prisoner were captured, so he could be sure those women were actually slave girls, since some women who were sold at the time as slave girls in the slave markets were actually freewomen who had been illegally abducted and then forced in slavery. A prime example of that is what we witnessed in the story of Zayd ibn Haritha *Allah be pleased with him*. Therefore,

when Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...Allah has assigned to you through war...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 50), Allah *Glorified is He* means ‘those regarding whom you are one hundred per cent sure that they are slave girls and that they are from among the captives whom Allah *the Almighty* has made lawful for you’.

Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘... and the daughters of your uncles and aunts on your father’s and mother’s sides, who migrated with you. Also, any believing woman who has offered herself to the Prophet and whom the Prophet wishes to wed— this is only for you [Prophet] and not the rest of the believers...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 50). Similarly, Allah *the Almighty* made it lawful for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to marry the daughters of his paternal uncles, the daughters of his paternal aunts, the daughters of his maternal uncles and the daughters of his maternal aunts. When we say ‘paternal’, we mean his relatives on his father’s side; and when we say ‘maternal’, we mean his relatives on his mother’s side. We note, however, that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* never did marry any daughters of his paternal uncles, daughters of his paternal aunts, daughters of his maternal uncles or daughters of his maternal aunts. The reason Allah *the Almighty* made it lawful for him *peace and blessings be upon him* to marry these women mentioned was so that his family would look out for him in the future and support him in his task. When you reflect upon this verse, you will notice that the Arabic words for paternal uncles and maternal uncles are in the singular while the Arabic words for paternal aunts and maternal aunts are in the plural. Why is that? They say it is because the words for paternal uncle and maternal uncle are generic nouns, and generic nouns may be used for both singular and plural. And this is proven by the fact that, in the Quran, you find generic nouns with exceptions being made to them in the plural, as in: ‘By time! Verily, man is bound to lose himself. Except for those who believe, and do good works, and enjoin upon one another the keeping to truth, and enjoin upon one another patience in adversity.’ (*al-’Asr*: 1-3)

‘Man’ is a singular generic noun. The exception that is made to it is ‘those who believe’ which is in the plural. As for the Arabic words for paternal aunts and maternal aunts, they are not generic nouns and so they were used in the feminine plural.

Another thing: because paternal uncles are the brothers of the father, and presupposing that there are many of them, they enjoy the same status of the father. An example of this is in Allah's words: 'Nay, but you [yourselves, O children of Israel,] bear witness that when death was approaching Ya`qub (Jacob), he said unto his sons: "Whom will you worship after I am gone?" They answered, "We will worship your Lord, the Lord of your forefathers Ibrahim (Abraham) and Ismail (Ishmael) and Ishaq (Isaac)..." (al-Baqara: 133). In this verse, the paternal uncle Ismail (Ishmael) was included in the general category of fore fathers. Another example of a paternal uncle being called a father is in Allah words: 'And, lo, [thus] spoke Ibrahim (Abraham) unto his father Azar...' (al-An'am: 74), since it is well-known that Azar was Ibrahim's (Abraham's) paternal uncle, not his father.

In another place in the Quran, the word for paternal uncle appears in the plural. This is clear in Allah's saying: '[All of you, O believers, are brethren: hence,] no blame attaches to the blind, nor does blame attach to the lame, nor does blame attach to the sick [for accepting charity from the hale], and neither to yourselves for eating [whatever is offered to you by others, whether it be food obtained] from your [children's] houses, or your fathers' houses, or your mothers' houses, or your brothers' houses, or your sisters' houses, or your paternal uncles' houses, or your paternal aunts' houses, or your maternal uncles' houses, or your maternal aunts' houses...' (an-Nur: 61). Here, both the word for paternal uncle and the word for maternal uncle appear in the plural. Why is that? They say that it is because it is the houses from which you are allowed to eat that are being discussed in this verse and the word for houses appears in the plural. Since the generic paternal uncle only has one house and multiple houses are mentioned, we must use the plural form *a'mam* for paternal uncles and the plural form *`akhwal* for maternal uncles. Then Allah the Almighty says, '... Also any believing woman who has offered herself to the Prophet' (al-Ahzab: 50). The Arabic word *wahb* means giving something to someone freely without seeking any recompense, So, when we say 'So-and-so *wahaba* (gave) you such-and-such', we mean that he gave it to you free of charge, not as part of a sale or in exchange for something else. That is why when this verse was revealed 'Aisha Allah be pleased with her said, 'I am amazed that there could be a woman who values herself so lightly that she would give

herself to a man for free without seeking any recompense!’ Then when the following verse: ‘...Also any believing woman who has offered herself to the Prophet’ (*al-Ahzab*: 50) was revealed, she *Allah be pleased with her* said to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* ‘Messenger Muhammad, I see that Allah hastens with what you desire.’ So he *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, ‘If you were to have *taqwa* (fear) of Allah, `Aisha, then Allah would hasten what you desire.’⁽¹⁾

What he *peace and blessings be upon him* meant was, ‘Allah hastens what I want because I have hastened with what He wants: because I did everything that He requested of me, He makes whatever I want come to pass before I even ask it of Him’. The verse says: ‘...any believing woman...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 50) because the ruling is specific to believing women; if the woman was from the people of the Book, it would not be valid for her to give herself to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* for free. One question that arises from this ruling is: ‘Is the act of offering herself to him *peace and blessings be upon him* for free enough to make her lawful for him?’ They reply that it is not, for there must also be acceptance. So, if the woman were to say to him *peace and blessings be upon him* ‘I give myself to you freely’, he must first accept her offer before she becomes lawful for him. That is why Allah *the Almighty* attaches a condition to the offer, when Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...who has offered herself to the Prophet and whom the Prophet wishes to wed—’ (*al-Ahzab*: 50); the reason for this is because marriage is one of the matters for which both offer and acceptance are necessary. There has been some discussion about this matter among scholars: some of them⁽²⁾ said that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* never accepted any woman who offered herself to him freely, and others⁽³⁾

(1) See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 4788, 5113; Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 1464 in Kitab Ar-Rida`*; see also Ahmad, *Musnad*, 6/134, 158, 261 from a Hadith on the authority of `Aisha *Allah be pleased with her*.

(2) See *As-Suyuti, Ad-Durr Al-Manthur*, vol. 6, p. 630; he said: ‘This was what Ibn `Abbas *Allah be pleased with him* held.’ *As-Suyuti* attributed it to Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abu Hatim, At-Tabarani, Ibn Mardawayh and Al-Bayhaqi that Ibn `Abbas *Allah be pleased with him* said, ‘The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* did not marry any woman who gave herself to him free of charge.’

(3) See *Al-Qurtubi, Tafsir* vol. 8, p. 5477; *Ibn Kathir, Tafsir*, vol. 3, p. 500; and *As-Suyuti, Ad-Durr Al-Manthur* vol. 6, p.p. 628-630. *Al-Qurtubi* said, ‘That which is narrated in=

said that he married four women who gave themselves to him freely, namely, Maymuna bint Al-Harith Al-Hilaliyya *Allah be pleased with her* Zaynab bint Khuzayma Umm Al-Masakin (mother of the poor) *Allah be pleased with her* Umm Sharik bint Jabir *Allah be pleased with her* and Khawla bint Hakim *Allah be pleased with her*. However, there is no riddle when it comes to this contradiction, since it is easy for us to reconcile these two statements when you look at the exact wording of what Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘... Also any believing woman who has offered herself to the Prophet and whom the Prophet wishes to wed—’ (*al-Ahzab*: 50) Thus, it is possible that a woman offered herself to the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* free of charge but he was not willing to wed her; and it is possible that a woman offered herself to him free of charge and that He *peace and blessings be upon him* wanted to honour her and give her a dowry anyway before marrying her. The word *yastankihuha*: ‘to wed’ (*al-Ahzab*: 50), is like *yankihuha* - both words mean exactly the same thing, like the words ‘*ajila* and *ista`jala* which both mean ‘to hasten’. The implication of: ‘...this is only for you [Prophet] and not the rest of the believers...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 50), is that Allah *the Almighty* singles out His Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* with certain rulings that set him apart from the rest of his community. And the reason for that is because the task of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* does not only relate to himself but relates to all of mankind, not just his contemporaries but every single person who will set foot upon this earth until its Final Hour. This means that the concerns of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* are massive, both in terms of size and in terms of number, and this is indicated by Allah’s words: ‘Behold, We shall bestow upon thee a weighty message’ (*al-Muzzammil*: 5). Allah *the Almighty* wanted

= the two books of *Sahih* strengthens and reinforces this opinion: it is narrated by Muslim that ‘Aisha *Allah be pleased with her* said, ‘I used to be jealous of those who gave themselves to the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* free of charge and say, “Does a woman not feel embarrassed to offer herself to a man free of charge?” When it was revealed, “[know that] you may put off for a time whichever of them you please, and may take to you whichever you please...”’ (*al-Ahzab*: 51). I said to the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* “By Allah, I see that your Lord only hastens with what you want.”’ Al-Bukhari narrated that ‘Aisha, *Allah be pleased with her*, said, ‘Khawla bint Hakim was one of those who gave themselves to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* for free.’ This indicates that more than one woman did so.

there to be nothing to distract Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* from this task of his. Allah *the Almighty* wanted His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* to devote all his attention to fulfilling that task with which he was entrusted so that when he was in love with the process of conveying the message from Allah *the Almighty* and totally absorbed in it. All his personal desires and wants would die, leaving nothing in his heart except for his preoccupation with the task of calling to Islam. This is proven by the fact that when the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* first started to receive the revelation, he found it exhausting: his forehead would drip with sweat and he would run to his wife and call out to her, ‘Cover me! Cover me!’ or ‘Wrap me up! Wrap me up!’ Then, after that, Allah *the Almighty* wanted to relieve him of his suffering and remove the load that had weighed down his back and tired him out, so He caused the revelation to abate for a time so that the nerves and strength of the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* might have time to rest and recover. During that period, however, the sweetness of what had been revealed to the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* remained with him, and that sweetness caused him to long for the revelation to return. And the longing that you feel for something makes you forget the hardship and toil you went through to acquire it.

In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘By the bright morning hours, and the night when it grows still and dark. Your Lord has not forsaken thee, nor does He scorn thee. For, indeed, the life to come will be better for thee than this earlier part [of thy life]! And, indeed, in time will your Lord grant you [what you heart desires], and you shall be well pleased.’ (*ad-Duha*: 1-5) It is quite amazing that the idolaters said when the revelation stopped, ‘The Lord of Muhammad has forsaken him.’ So, when they thought him forsaken, they acknowledged Muhammad had a Lord who (they believed) had forsaken him, but when he was conveying the Message in secret and in public, they said he was a liar, a poet etc. The verse: ‘for, indeed, the life to come will be better for you than this earlier part [of your life]!’ (*ad-Duha*: 4) means that the return of the revelation will be better for you the initial stages of revelation since, when it first came to you, it was more than your strength could readily bear and so it tired you out. But when it comes back, you yourself will be calling for it come and longingly waiting for it. So, you will have gathered

your strength and readied yourself to receive it and will, as a consequence, be able to bear it without effort or exhaustion. Thus, Allah *the Almighty* gave Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* what would make it easier for him to absorb himself completely in the revelation. So when, it did return, his forehead no longer dripped with sweat and he *peace and blessings be upon him* no longer became physically exhausted as he had in the initial stages of revelation because the potency of his longing and love had won out over the tiredness and exhaustion that had previously afflicted him. Then Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...We know exactly what We have made obligatory for them concerning their wives and slave-girls— so you should not be blamed...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 50), i.e. with respect to the number that they are limited to four and with respect to the dowry that is agreed upon at the time of the contract. The meaning is that everyone has a ruling and law that relates to them, so you, Messenger Muhammad, have a ruling that befits you and your community has a ruling that befits its members. While we are on the topic of polygamy and the rulings relating to wives, it is worthwhile reminding ourselves of the hue and cry that is raised by many of the enemies of Islam about ‘polygamy’, even though the practice of marrying more than one wife in Egypt is scarcely a noticeable feature of the society, let alone the epidemic that some people imagine it to be.

A survey was carried out and revealed that three men out of one hundred got married to two wives while those who got married to three wives are one out of every one thousand; yet those who got married to four are one in every two thousand. Thus, why do people make such noise about a matter that Allah Himself legislated? In addition, has not polygamy helped with allowing unmarried women to get married?

We see wives complaining and asking, ‘Why would their husbands marry another after living with him and serving him for such-and-such a period of time?’ In response, I ask such wives, ‘Did that marriage harm you?’ They would take ‘yes’ as an answer. Hence, I say, ‘But that marriage brought benefit to another woman. Why do we then consider the affairs of married women and ignore the others? Do they not have the right to get married as well? In addition, those who accept being the second and the third wife only do so because they are unable to be the first and the second.’ Moreover, we say to those who protest about polygamy that Allah has not made it compulsory; however, Allah’s Wisdom

decreed that polygamy is a recommended act and not an obligatory one. Thus, if you do not like polygamy, keep it to one wife.

Those who make this fuss about polygamy have raised an even bigger controversy about the practice of slavery in Islam. They accused Islam and Muslims, wondering how it is for a man to possess such-and-such a number of slave girls on top of his wives. However, it is well known that slavery was practised before Islam and continued to be practised throughout the world until common international law called for putting an end to it. On calling for freedom of all slaves, people began to release them to the level that some people bought them from others in order to secure their release. Certain slaves returned to their former owners, preferred to live under their protection and serve them because they were happy with their life under their masters' protection. Yet some of them took pride in their status as slaves and felt no shame to say that they were the emancipated slaves of such-and-such a family.

Anyone who examines the matter with a fair and unbiased eye will find that slavery is far from being a source of shame for Islam. It was actually a source of pride that slavery was restricted to only one way, namely; legally sanctioned wars. Thus, Islam did not come to institute the practice of slavery, but rather came to institute the practice of emancipation. It came at a time when slavery was practised everywhere. Slaves were sold here and there, and there was no way for freedom unless their master decided to emancipate them. Slavery was present in many ways. For example, debtors who found themselves unable to pay off their debts would sell themselves or their children to pay off their debts. Robbers and highwaymen would abduct free people and sell them in the slave markets and so forth.

However, when Islam emerged, it prohibited all the means of becoming a slave except for one, i.e. being taken prisoner in a legally sanctioned war. Wars did not even necessarily lead people to becoming slaves, as exchanges of prisoners and like-for-like transactions often existed. In addition, the social worth of a prisoner was taken into consideration. A leader, philosopher or great scholar would not be ransomed in exchange for just one ordinary man, but for as many as befitted his social value and status as the following verse proves: 'And afterwards either set them free as a favour or let them ransom (themselves) until the war terminates.' (*Muhammad*: 4)

The reason for this is because wars in Islam were not legislated to force people to adopt the religion, but rather to defend their right of choosing the religion they wanted. It is manifest through the fact that large numbers of non-Muslims continued to live in conquered lands for years after the conquest. These people, however, were required to pay *jizya* in lieu of the *zakat* that was paid by the Muslims and in exchange for services rendered to them by the Muslims' state.

One should reflect on the way that Islam treats prisoners. Here, we should stress that those unjust societies that criticise Islam on this particular point should know that capturing someone in a battle means that the capturer has complete power over him, and that he is free to kill him if he so wishes. But when the law intervenes and makes the prisoner your slave, it aims at sparing his blood and allowing you to derive some benefit from him through demanding a ransom or having him serving you directly. Therefore, the comparison here is not between slavery and freedom as some people mistakenly think, but rather it is between slavery and death.

Thus, the only reason that slavery was legislated with respect to prisoners of war was to spare their blood and give their captor a chance to profit from them. In addition, if there was no ransom or exchange of prisoners and prisoners were to remain in your possession, then you must know that they have certain rights that may never be violated, since they are fellow humans, created by Allah. Thus, Allah only permitted you to take possession of prisoners so that you spare their blood, not to humiliate them.

Read the words of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'Your slaves are your brothers. Allah has put them under your authority. If someone has his brother under his authority, he should feed him from what he eats, and clothe him from what he wears and not burden him with anything that will be too much for him. If you burden him with what will be too much for him, then help him.' What greater hospitality could be shown to a prisoner than this? First, Islamic law spares his blood and honours him by making him your brother and by respecting the common humanity through treating him well. Furthermore, it opens many ways for him to secure his freedom and emancipation. Although there is but a single door through which a person may become a slave, there are many doors through which he may exit from it, including expiation for one's sins that lie between him and Allah.

And even when there is no sin, Islamic law still encourages emancipating of slaves, in order to help one break through the difficult road. Allah says, ‘But he would not attempt the uphill road. And what will make you comprehend what the uphill road is? (It is) the setting free of a slave.’ (*al-Balad*: 11-13)

This is the case of a male slave and it also applies equally to a female slave. She receives the same good treatment as a male slave receives it. However, on top of that, she has a special position within the household of her master. She sees her mistress enjoy herself with her husband and the daughter of him gets married and moves to the matrimonial home with her husband and many other such matters. Since she cannot stand observing all that and may cause her to start to feel jealous, Allah honours her and makes her lawful to her master, allowing her to enjoy the same things as her mistress. In addition, if she delivers a child to her master, she becomes free as a result, which is another way of putting an end to slavery.

Allah concludes the verse we are studying saying that He ordained this in order that there will be no discomfort upon Prophet Muhammad and such is a privilege granted to him *peace and blessings be upon him*. Allah *the Almighty* says to His Prophet, ‘So that you can devote yourself completely to your difficult task, we do not wish to burden you with any sort of worry or anxiety whatsoever. Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful.’ (*al-Ahzab*: 50)

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

تُرْجَىٰ مِنْ نَشَاءٍ مِنْهُنَّ وَتَقْوَىٰ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ نَشَاءٍ وَمِنْ أَنْ يَكُنَّ مِنْ عَزَلَتٍ فَلَا جُنَاحَ
عَلَيْكَ ذَلِكَ أَدْنَىٰ أَنْ تَقْرَأَ عَنِ هُنَّ وَلَا يَحْزَنَ وَيَرْضَيْنَ بِمَا آتَيْنَهُنَّ
كُلُّهُنَّ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَلِيمًا ﴿٥١﴾

You may make any of [your women] wait and receive any of them as you wish, but you will not be at fault if you invite one whose turn you have previously set aside: this way it is more likely that they will be satisfied and will not be distressed and will all be content with what you have given them. God knows what is in your hearts: God is all knowing, forbearing [51] (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 51)

Speaking of the marital right of copulation, Allah says that Prophet Muhammad may put off the night of whichever of his wives that he pleases to another time

and may embrace and take to his bed whichever of them that he pleases. In addition, Allah *the Almighty* reassures him *peace and blessings be upon him* that there is no blame upon him by desiring any of his wives and putting off another wife to another time.

Next, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...this way it is more likely that they will be satisfied and will not be distressed and will all be content with what you have given them.’ (*al-Ahzab*: 51) This means that both those whom you draw close to from among your wives and those whom you put off to another time will rejoice. They will all be content with their lot because they know that your wishes are a reflection of the command of Allah. Thus, the ones whom the Prophet of Allah takes shall rejoice because of his love to them and their pleasure at being in his company, and those whose time has been put off shall also rejoice because he *peace be upon him* kept on them, embraced them and drew them near to him at another time, which shows that they held an important role and a high rank. Furthermore, the fact that this happened as a result of what Allah legislated to him *peace and blessings be upon him* does not mean that he *peace and blessings be upon him* hated them or was forsaking them, but rather than that he, despite the difficulty it caused, was obeying and acting on the command of Allah and thereby got a reward for doing that.

It is a truism that every word in the Quran looks like a diamond with special rays shining from every individual atom within it. That is why they say the Quran is glittering due to the abundance of its bright rays that not one ray puts out the light of another, just like the words of the Quran.

The Arabic word for being satisfied appears very often in the Quran. Allah says, ‘And Pharaoh’s wife said, “A refreshment of the eye to me and to you.”’ (*al-Qasas*: 9) The literal meaning of the word is to settle down or dwell, as we say: ‘someone settled down in a place and dwelled there’. It also means ‘coldness’, a meaning which is clear in the phrase ‘Someone is *qurrat al-`ayn*’, which bears the two meanings; for the eye gets attracted to something and does not move because of the beauty of this very thing since it has captured its gaze. In this regard, they say that so-and-so a person’s gaze is transfixed. And for the opposite, they say that so-and-so a person has a wandering eye, meaning that his eye does not rest for long on any one thing.

In the language of politics, they say that so-and-so a person has an eye of aspirations, meaning that whenever he gets promoted to a particular post, he eyes up the post above it.

As for the meaning of coldness or refreshment regarding the eye in the phrase *qurrat al-`ayn*, this is an allusion to its being happy as the eye becomes warm at times of sadness and pain. It has recently been scientifically proven that the eyeball is a precise thermometer to the condition of the rest of the body and can be accurately used to determine how healthy or sick a person is.

Another example of the importance of the eye is shown by how it is used to indicate emphasis. For example, we say, 'So-and-so himself (literally 'with his eye') came to see me'. We previously mentioned the phenomenon of temperature equilibrium in the human body. We observed that it is one of the miracles of the human being that the temperature equilibrium is maintained within his body in an amazing way. The temperature varies from a body organ to another with each one maintaining a degree that best befits it. If we say that the temperature of the body as a whole stays constant at an ideal temperature of 37°C, which is amazingly the same even for people at the north pole and people at the equator, the temperature of the liver never drops below 40°C. However, the temperature of the eye never rises above 10°C because if it did, it would explode.

Thus, the gladness of the eyes of the wives of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon them*, and their satisfaction lie in the acceptance of whatever he wanted with respect to bringing them close or putting them off to another time, because the main source for his desires was the command of Allah.

Then Allah says that the wives of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* will all be content with what you have given them, regardless of the circumstances. Allah finally concludes the verse saying that He knows what is in their hearts and that He is All Knowing and Forbearing. Thus, Allah *the Almighty* indicates that the mentioned contentment here was not limited to their outward forms, but rather was in their hearts. In other words, their hearts were content to carry out the commands of Allah, without any resistance in the innermost parts of their beings.

Allah is All Knowing and He fully knows what is in people's hearts, but He is All Forbearing. He does not recompense you for what He knows of in your hearts, for if He does so, it will completely tire you out. Reflect on the Forbearance and Mercy of Allah regarding the matter of starting things with uttering the phrase '*bismillah*' (In the Name of Allah), Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* taught us that every action that does not begin with *bismillah* is cut-off from being blessed. When a human being embarks upon an action, he does not carry it out with his inherent power, but rather by means of the One Who created that subject for him. So, when you say, 'In the Name of Allah, I will do such-and-such a thing', you are, in fact, doing that thing in the Name of the One Who made that thing subjected to your use.

That is why Allah says: 'And He Who created pairs of all things, and made for you of the ships and the cattle what you ride on. That you may firmly sit on their backs, and then remember the favour of your Lord when you are firmly seated thereon, and say, "Glory be to Him Who made this subservient to us and we were not able to do it."' (*az-Zukhruf*: 12-13) Therefore, you must begin any action by saying 'In the Name of Allah' even if you are a sinful person. Beware of thinking that you are not worthy of saying those words, for Allah is Forbearing and All Merciful.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

لَا يَحِلُّ لَكَ الْنِسَاءُ مِنْ بَعْدُ وَلَا أَنْ تَبَدَّلَ بِهِنَّ مِنْ أَزْوَاجٍ وَلَوْ أَعْجَبَكَ
حُسْنُهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا مَلَكَتْ يَمِينُكَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ رَقِيبًا ﴿٥٢﴾

You [Prophet] are not permitted to take any further wives, nor to exchange the wives you have for others, even if these attract you with their beauty. But this does not apply to your slave-girls: God is watchful over all [52] (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 52)

We explained the meaning of this verse in the course of discussing the previous few verses, but it can be summarised here as follows: Allah started off by making these marriages lawful for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'Prophet, We have made lawful for you the wives whose bride gift you have paid.' (*al-Ahzab*: 50) Allah *the Almighty* then restricted

what was lawful for him *peace and blessings be upon him* in this verse under study. Thus, Allah *the Almighty* starts with what is light and easy first and brings what is heavy and difficult afterwards, to let people know that Allah began His dealings with Prophet Muhammad with tenderness, compassion and sympathy and to show His Favours upon him. It is like the verse wherein Allah *the Almighty* starts with mentioning His Forgiveness before blaming the Prophet *Muhammad*: ‘Allah pardon you! Why did you give them leave?’ (*at-Tawba*: 43)

The verse we are studying clearly shows that the law legislated for the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with respect to his wives was different from that of the rest of his *ummah*. Allah has not ordained a specific number for Prophet Muhammad, but rather specified particular women as his *peace and blessings be upon him* wives. If He had permitted Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to marry nine wives, he would be unable to marry another nine if they were all to die. Also, if one of these wives were to die, he could not marry another one to replace her, that is, the exception that was made with respect to him *peace and blessings be upon him* however, was not in terms of number like the rest of his *ummah*, but rather in terms of the specified women themselves. This means that Prophet Muhammad was limited to those women and could marry no others. The wisdom behind this ruling lay in the fact that any woman other than the wives of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was free to marry again if she was divorced by their husband. His *peace and blessings be upon him* wives, however, could not do so since they were the Mothers of the Believers, thus were not permitted to remarry after him *peace and blessings be upon him*.

We made it clear that the matter of slavery was far from being a mark of shame for Islam, but rather, one of its greatest marks of distinction. Allah enabled the possession of slaves in order to protect them from being killed. Thus, the comparison here is not one between slavery and freedom, but rather between slavery and death, as we made clear earlier. Anyone who reflects upon the circumstances of male and female slaves under the protection of Islam will have no recourse but to recognise the great Wisdom of Allah in this matter.

Next Allah *Glorified is He* says:

يَتَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا نَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتَ النَّبِيِّ إِلَّا أَنْ يُؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ إِلَى طَعَامٍ غَيْرٍ
نَظِيرِنَ إِنَّهُ وَلَكِنْ إِذَا دُعِيتُمْ فَادْخُلُوا فَإِذَا طَعِمْتُمْ فَانْتَشِرُوا وَلَا مُسْتَعْسِفِينَ
لِحَدِيثٍ إِنَّ ذَلِكُمْ كَانَ يُؤْذَى النَّبِيَّ فَيَسْتَحْيِي مِنْكُمْ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَسْتَحْيِي مَنْ
الْحَقِّ وَإِذَا سَأَلْتُمُوهُنَّ مَتَاعًا فَسْأَلُوهُنَّ مِنْ وَرَاءِ حِجَابٍ ذَلِكُمْ أَطْهَرُ لِقُلُوبِكُمْ
وَقُلُوبِهِنَّ وَمَا كَانَ لَكُمْ أَنْ تُؤْذُوا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَلَا أَنْ تَنْكِحُوا أَزْوَاجَهُ مِنْ
بَعْدِهِ أَبَدًا إِنَّ ذَلِكُمْ كَانَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَظِيمًا ﴿٥٣﴾

Believers, do not enter the Prophet's apartments for a meal unless you are given permission to do so; do not linger until [a meal] is ready. When you are invited, go in; then, when you have taken your meal, leave. Do not stay on and talk, for that would offend the Prophet, though he would shrink from asking you to leave. God does not shrink from the truth. When you ask his wives for something, do so from behind a screen: this is purer both for your hearts and for theirs. It is not right for you to offend God's Messenger, just as you should never marry his wives after him: that would be grievous in God's eyes [53]

(The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 53)

Allah *Glorified is He* tells clearly that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and his *ummah* are obliged to act upon His commands. For, just as Allah *the Almighty* commanded Prophet Muhammad at the beginning of this chapter to remain conscious of Allah *Glorified is He*. He later commands his *peace and blessings be upon him ummah* to remember and obey Him; and just as Allah talks of a matter relating to the Prophet Muhammad, He then talks of a matter relating to his community when He says, 'Believers, you have no right to expect a waiting period when you marry believing women and then divorce them.' (*al-Ahzab*: 49)

After that, Allah *Glorified is He* says to Prophet Muhammad: 'Prophet, We have sent you as a witness, as a bearer of good news and warning.' (*al-Ahzab*: 45), to show how comprehensive the benefit he *peace and blessings be upon him* brought to his *ummah* was. Thus, Allah made his community repay him by

calling down blessings upon him *peace and blessings be upon him* and exhibiting proper etiquette when they are inside his home. Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* calls out those who believe, saying: ‘Believers, do not enter the Prophet’s houses for a meal unless you are given permission to do so...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 53) because being responsible for one’s actions must be the characteristic of those who believe in Allah.

We have mentioned before that the Allah is the Lord and the True God. He is the Lord because He creates, brings up and bestows blessings and favours. This creation, upbringing and bestowal of blessings and favours are not specific to the believers but includes absolutely everyone that Allah called into being, regardless of whether they believe or not. The sun shines down upon everyone; the rain irrigates the land of the believer and the land of the disbeliever alike; and the land responds to everyone and yields up its produce. Anyone who makes good use of the means that Allah has given him through his attribute of Lordship reaps the reward and obtains a limited portion in this world. Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘Whoever desires the gain of the hereafter, We will give him more of that gain; and whoever desires the gain of this world, We give him of it, and in the Hereafter he has no portion.’ (*ash-Shura*: 20) Allah does not let the wage of those who do things well go in vain.

A believer who does not make use of the means of Allah, which is stretched out to him, and completely ignores it, lives in a state of backwardness and total reliance upon others. He lives his life begging from disbelievers in order to gain his power. Moreover, when the way is left clear for the disbelievers to make use of the means and they do all full due, they shall take the gifts that Allah has to offer, while it is all the more appropriate for believers not to neglect those same gifts and not allow themselves to fall behind the onward march of civilisation, even if it is the materialistic civilisation that has been created by today’s disbelievers.

As for morals and values, they have declined in these societies. This is proven by the fact that when you go to those countries and spend the night in a hotel, you find a printed message on the door of your room that says, ‘If thieves come into your room, do not resist them. Your life is the most valuable thing you have. And when you walk down the streets, you only take

as much money as is absolutely necessary'. Thus, they have progressed in one area and regressed in another.

In addition, if you say that their progress in the economic sphere is the greatest manifestation of their civilisation, then look at Sweden. It is the country with highest income per capita. However, despite their material wealth, they have a very high incidence of psychological and nervous disorders, suicide, madness, deviancy, and many other such sociological disorders.

These countries have developed a materialistic civilisation because they have taken hold of the means of this world. Everyone does his job well using their work hours for work. You will not find anyone in the streets between the hours of eight and twelve, and you will not find anyone lounging around in coffee shops or wasting the hours he has set aside for work. Then, on their lunch breaks, everyone goes out to the restaurants to eat ready-made sandwiches and then hurry back to work. This is how a materialist society lives and anyone who does not work in such a society dies of hunger. Praise is due to Allah that the young men in our own societies have realised the importance of work and left behind the childhood characteristics that had lasted until they were thirty years old during which they were reliant upon their parents.

Allah *Glorified is He* in this verse in question teaches us the correct way of behaving with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. He makes him an example to all of us since he lived a life of abstinence in terms of his food, clothing, and dwelling. He had only a limited number of rooms for each of his wives and had no living room or reception room. It was thus necessary for his community to learn the necessary etiquette for visiting in such circumstances, especially with visiting the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* in his dwellings.

Allah orders the believers not to enter the Prophet's houses for a meal unless given permission to do so. Houses have been specifically prepared for sleeping. This sleeping, in most cases, happens during the night because it is a time of peace and rest, unlike the day which is a time of movement and activity. It is necessary to have a place where you can find refuge during the night to rest from the hard work and toil of the day. This place is that where you can come back to. Therefore, a house is a place of rest, similarly as a

person's wife is also a place of rest. A house is a place where a person's body finds its shelter and rest; whereas the wife is what gives a person's heart shelter and rest. They both are sources of rest for a person.

The Arabic word *bayt* is also used to refer to lines of poetry. Arabs were people of extraordinary eloquence and linguistic mastery; they named a line of poetry as such because lines of poetry are 'homes of meanings'. Just as we seek shelter in our houses and dwell therein, meanings dwell inside lines of poetry and thereby the lines impart wisdom in their own right.

Wisdom remains homeless until it finds shelter in a line of poetry that can be memorised and passed from generation to generation throughout the ages, as we still quote lines of poetry written by Al-Mutanabbi, Al-Ma'arri and Shawqi today.

Sleeping time depends on the circumstances of every person. Those who work during the day sleep during the night and those who work during the night sleep during the day, even though the genuine time for sleeping is at night. Thus, take care not to disturb someone during the time they have set aside for sleep, regardless of whether that time is during the night or during the day, that is, the time of work is for work and the time of rest is for rest. That is why wise farmers say, 'The one who guards' i.e. guards the fields during the night, 'does not plough', i.e. plough the fields during the day. That is because when a person works during the time, he customarily rests, that is, he does not do his job properly.

Regardless of whether the time of rest is during the night or during the day, when you reflect on those countries in the far north where the sun shines for three or even six whole months and then sets for three or even six months, do you see the people there working for three whole months and then sleeping for three whole months? Of course not! They divide each day up into a period of work and a period of sleep, regardless of whether it is night or day. One great aspect of the Quran is the way it makes provision for situations like these. Allah says, 'And one of His Signs is your sleeping and your seeking of His Grace by night and [by] day' (*ar-Rum*: 23). So, sleep is at night, but can also be during the day for those whose job demands them to work during the night.

The type of a house depends on the financial wherewithal of a person. However, what matters is that he has a place in which he can take shelter and relax. It does not matter how small it may be, even if there is only enough space in it for him to lay down on the ground. But if he does have a spacious house, it is better for him. Further, he who knocks on people's doors should make sure to respect the sleeping time and not to knock at those times.

Similarly, as people differ in terms of the size of their houses, people also differ when it comes to the level of luxury and the means of rest at their disposal. Thus, since means of rest depends upon the financial capability of a person, everyone should be satisfied with what he has and the link between his job, his income and how luxurious he wants his lifestyle to look like. Before you decide upon an opulent lifestyle for yourself, get a job that is at the same level of opulence first to give the necessary means to pay for that lifestyle.

It is as the saying goes, 'Stretch your legs as far your mattress is'. So, if your means offer you no option to live a fancy life, be content with that and if you are going to rebel against that and seek more, rebel against yourself first and find a job that provides you with such means that afford the lifestyle you seek. However, the biggest economic affliction that affects people today is that they first decide upon the type of lifestyle they want and then stretch their income to meet that lifestyle. Thus, their efforts are swiftly met by failure because their incomes fail to match up to their requirements. Things really ought to be the other way around. A person should determine his standard of living considering his means and income and thereby live a happy and relaxed life that is not weighed down by the burdens of expectation. Further, we must not forget to make sure that we earn our income and means of living lawfully and spend it in lawful ways.

In addition, since houses and the means of rest vary according to the means of their owners, then their psychological condition should also vary according to their means and thereby the hearts of the poor do not fill up with envy and spite against the wealthy. Therefore, we should be satisfied and content with what we have because perhaps that man of wealth you know might have inherited his wealth but still, even if he did not himself work hard to acquire that wealth, his parents, or his grandparents did. We have previously explained a

man might get rest in his life after working hard for ten years; yet if he works for twenty, he might bring rest to his children, whilst his work of thirty years will bring rest for his grandchildren. Who is there who has sweated and toiled and has not received the fruit of his sweat and toil? So, whoever wants to be honoured and revered when he is old should work hard while young and strong before that day arrives when his strength fails him as Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was alluding when he said, 'Give the worker his due before his sweat dries.'⁽¹⁾

As for those who loiter around in the streets or spend their days in coffee shops, they do not deserve to have that sort of noble life when they grow old; the same applies to those workers who do not show due care and attention to their work; they do not master it, they sit around watching their boss and waiting for an opportunity to skive off and waste time. It is a well-known fact that when someone acquires money illegally, that money shall be a source of evil and misfortune for him since he exerted no effort in acquiring it.

Read if you like the saying of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'When someone acquires his money through unlawful means, Allah will cause his wealth to be wasted in worthless pursuits.' He gained his money through ways against the law, thus the doors open for spending this money in matters that have absolutely no benefit whatsoever. We see people who live the lives of paupers with no sign of that wealth apparent on them or their children in spite of their enormous incomes and salaries.

People differ when it comes to the way they look at the wealth in other's hands. As for those who have strong faith; when they see someone blessed with wealth, they do not envy him but rather see it as an example of Allah's Bounty to His slaves. They pray to Allah to bless him and observe that such a person deserves this wealth and more besides because he has worked hard for it; a believer, upon seeing Allah's Blessings upon a person, says, 'It is what Allah wills. There is no power except in Allah. O Allah, bless him and bestow your Favour upon me'.

He sees the blessings of this world as a miniature model of how the blessings will be in the Hereafter. He says, 'If this is what man has made

(1) Narrated by Ibn Maja

ready for himself, then how about what Allah has prepared for His creation!? Thereby, the delights of paradise will appear before him and he will advance towards them with a heart full of certainty and faith. This way of looking at the blessings in other people's hands represents happiness at other people's good fortune. As for those who lack faith, may Allah protect us from being among them, they resent those whom Allah has blessed with wealth, believing that they do not deserve it, thus envy them and desire that it be taken away. Feelings of this sort are a sign of a weak faith and dissatisfied with what Allah has decreed to pass in His creation.

On the other hand, we call mosques the 'Houses of Allah' because they are especially constructed to be places in which we go and stand in front of our Lord when we hear the call to prayer. That is why the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* warned us against bringing the matters of this world into the Houses of Allah. He warned us against concluding business transactions inside the mosque or using them as places to call for lost objects. There is no better proof of this than what the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said to a man who concluded a business transaction in the House of Allah; he said to him, 'May Allah make your business transaction void of all blessing.' Further, he *peace and blessings be upon him* said to a man who was calling out for his lost property in the mosque, 'May Allah not return your lost property to you.'

This is all because human beings live their whole lives for this world. Thus, they are not permitted to carry the affairs of this worldly life with them at times of prayers. The time of the prayer is set for meeting with Allah. It does not render your life's works inactive; however, it stocks you up with faith and gives you the strength to carry out the missions of your life. We previously compared this stock of faith to the charge of a battery. Do we say to someone who takes away a battery to recharge it that they have rendered the battery inactive?

Similarly, humans are created by Allah. So, do you think that a creation of His that presents itself before Him five times a day would go wrong? Therefore, when you pray, you use that meeting to stock up with certainty and faith and rid worries and problems. That is why the Prophet Muhammad *peace*

and blessings be upon him used to take refuge in the prayer when matters became serious. For when you are praying, you hand over all your problems to your Lord. Allah is Who gave existence to its means, so when you have difficulty with the means and cannot derive any benefit from them, leave it aside and resort to their Causer.

In addition, we have said that mosques are chosen by creation to be the Houses of Allah, but the Sacred House is chosen by Allah Himself and that is why Allah made it the main direction of all the mosques. Thus, when you visit it even for once in your lifetime, it will set right your entire life.

Now let us return to the topic of the houses of the Prophet Muhammad and how the believers should conduct themselves when they enter therein. Let us discuss the actions that must be considered when entering those houses of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in particular, since they possessed a special character as befit the importance of their owner.

Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘Believers, do not enter the Prophet’s houses for a meal unless you are given permission to do so.’ (*al-Ahzab*: 53) This commands the believers not to enter the Prophet’s houses without permission since they are very cramped and there is no room in them for him to host guests at any time. Further, this permission to enter is conditional upon being offered food. However, even when you have been invited to a meal at one of the houses of the Prophet, do not go there before the appointed time. If lunch is at 2 o’clock, for example, do not show up at 10 o’clock since it would not be right for you to busy the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* when he has tasks that he needs to do within his house. Some tasks relate to his Lord, while others may relate to his family. That is what is meant by the saying of Allah: ‘Do not linger until [a meal] is ready.’ (*al-Ahzab*: 53)

Here, the believers, upon being invited by Prophet Muhammad to have a meal with him, are being warned against going early to his houses and waiting there for the food to be cooked. Rather, they should not go into his house except when the food is already cooked and prepared. They should wait until he says to them, ‘Please come and eat’. However, Allah continues and says: ‘When you are invited, go in; then, when you have taken your meal, leave.’ (*al-Ahzab*: 53) Just as Allah forbids you from coming early before the

meal and waiting around for the food to be cooked, He also forbids you from hanging around after the meal. What you should do as soon as you have finished eating is to disperse.

Dispersal is what happens when an object spreads out into a space that is larger than its size. This process of dispersal helps with realising the intended aims. Do we not spread out our clothes after washing them? Why do we do that? Because spreading out things that have been washed helps them dry out. If you were to leave them balled up in their own confined space, they would take weeks to dry. So, there is tremendous benefit in spreading things out and dispersing them. We previously explained this phenomenon by using the example of a cup of water. When you leave some water in a cup, travel for a few months and return, you would find the water still in the cup with its amount having barely decreased at all. However, when you pour that water on the ground in your room, it would dry up even before you make it out the door.

Thus, when Allah orders the believers to leave, He orders them to spread out, for the house of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is narrow and confined. Then everyone should go out to do his work. For what should a believer do after he eats his food? He should seek his provision in the broad trails of the earth and not laze around and be a burden upon others. Reflect upon what Allah says in the chapter of *al-Jum`a*: 'But when the prayer is ended, then disperse abroad in the land and seek of Allah's Grace.' (*al-Jumu'a*: 10)

Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* commands His believing servants to disperse freely on the earth for a particular purpose, namely; working hard and seeking provision. What do you think you should do after eating your food? Is it appropriate to sit around in the house of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* do nothing when you know that he himself lives a life of abstinence in terms of every aspect of his life?

The Arabic word for disperse (*intashiru*) means to travel around/spread out as well. It is derived from a word used with water that means to overflow and fill up a larger space. Thus, dispersal or travelling around should be done in a systematised way, just as a drop of water falls on a bit of cloth and spreads out evenly in all directions, forming a circle. In the same way, when

you disperse in the earth to seek provision, you must do so in a systematic and organised way so that people are not crammed together in one area while another is left empty and uncultivated with all its resources going to waste.

Allah wants us to disperse freely through the earth for two reasons: first to do so in search of provision and sustenance as Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘and others who travel in the land seeking of the Bounty of Allah.’ (*al-Muzzammil*: 20)

To travel throughout the earth does not mean just dispersing freely over it, but rather to work hard and extract its resources since the Creator distributed food and crops equally throughout the land and dispersed resources over it. That is why the earth gives up Allah’s Blessings anew every single day. The only things we used to know of the blessings of the earth were crops, but as the sciences progressed, new discoveries were made and new types of tools were developed and thereby we knew metals, minerals, oil and underground treasures that were hidden under Allah’s Earth. We would never have come to know of any of these treasures without travelling throughout the earth and exploring it.

We used to be amazed at those people who lived in the desert and feel pity for them. We were wondering how they live in that dry, barren, and waterless condition and why they did not move somewhere else more hospitable. But now, after the discovery of oil, they have become the wealthiest of people with the treasures of this world at their feet. How did that happen? They clung to their lands and endured the times of hardship until the time came for them to harvest its treasures. If they had despaired of those lands, they would have never acquired all that wealth. Moreover, we already explained that the resources of the earth are divided up equally and we gave the example of a watermelon when it is cut lengthways. That is the case even if those resources are of many different types and vary from place to place

The second purpose of travel is to reflect on the signs of Allah in existence, for by travelling throughout the earth, one sees signs that do not exist in his homeland. In this regard, Allah says, ‘Say, “Travel in the earth and see how He makes the first creation, then Allah creates the latter creation; surely Allah has power over all things.”’ (*al-Ankabut*: 20) He also says elsewhere: ‘Say, “Travel in the land, then see what was the end of the rejecters.”’

(*al-An'am*: 11) What this means is that when we travel throughout the earth to seek our provision, it should be accompanied with reflection and contemplation on the Signs of Allah.

Next Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Do not stay on and talk, for that would offend the Prophet, though he would shy from asking you to leave. Allah does not shy from the truth.' (*al-Ahzab*: 53) This means that the believers should not remain seated after having finished eating to chat with one another in the house of the Prophet of Allah. This prohibition had a direct cause of revelation. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not make a wedding banquet for any of his wives except for Zaynab bint Jahsh *Allah be pleased with her*. On that occasion, he slaughtered a sheep and prepared a special dish.

When the people finished eating, they sat down to chat to one another. He *peace and blessings be upon him* waited for them to get up and go, but no one moved. His shyness prevented him from telling them to go. He wanted to show them his desire to go, so he himself stood up and went outside, but still no one got up. Further, he found more people sitting down outside the door. He went back inside and then the people finally sensed that he wanted them to leave. Anas *Allah be pleased with him* narrates that he went and told Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that they had gone and thereby he came back and went inside. Anas went to go after him, but he *peace and blessings be upon him* threw a veil between them as saying no one should enter, not even you. Hence, the verse was revealed because he *peace and blessings be upon him* wanted them to leave, but his shyness held him. The house of the Prophet was small and cramped and it was his wedding night. Therefore, it was not appropriate for them to sit around in his house. However, Allah says that He does not shy from the truth.

Thus, in the beginning of the verse, it talks about the etiquette of entering, the etiquette of asking for permission, the etiquette of eating and the etiquette of sitting in the house of the Prophet of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*. Next, the verse talks about the etiquette relating to dealings with the wives of the Prophet Muhammad.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'When you ask his wives for something, do so from behind a screen: this is purer both for your hearts and for theirs...'

(*al-Ahzab*: 53). The word ‘something’ here refers to those household items that are not present with everyone. Usually in the past, there was one or two houses that have things of this sort in a neighbourhood, such as vessels, sieves, strainers, mortar and pestle and so on. Generally speaking, poor people do not possess items of this sort. Thus, they go to their neighbours and borrow such things from them. This is what Allah is referring to when He says, ‘Have you considered him who calls the judgment a lie? That is the one who treats the orphan with harshness. And does not urge [others] to feed the poor, so, woe to the praying ones, who are unmindful of their prayers. Who do [good] to be seen, and withhold the necessities of life.’ (*al-Ma’un*: 1-7)

When Allah demanded a special etiquette concerning entering the houses of the Prophet, eating and sitting therein, He did not forbid us from taking advantage of the household items that he had. Generally, one requests these household items by knocking on the door of the household that possesses them and saying, ‘Please give me such-and-such an item’. Further, that request is usually directed to the woman of the house since she is its mistress and is responsible for items such as those. Thus, when you request something like this from the wives of the Prophet, make your request from behind a screen, for ‘this is purer both for your hearts and for theirs’.

We previously said that perceptions, feelings, emotions, and beliefs that get implanted in a person’s soul manifest themselves in three distinct phases: first a faculty perceives, the psyche meets it with either love or loathing and finally the self tends to action. We gave the example of a rose. You first see its beauty in a garden; you smell its sweet and fragrant smell. This is the stage of perception via your sense of sight and sense of smell. That perception produces feelings of admiration and delight in your psyche which results in you reaching out your hand to pluck the rose. That is what we mean by inclination.

The law does not intervene in the stage of perception nor at the stage of emotion, but it does intervene at the stage of inclination. You can look at a rose as much as you wish and smell its beautiful fragrance. However, if you were to stretch out your hand towards it, we would say to you, ‘Stop! Do you have the right to the rose?’ If you do then go ahead and take it, but if you do not, then you are forbidden from taking it since it does not belong to you. By saying this, we

are not restricting your freedom since the same law that limits your freedom when it comes to infringing upon the property of others, limits their freedom when it comes to infringing upon your property. Thus, the law reassures you before taking anything away and thereby is in your own best interests.

We say that the law does not intervene except in the stage of inclination. It is not the case however when it comes to men and women. In such cases, the law steps in at the very beginning and makes even the stage of perception forbidden for you because when you see a beautiful woman and she is more beautiful than your wife or that you have yet to get married, her beauty causes you to become enamoured of her. This feeling of attraction will most certainly induce some form of inclination or action. How would inclination be like in such situations for there are certain conditions that must be met. The first is only acting in a way which is lawful and if there are no lawful avenues open to you, you either restrain yourself or trample upon the honour and dignity of others. That is why the law intervenes right from the start when it comes to this matter and does not let you fall into or incline towards something that is not lawful since there is no doubt that beautiful women arouse certain specific urges in men.

Furthermore, a man who claims that looking at beautiful women does not arouse him is contrary to human nature even if he is already married. Beware of thinking that a beautiful wife will protect you from being affected by the beauty of others, for women are like wine. Every vintage has its own individual flavour. Thus, no matter how beautiful your wife is and no matter how much her appearance appeals to you, you will always find some new pleasing quality in another woman which is not in your wife. Therefore, Allah, out of His Mercy, forbids you from embarking even upon the first stage and makes looking at women forbidden.

If this is the ruling with respect to women in general, then how must it be with respect to the wives of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*? Thus, Allah addresses the believers saying: 'it is not right for you to offend Allah's Messenger.' (*al-Ahzab*: 53) This is by looking to his wives since looking is a form of perception that stirs up feelings within the psyche. And, although it is true that you cannot proceed with these feelings since they are

the mothers of the believers, but your heart would be occupied with them. And those thoughts and desires themselves cause offence and pain to the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Thus, Allah says immediately afterwards: ‘just as you should never marry his wives after him.’ (*al-Ahzab*: 53)

It is narrated that a man saw `Aisha before the advent of the screen, got attracted, and said, ‘By Allah, when the Prophet dies, I will marry this rosy coloured girl.’ He thereby had to make penance for this statement, went to *Hajj* on foot and emancipated slaves so that Allah forgives him his trespass against the Prophet Muhammad.

Thus, the pronoun ‘this’ in the saying of Allah; ‘this is purer both for your hearts and for theirs’ refers to the command of Allah to ask the wives of the Prophet Muhammad from behind a screen. This command was a protection for both parties and for the believers’ hearts and then for the wives’. Then Allah says, ‘It is not right for you to offend Allah’s Messenger.’ (*al-Ahzab*: 53) This means that offending the Prophet Muhammad is not and will not be proper. In other words, the mere thought is considered offensive since it is related to a right of him *peace and blessings be upon him*. When Allah says, ‘just as you should never marry his wives after him...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 53), He, thus, honours him *peace and blessings be upon him* and his wives not only in the course of his lifetime but even after his death since they are the ‘Mothers of the Believers’ and since no one has the right to marry them after him *peace and blessings be upon him*.

It is a well-known fact that women hold a unique and special position to their husbands. It is quite normal in terms of human nature to see men encompassing all sorts of good characteristics. So, if he is a generous person, there is nothing that he would deny you if you ask him to either give it to you or loan it to you; he would give you money, give you furnishings from his home, lend you his car and so on, except when the request relates to his wife. For, when it comes to his wife, he is so jealous that he could not even bear you looking in her direction. And that is not only the case when she is in his possession; it is even true when he dislikes her or after he has divorced her since men even feel jealous when their ex-wives marry some other man.

Women are the only thing that occupy this position and that are so jealously guarded and attentively looked after. But why is that? It is because they are the receptacle of the future generation of offspring. It is as if Allah *the Almighty* wanted the community to have many children, but on condition that they come into the world by pure and virtuous means, so Allah *the Almighty* placed into the heart of men, love for their wives and jealous protectiveness towards them. In this regard, you should reflect on how Allah *the Almighty* described the *Ansar* (Helpers) when they welcomed the Emigrants and made rooms for them in their homes and gave them of their possessions. The description Allah *the Almighty* gives of them is loftier than any position occupied by the influential and powerful. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Those who were already firmly established in their homes [in Medina] ...' (*al-Hashr*: 9). It is as if they were actually living in faith, a point which is clear in the saying of Allah: '...and firmly rooted in faith, show love for those who migrated to them for refuge and harbour no desire in their hearts for what has been given to them. They give them preference over themselves, even if they too are poor: those who are saved from their own souls' greed are truly successful.' (*al-Hashr*: 9)

The only thing which made the *Ansar* (Helpers) worthy of being described by the True Lord in this way was the fact that they preferred their brothers from amongst the Emigrants to themselves and gave them something that no man had ever before given to a fellow man. It is historically recorded that there were men from among the *Ansar* (Helpers) who offered to divorce one of their wives so as to allow their Emigrant brothers to marry. This definitively proves that the faith of these men was such that it overcame everything else in their lives and had even become more beloved to them than their own wives; their faith had subjugated their feelings of jealousy and protectiveness.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'that, verily' (*al-Ahzab*: 53); this part of the verse refers to what we mentioned earlier with respect to asking the Mothers of the Believers from behind a screen, and with respect to not causing pain or offence to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* or marrying his wives after him. All of that, as Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...would be grievous in Allah's Sight.' (*al-Ahzab*: 53) And how could you cause pain and offence to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* when he

himself was only sent to protect us from what brings us pain in this world and in the Hereafter?

Allah says:

إِنْ تَبْدُوا شَيْئًا أَوْ تُخْفُوهُ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا ﴿٥٤﴾

God has full knowledge of all things, whether you reveal them or not [54] (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 54)

This verse is likely to give a warning: it is as if Allah *the Almighty* were saying to us, ‘Beware of the thoughts that steal over you with respect to this matter, for nothing is hidden from your Lord and nothing escapes His Sight’. Even though people are not held to account for their innermost thoughts and desires, still such thoughts are forbidden when it comes to matters that relate to the rights of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. It is narrated in a Noble Hadith: ‘Anyone who intends a wrong action but does not do it has a good action written for him.’⁽¹⁾ This is the ruling when it comes to matters in general. However, when the matter relates to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* it is not like this, since it is the will of the True Lord for all His Messenger’s energy to be directed towards the task for which he was sent and for him to not be distracted by anything. What task could be greater than that of bringing guidance to the entire world, not only during his time upon this Earth, but from the moment his mission commenced until the coming of the Final Hour? As for the saying of Allah: ‘Whether you do anything openly...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 54), it refers to anything whatsoever regardless of what it is, a meaning which is also clear in the saying of Allah: ‘...or in secret, [remember that,] verily, Allah has full knowledge of everything.’ (*al-Ahzab*: 54) The word ‘*aleem* (All Knowing), in terms of its morphology, indicates the utmost degrees of knowledge, for Allah’s Knowledge is timeless and does not respond to events as they happen; Allah *the Almighty* knows what will happen before it happens, as it already happens and after it happens. That is why we say, ‘For us, time is past, present or future, but for Allah *the Almighty* there is no past, nor present nor future, and

(1) See Muslim, *Sahih*, Kitab Al-‘Iman, Hadith no. 130.

that is why Allah *the Almighty* talks of the future as if it were in the past'. Read, for example, the saying of Allah: 'Allah's Judgement is coming, so do not ask to bring it on sooner...' (*an-Nahl*: 1). Allah *the Almighty* uses a past tense verb '*ata* (came), despite the fact that He says immediately afterwards: '...so do not ask to bring it on sooner...' (*an-Nahl*: 1).

Calling for something's speedy advent only happens when the time for the thing being called for has not yet come. So, the word '*ata* in our views means 'will come', but with respect to Allah *the Almighty* and His Knowledge, it has already happened since all times are the same for Him *Glorified is He*.

The saying of Allah: '...verily, Allah has full knowledge of everything.' (*al-Ahzab*: 54) means that Allah *the Almighty* had full knowledge and still has full knowledge. As long as Allah remains, He has full knowledge because change is not conceivable with respect to Him. So, Allah *the Almighty* had full knowledge in the past and still has full knowledge because He does not change. The word *kana* (was) does not mean here that His Knowledge resulted from events that you enacted, but that He knew of those events before you even enacted them.

This verse is one of the verses that the orientalist used (to call into question) and thought that the words used by Allah *the Almighty* here required amendment and correction. The orientalist always accuse us of considering the words of the Quran as being holy and thereby preventing us from using our intellects when we read them. They also claim that they examine them much more meticulously and have the courage to research them much more thoroughly, thereby enabling them to find the faults and shortcomings of the Quran.

Their objection against the saying of Allah: 'Allah has full knowledge of all things, whether you reveal them or not.' (*al-Ahzab*: 54), and similarly against His saying: '...Allah knows everything you do openly and everything you conceal.' (*an-Nur*: 29), goes as follows: they say that if Allah knows what we conceal, then where is the advantage and greatness in knowing what we do openly? We reply to these people, 'Beware of reading Allah's saying and judging them according to your whims without first believing that those words are from Allah *the Almighty* and that Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who says them. When you accept that, then you can use your intellect and reflect

on them until you perceive the wisdom and inimitability of His sayings. When Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Whether you do anything openly...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 54), Allah *the Almighty* is not addressing an individual but addressing the seething masses of humanity. When a large mass of people are doing something openly, then you cannot determine the source of the actions made by people; you cannot trace back every sound to the person who made it, or every movement. The example we previously gave of this was that of a public demonstration where people’s shouts and calls are mixed together into one great cacophony of sound. Then from among these people, we hear someone shout for the downfall of so-and-so. In such circumstances, would we be able to determine who exactly said that? The answer is ‘no’. We would not be able to do so because of the mixed voices. However, the person spoke openly and announced the downfall of so-and-so to the masses at the top of his voice. You would be totally unable to determine who it was. Allah *the Almighty* however, knows the voice, the owner of the voice and what is produced by it. So, He traces back not only every single word, but also every single breath, to the one who uttered them. Those who try to hide themselves and their actions by doing this in a mass should beware: even if they may have confounded other people and successfully hidden from them, they will never be able to conceal themselves from Allah Who is not confounded by different languages, nor confused by different voices.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

لَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِنَ فِي آبَائِهِنَّ وَلَا أَبْنَائِهِنَّ وَلَا إِخْوَانِهِنَّ وَلَا أَبْنَاءَ إِخْوَانِهِنَّ
وَلَا أَبْنَاءَ أَخَوَاتِهِنَّ وَلَا نِسَائِهِنَّ وَلَا مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُنَّ وَأَتَقِينَ
اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدًا

The Prophet’s wives are not to blame [if they are seen by] their fathers, their sons, their brothers, their brothers’ sons, their sisters’ sons, their women, or their slaves. [Wives of the Prophet], be mindful of God. God observes everything[55]
(The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 55)

After the verse of the screen: ‘...When you ask his wives for something, do so from behind a screen...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 53), was revealed, the close relatives

of the Mothers of the Believers complained about it and asked, 'Does that even apply to us, Messenger Muhammad'? Then Allah *Glorified is He* revealed the following verse: 'There is no blame upon women concerning their fathers...' (*al-Ahzab*: 55). The saying of Allah: 'There is no blame upon women...' (*al-Ahzab*: 55) means that there is no objection or sin on or against any of these people who are mentioned here in case they come in to see their relative women since their position with respect to these woman is known and so there is nothing to be feared from them going in to see them. These people are fathers, sons, brothers, and nephews (both the brothers' and sisters' sides). As for the saying of Allah: 'their women' (*al-Ahzab*: 55), it is to be understood in the light of the grammatical rule of *'idafa* (genitive), which is used, linguistically, to convey one of three meanings: either the meaning of 'from' as in our saying, '*ardab qamh*' or (an ardab of wheat); or the meaning of 'in', as in 'the plotting of the night', i.e. plotting in the night; or the meaning of 'belonging to', as in our saying '*mal Zayd*' or (The money belonging to Zayd). This 'belonging to' can refer to something that is possessed either by someone or something that is a characteristic of him. So, the meaning of 'the money of Zayd' refers to that money which is possessed by Zayd, but when you say 'the bridle of the horse', the bridle is not a possession of the horse, but rather, something which is specifically assigned to it. Here, in the saying of Allah: 'their women' (*al-Ahzab*: 55), the *'idafa* is used to convey both the meaning of 'from' and that of 'belonging to', i.e. women belonging to them or women from them, but not the meaning of 'in'. When we say 'women from them', we mean women from their close family; and when we say 'their women', we mean women who are subordinate to them, like their servants, but on condition that they are believers since only a believer may be trusted to safeguard a believer. As for women from the people of the Book or disbelieving women, it is not correct that they serve a believing woman since they might give a description of her to their own people. That is why we note that the subtlety of the expression used here does not mention the paternal and maternal uncles, since a paternal or maternal uncle despite the fact that his position is almost that of a father, might well give a description of the girl to his own son. If, however, the paternal or maternal uncle does not have a son, then the underlying reason (for him not seeing the girl) is lacking, and so it becomes

permissible for the girl to relax in front of him and display her charms to him and for him to go in to see her. As for the saying of Allah: ‘or their slaves’ (*al-Ahzab*: 55), we have said that the only people who can become slaves are those who have been taken prisoner in a legitimate war and in whose capture you have been directly involved. In other words, the act of serving is not allowed on the part of someone who was a freeman and then was kidnapped and sold as a slave. Then, after someone has been captured in a legal war, it is possible for you to take possession of him by buying, inheriting, or even being given him as a gift. These owned slaves could be women, in which case they would fall under the category of being ‘their women’; and they could also be children who have yet to reach the age of puberty as Allah *the Almighty* has indicated elsewhere in the Quran: ‘...or children who are not yet aware of women’s nakedness...’ (*an-Nur*: 31). Others who may enter into this category are the servants who work in a person’s house, such as doormen, drivers, and cooks. Islamic law gives a certain leeway when it comes to these people since society’s conventions shall refuse any relationship between these people and the members of the household.

These servants work in houses in which women and their beautiful daughters abide, and yet how many of these servants would ever be so bold as to even look at their mistresses? The reason for that is because social convention has placed a barrier between them. Then Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘be mindful of Allah’ (*al-Ahzab*: 55). It is as if Allah *the Almighty* were saying here, ‘I have made clear to you what the ruling is when it comes to entering into the presence of a woman and I have made clear to you the different types of people for whom there is no objection against them coming in to see women, but know that which keeps you safe and watches over you when it comes to this matter is your *taqwa* (fearing) of Allah. It is your *taqwa* of Allah that moves you to obey Him and stops you from disobeying Him’. After your command to have *taqwa* of Him, it is enough for you to know that: ‘Allah was’ (*al-Ahzab*: 55), and still is ‘...witness unto everything.’ (*al-Ahzab*: 55)

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَمَلَائِكَتَهُ يُصَلُّونَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ
ءَامَنُوا صَلُّوا عَلَيْهِ وَسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا ﴿٥٦﴾

**God and His angels bless the Prophet – so, you who
believe, bless him too and give him greetings of peace [56]
(The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 56)**

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* brought good to his *ummah*, giving glad tidings to the believers and a warning to the disbelievers. He was eager to bring guidance to his *ummah*, as Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘A Messenger has come to you from among yourselves. Your suffering distresses him: he is deeply concerned for you and full of kindness and mercy towards the believers.’ (*at-Tawba*: 128) He used to feel pain and distress when anyone slipped from his fingers and stepped out of the arena of faith and belief. He used to charge himself with doing more to call people to Islam than he himself was physically capable of or was actually required to do so that his Lord even addressed him, saying: ‘But [Prophet] are you going to worry yourself to death over them if they do not believe in this message?’ (*al-Kahf*: 6)

It is well-known that nothing more was required of our Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* except to convey the Message, for guidance can only come from Allah *the Almighty* as shown by the fact that Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘If We had wished, We could have sent them down a sign from heaven, at which their necks would stay bowed in utter humility.’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 4) So, it was on account of the intensity and force of his eagerness to bring guidance to his people, that Allah *the Almighty* blamed Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* for making things too difficult for himself. Here, we stress that Allah *the Almighty* wanted him *peace and blessings be upon him* not to make things difficult for himself, as is shown by His saying elsewhere: ‘Prophet, why do you prohibit what Allah has made lawful to you in your desire to please your wives? Yet Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.’ (*at-Tahrim*: 1) This rebuke most closely resembles that you deliver to your son when he is working himself so hard in revising (for his exams) that you become worried about him. You are not criticising him for falling short, but rather for going to excess and trying to do more than that of which

he is physically capable. In the same way, the greatest concern of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* for his *ummah* became clear when Allah *Glorified is He* revealed the following verses about him: ‘By the morning brightness and by the night when it grows still, your Lord has not forsaken you [Prophet], nor does He hate you, and the future will be better for you than the past; your Lord is sure to give you so much that you will be well satisfied.’ (*ad-Duha*: 1-5) As soon as he *peace and blessings be upon him* received those verses from his Lord, he immediately applied them to his *ummah* and said, ‘In that case, I will not be well pleased if even one of my community is in the Hell-fire.’⁽¹⁾ If Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had this level of concern for you, then he is deserving of your prayers upon him, since every good thing that he acquired also extended to you, and was for your benefit as well as his. That is why Allah, *Glorified is He* says: ‘Allah and His angels bless the Prophet- so, you who believe, bless him too and give him greetings of peace.’ (*al-Ahzab*: 56) As you probably noted, the verb: ‘bless’ has two subjects, which are Allah *the Almighty* and His angels. So, the True Lord joins His Blessing with that of His angels. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* once heard a preacher saying in his sermon, ‘Allah will reward anyone who has *taqwa* (fearing) of Allah and Messenger Muhammad and Allah will punish anyone who disobeys them both’, so he *peace and blessings be upon him* said to him, ‘You are the worst sort of preacher a people could have!’⁽²⁾ Why did he *peace and blessings be upon him* say that?

They reply that he *peace and blessings be upon him* said that because the man joined together between Allah and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* when he said, ‘disobeys them both’, instead of saying, ‘disobeys Allah and His Messenger’ and it is Allah *the Almighty* Alone Who has the right to join others with Himself, such as when Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...being spiteful was their only response to Allah and His Messenger enriching them out of His Bounty...’ (*at-Tawba*: 74).

It is never permissible for us to use a linguistic form that joins Allah *the Almighty* with anyone from His creation. Yes, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

(1) See *Al-Khatib, Talkhis Al-Mutashabih*; see also *Al-Bayhaqi, Shu`ab Al-`Iman*.

(2) See *Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 870*; *Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. (4/256 & 279)* and *Abu Dawud, Sunnan, Hadith no. 1099*.

‘Allah and His angels bless the Prophet...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 56). This is how it is said by Allah *the Almighty*; He joins with Himself any of His creation (the angels) that He so wishes. But it is not permissible for you to use this form unless you are reading it in the Quran. If you want to use your own words to express a similar concept, then it is incumbent upon you to say, ‘Allah blesses Prophet Muhammad and the angels also bless him’.

That is why the scholars of *tafsir*⁽¹⁾ take great care when it comes to this matter and say that the saying of Allah: ‘bless’ (*al-Ahzab*: 56) is not the predicate for both the two subjects that precede it. Rather, there are some words elided, the implicit meaning of the verse thus is: ‘Allah blesses Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the angels bless Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*’. If Allah *the Almighty* calls down blessings upon him *peace and blessings be upon him* and the angels call down blessings upon him *peace and blessings be upon him* then what about you? It is necessary and obligatory upon you to also call down blessings upon him *peace and blessings be upon him*; Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘...so, you who believe, bless him too and give him greetings of peace.’ (*al-Ahzab*: 56) We previously made it clear that *salat* (blessing) from Allah *the Almighty* has a particular meaning, blessing from the angels has a particular meaning, and blessing from the believers has a particular meaning. *Salat* came from ‘supplication’ which necessitates the existence of the one who supplicates, and the One to Whom the supplication is made and the one to whom we supplicate. So, for example, when I ask Allah *the Almighty* to forgive a person, I am the one who supplicates; a person is the one to whom we supplicate and Allah *the Almighty* is the One to Whom the supplication is made. But if the one who supplicates and blesses is Allah *the Almighty* then to whom is the supplication addressed? Therefore, the meaning of supplication cannot apply to the *salat* of Allah *the Almighty*. That is why we say, ‘If you were to think deeply and imagine that a friend, for example, said to you, “I promise to give you such-and-such a thing tomorrow”, that would be a promise from him about something which he has no power or control over. If he were to say to you, however, “I ask Allah to give you such-and-such”, and attributed the act of giving to Allah *the Almighty*

(1) See *Al-Qurtubi, Tafsir, Al-Jami` li Ahkam Al- Quran*, p. 8/5500.

then there would be more hope in that thing to be realised, since the act of giving would be attributed to Allah *the Almighty* and so if He accepts the supplication, the desired outcome is achieved. And if Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who commands this gift to come to you, then it will come into your possession; of that there is no doubt'. So, *salat* from Allah *the Almighty* does not mean supplication, rather, direct implementation of His Commandments and a Mercy for all his creation. It is enough of a Mercy from Allah *the Almighty* to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that He made him the seal of the Messengers; no one will ever come to amend his Message. Would it not be enough for Prophet Muhammad to get Allah's Mercy, Blessing and Praise when Allah *the Almighty* links His Name with him?! Do not be surprised, for Allah *Glorified is He* addresses him saying: 'and raise your reputation high' (*ash-Sharh*: 4). What an honour that Allah has bestowed upon Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* when Allah *the Almighty* accepts his intercession on the Day of Resurrection, not only on behalf of his *ummah* but also on behalf of the rest of creation! It is enough for him *peace and blessings be upon him* that Allah *the Almighty* addresses all the messengers by their personal names (except him *peace and blessings be upon him*) whom He addresses with an honorary title, such as when Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'O Prophet!...' (*al-Mumtahana*: 12), and 'O Messenger!' (*al-Ma'ida*: 41)

As for the *salat* of the angels, it is a supplication. Read the saying of Allah: 'Those [angels] who carry the Throne and those who surround it celebrate the praise of their Lord and have faith in Him. They beg forgiveness for the believers: "Our Lord, You embrace all things in mercy and knowledge, so forgive those who turn to You and follow Your path. Save them from the pains of Hell and admit them, Lord, to the lasting Gardens You have promised to them, together with their righteous ancestors, spouses, and offspring: You alone are *the Almighty*, the All Wise. Protect them from all evil deeds: those You protect on that Day from [the punishment for] evil deeds will receive Your Mercy-that is the supreme triumph.'" (*Ghafir*: 7-9) If the blessings, supplication and asking forgiveness of the angels are directed to the whole of mankind, even to those who committed sins but repented to Allah, then imagine how their blessings would be when it comes to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the one who brings guidance to the entire humanity!

As for the *salat* of the believers, it refers to forgiveness. When they ask for forgiveness, they are not asking it for Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* but rather for themselves since he *peace and blessings be upon him* only came as a mercy for them. In addition, since he came as a mercy for them, they should never cease to venerate and revere him for even a moment. When a believer blesses him *peace and blessings be upon him* what does he actually possess to give him? What could we possibly give to him? Reflect on what you actually say when you bless him *peace and blessings be upon him*; you do not say, 'I bless...', but rather, you say, 'O Allah, bless Prophet Muhammad', or 'Allah has blessed Prophet Muhammad'.

You ask the One Who is higher than you to bless him *peace and blessings be upon him* because you do not have anything whatsoever that you could give him *peace and blessings be upon him*. So, *salat* from Allah *the Almighty* is absolute and all-encompassing mercy, *salat* from the angels means supplication while *salat* from the believers is asking for forgiveness. For this reason, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was asked, 'O Messenger Muhammad, that is the *salat* of Allah and that is the *salat* of the angels, so how should we send *salat* upon you?' He replied, 'Say, O Allah, send *salat* upon Muhammad and upon the family of Muhammad, as You sent *salat* upon Ibrahim (Abraham) and the family of Ibrahim (Abraham), and send blessings upon Muhammad and upon the family of Muhammad as You sent blessings upon Ibrahim (Abraham) and the family of Ibrahim (Abraham) among the nations. You are indeed Worthy of Praise, Full of glory.'⁽¹⁾

A companion once came to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and said, 'O Messenger of Allah, I have never seen you cheerful and happy like you are now' whereupon the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, 'Jibril (Gabriel) just came to me and told me that whoever blesses me once, Allah will bless him ten times, ten good deeds will be written down on his behalf, and ten of his bad deeds will be erased.'⁽²⁾ `Umar *Allah be pleased with him* narrated, 'A man came to the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* and asked him, "What is the prayer upon you, Messenger of Allah?"

(1) See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 4797*.

(2) See *As-Suyuti, Ad-Durr Al-Manthur, p. (6/650)*; see also *Al-Bukhari, Al-Adab Al-Mufrad*.

He *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, “That is from the unseen. If you were to ask me about it, I would not say what it is. Allah has assigned two angels to me. When one of you says the prayer upon me, those two angels say, ‘May Allah forgive you’, then Allah, says, ‘Amen’ and the angels say ‘Amen’.”⁽¹⁾

Glory be to Allah! Allah *the Almighty* says ‘Amen’ to the supplication of the two angels!

They say that, just like *Hajj* (pilgrimage), it is obligatory for the believer to say the prayer upon Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* once in his lifetime. However, it is also obligatory upon him to say every time a mention is made of him *peace and blessings be upon him* which is why he says in the Hadith, ‘The most miserly of all the misers is the one who does not pray upon me when I am mentioned in his presence.’⁽²⁾ Then Allah *the Almighty* says afterwards: ‘...and give him greetings of peace’ (*al-Ahzab*: 56). You will notice that in the first part of the verse, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Allah and His angels bless the Prophet-...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 56), He does not say, ‘and give themselves up to him in utter surrender’, with respect to Himself and His angels, but then when He issues His command to the believers, Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘...bless him too and give him greetings of peace’ (*al-Ahzab*: 56) adding the phrase, ‘give yourselves up to him in utter surrender’. The scholars explained this reason saying that this is because the prayer on Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is meaningless except when it is accompanied by surrendering to him; in other words, obeying him, following his commands and handing over the reins to him when it comes to every large thing and small thing in your life. If that were not so, then how could you say the prayer for him when you are actively disobeying his commands? Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘By your Lord, they will not be true believers until they let you decide between them in all matters of dispute, and find no resistance in their souls to your decisions, accepting them totally.’ (*an-Nisa*: 65)

One of the meanings of *taslim* (greeting of peace) is saying, ‘Peace be upon you, O Prophet’, as we say in the *tashahhud*. *As-Salam* (peace) is one of

(1) See *As-Suyuti, Ad-Durr Al-Manthur, Hadith no. (6/652), At-Tabarani, Ibn Mardawayh and Ibn An-Najjar*.

(2) See *Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 1/201; Ibn Hibban, Sahih, Hadith no. 2388*.

the Names of Allah *the Almighty*, so the meaning of ‘peace be upon you, Messenger of Allah’ is ‘may Allah *the Almighty* grant you protection so that no one will ever be able to harm you’.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُؤْذُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ لَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا مُهِينًا ﴿٥٧﴾

Those who insult God and His Messenger will be rejected by God in this world and the next – He has prepared a humiliating torment for them [57] (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 57)

The Arabic word *idha* (harming) is the process whereby one person causes pain to another, regardless if it is done through words or actions. However, it is not suitable to use such an understanding of the word *idha* with respect to Allah *the Almighty* so what does it mean when it says that they cause pain to Allah *the Almighty*? They reply that Allah *Glorified is He* cannot be affronted by any action since they are incapable of that - that is something which is not possible. However, it is possible for Him to be affronted by words, and that would mean that, with respect to Allah *the Almighty* ‘*idha*’ means incurring His Wrath by saying something that does not befit Him such as when they say, ‘Allah is poor, while we are rich’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 181); some of them even deny the Existence of Allah *the Almighty*; also when they say: ‘Allah is tight-fisted’ (*al-Ma‘ida*: 64) or ‘...Ezra is the son of Allah...’ (*at-Tawba*: 30). Falling under this category of harming Allah is what Allah *the Almighty* says in the following Qudsi Hadith, ‘My slave harms Me when it is not for him to harm Me: he curses time and I am time. The affair is in My Hands and I turn the night into day.’⁽¹⁾

Is time to be blamed for the events that cause you pain? No, time is simply the envelope in which the event is contained. As for the Actor - it is Allah *the Almighty*. So, do not curse time, for time is Allah *the Almighty*. People themselves say: ‘There is only our life in this world: we die, we live, nothing but time destroys us.’ (*al-Jathiya*: 24)

(1) See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 4826, 6181, 7491; Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 2246; and Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 2/ 238 & 272.*

All these are examples of statements that cause affront. However, we should look into them further and see whether they are simply barefaced lies, or truthful words that may be verified by evidence and proof. A person could say some words to cause you offence and yet you suffer no harm from them. In such circumstances, he incurs the sin for what he said and yet you are protected from their evil and their capacity to cause pain. So, these words that they utter really do cause pain and offence, but not to Allah *the Almighty* but rather to themselves; how is that? When Allah *Glorified is He* created the universe for him to inhabit before He even created him. So, mankind came into a universe that had already been readied to receive him - all the ingredients for his own survival and that of his species were already in place. Then, Allah *the Almighty* also prepared a law for him by which he could preserve and sustain himself so that, if anything went wrong, he would know how to fix it and make it right. That law was the divine way of guidance that Allah preserved in His Book. Read the saying of Allah: 'It is the Lord of Mercy Who taught the Quran. He created man and taught him to communicate.' (*ar-Rahman*: 1-4) The law of preservation existed in the Quran before mankind was even created because mankind is Allah's creation, and Allah *the Almighty* created them in the finest state and with the best of forms. Allah *the Almighty* wanted them to remain that way, well proportioned in every way. But, if this successor then leaves aside the law of preservation with which his Lord has provided then there is no doubt that Allah *the Almighty* will become angry, since He wants His creation to remain in that beautiful form in which He created them. Therefore, those who deny the Existence of Allah or associate others with Him, and those who say, 'Allah is poor while we are rich!' or 'The angels are Allah's daughters' or any similar statements, all incur His Wrath; since His successor did not fulfil what was required of him according to the divine way of guidance. We say to these people, 'Beware! Do not think that your disbelief has placed you outside the grasp of the True Lord *the Almighty*. On the contrary, you are within His Grasp and subject to His will - if He so wished, He could compel you all to obey Him and create you all in a right-acting form whereby it would be impossible for any of you to disobey, as He did with the angels. But He gave you free will with respect to those things He made you responsible

for so that anyone who wishes to accept may do so and anyone who wishes to reject may do so, in order that Allah *the Almighty* would know the ones who come to Him through love and not compulsion'. The proof for this is that Allah *the Almighty* has created you in two distinct aspects - one aspect in which you have free will, which relates to those things you are held responsible for; and the other one in which you are completely within the Lord's Grasp which relates to your fate and destiny. So, as long as it is your wont to rebel against Allah *the Almighty* with respect to the things Allah *the Almighty* has commanded you with, why do you not also rebel against Him with respect to those things Allah *the Almighty* has destined for you such as death and poor health? And since you have chosen unbelief because He is your Lord and is required to help you get what you want, He will place a seal over your heart to stop belief ever getting in, and prevent your beloved unbelief from ever getting out. So, He brings you what you want - and that proves that your unbelief neither harms Him nor causes Him pain. It has been narrated in a Qudsi Hadith, 'My slaves, you will never attain to the extent of my benefit so as to be able to benefit Me, nor attain to the extent of my harm so as to be able to harm Me.'

⁽¹⁾ If this world is a zone of free will when it comes to matters for which we are held responsible, that will not be the case on the Day of Resurrection. On that day, there will be absolutely no free will whatsoever - no one will have a choice with respect to anything. On that day, Allah *the Almighty* will say, 'Who has control today' (*Ghafir*: 16), but no one, whether king or slave, will reply. Allah *the Almighty* will provide the answer, saying, '...Allah, the One, the All Powerful.' (*Ghafir*: 16) All of what we have said here is with respect to what is meant by causing harm to Allah *the Almighty*. As for causing harm to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* he is a human being and so can be harmed by both actions and words. Just as they used to say about Allah *the Almighty* that He was poor, while they were rich, they used to say about Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that he was a soothsayer, a magician, a mad man and a poet. Then they went beyond that into the realm of action and caused him physical harm and pain. Was he not

(1) See Muslim, *Sahih*, Hadith no.2577; Ahmad, *Musnad*, hadith no. 5/160; Al-Bayhaqi, *Al-Sunnan Al-Kubra*, Hadith no. (6/93); and Al-Bukhari, *Al-Adab Al-Mufrad*, p. 172 & 490.

pelted with stones in Ta'if until his feet bled⁽¹⁾? Was the embryonic sac of a camel's foetus not placed on top of his noble back when he was in Mecca?⁽²⁾ Was his tooth not broken on the day of the Battle of Uhud?⁽³⁾ Was his face not cut open and did he not bleed? So, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* like his Lord, was subjected to verbal abuse, but was also, on top of that, subjected to physical abuse; a human form of abuse that caused him physical pain. And the worst form of physical offence against him *peace and blessings be upon him* was what related to his wives and womenfolk.

That is why Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...It is not right for you to offend Allah's Messenger...' (*al-Ahzab*: 53), i.e. by going against that which he brought, making false accusations against him or subjecting him to physical pain and torture. But Allah *the Almighty* does not mention any of the ways of causing harm or pain to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by name except what relates to his wives when Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...just as you should never marry his wives after him...' (*al-Ahzab*: 53). He mentions this matter specifically and unequivocally, taking into consideration how human nature works. For, as we said before, men are able to give away to their companions and loved ones the most expensive and prized assets in their possession, but when it comes to their wives, they will not even permit another man to look at them. They guard their wives jealously and protect them from the gaze of others. An example of this is found in the conversation of Hudhayfa with his wife. He loved her greatly, so he asked her, 'Would you like to be with me in paradise?' She replied, 'Of course I would,' so he said, 'Then, if I die, make sure that you do not marry another man after me' - he was even jealously protective of her after his death - 'for I heard Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying, 'A woman will be for the last of her husbands (in Paradise)'.⁽⁴⁾ However this Hadith is countered by another in which Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was

(1) See *Ibn Hisham As-Sira An-Nabawiyya*, Hadith no. 2/421, *Al-Bayhaqi, Dala'il An-Nubuwwa*, p. 2/415.

(2) See *Al-Bayhaqi, Dala'il An-Nubuwwa*, Hadith no. 2/278; *Al-Bukhari, Sahih*, Hadith no. 3185 and *Muslim, Sahih, Kitab Al-Jihad Wa Asayr*, Hadith no. 108.

(3) See *Ibn Hisham, As-Sira An-Nabawiyya*, p. 1428.

(4) See *Al-'Ajuni, Kashf Al-Khafa'*, Hadith no. 2/410.

asked, 'Which of a man's wives will be with him in Paradise?' He replied, 'the ones with the best character will be with him.'⁽¹⁾

Some people think that these two Hadiths contradict each other, but, in actuality, there is no contradiction whatsoever between them, since the Prophet's saying (for the last of her husbands) referred to something leaving one's consciousness but not in terms of time. It would be much like if you were to have had an enjoyable trip in the company of one of your friends twenty years ago and then, when you reminded him of it, he would reply that it was the last enjoyment he had, despite the fact that he had enjoyed many journeys after that. In other words, that journey left the most lasting impression on his consciousness. So, the meaning of the Hadith is that she will be with the last of her husbands in terms of enjoyment; the one whose memory was the last to leave her consciousness even if he was an earlier husband in terms of time, by virtue of his good character. So, the meanings of the two Hadiths agree and there is no contradiction between them.

The jealous protectiveness that a man feels towards his wife is a matter that has been well documented in Arab history and literature. An example of this is found in the words of a poet⁽²⁾:

I will love Da'd for as long as I live, but if I die

What sadness, for there will be one who comes and loves her as I did.

His infatuation for her was so great that it even extended beyond his death. However, this line of poetry is criticised by the fact that he is fretting about someone who will come and take his place in terms of the love he felt for his beloved. So, the following words, composed by another⁽³⁾, are considered more eloquent:

I will love Da'd for as long as I live, but if I die

She may not fall in love after me.

(1) See Ibn 'Uday, *Al-Kamil Fi Du'afa' Ar-Rijal*, 3/262 and Ibn Al-Qayyim, *Hadi Al-'Arwah*, p. 216; Abu Hatim considered it weak.

(2) He is Nusayb ibn Rabah Abu Mihjan; he died in 108 A.H. and was the freedman of 'Abd Al-'Aziz ibn Marwan. He was a poet of great renown. (Al-Mawsu'a Ash-Shi'riyya).

(3) He is 'Abd Al-Malik ibn Marwan, the Umayyad Caliph who had found fault with the line of poetry composed by Nusayb.

Therefore, it can be seen that there are differing degrees of jealous protectiveness.

History tells us⁽¹⁾ that one of the Abbasid Caliphs –I believe it was Al-Hadi – used to love a slave girl named Ghadir; his love for her was so strong that he married her and, during one of the loving and intimate moments they spent in each other's company, he said to her, 'Promise me that if I die – and at the time he said that, he was not in the best of health – you will not marry anyone after me.' And so she gave him her word that she would not do so. But after Al-Hadi died, it was not long before Ghadir forgot the love she had felt for him and the sorrow she had felt at his passing – and, indeed, it is one of Allah's great mercies to us that everything in creation starts out small and gets bigger except for misfortunes which start out big and then get smaller. So, after a bit of time passed, Ghadir married Al-Hadi's brother. Then, one day, she woke up from her sleep, terrified and screaming so loudly that the entire palace heard her, so they gathered around her and asked her what is wrong. She replied, 'Al-Hadi came to see me in my dreams and said to me:

You broke your promise to me after

The inhabitants of the grave became my neighbours.

You married my brother in your treachery,

Truthful was he who named you Ghadir.

The new lover will not enjoy you,

Nor will calamities pass you by.

You will catch up with me before the morning,

And will become as I have become.

She barely said those words than she breathed her last breath and died. That is why Allah *the Almighty* takes these natural human instincts into account when imposing laws upon mankind. Do you not see that the waiting period for a woman whose husband had died was originally a full year, as is mentioned in the saying of Allah⁽²⁾: 'If any of you die and leave widows,

(1) *The story of the caliph Al-Hadi with the slave girl Ghadir.*

(2) *Most of the scholars say that this verse is abrogated by the verse that comes earlier in the same chapter when Allah Glorified is He says, 'If any of you die and leave widows, the=*

make a bequest for them: a year's maintenance and no expulsion from their homes [for that time].’ (*al-Baqara*: 240) But then, this waiting period for widows was reduced to four months and ten days out of respect for this natural instinct that women also possess.

Then Allah *the Almighty* makes clear what will be the just requital for those who abuse Allah *the Almighty* and His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying: ‘will be rejected by Allah’ (*al-Ahzab*: 57) which means that He will exclude them from His Mercy: ‘...in this world and the next- He has prepared a humiliating torment for them’ (*al-Ahzab*: 57). Allah *the Almighty* then gives us an indication that this just requital that He has prepared for those who abuse Him and Messenger Muhammad is not out of any form of partisanship to Him *the Almighty* or to His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* which is proven by the fact that anyone who abuses a believing man or a believing woman will also be repaid for his abuse. Allah places believing men and believing women at the same level as Allah *the Almighty* and His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* when it comes to wanting to abuse them and cause them harm.

Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْذُونَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ بَغْيًا
مَا أَكْتَسَبُوا فَقَدْ أَحْتَمَلُوا بُهْتَانًا وَإِثْمًا مُّبِينًا

And those who undeservedly insult believing men and women will bear the guilt of slander and flagrant sin [58]
(The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 58)

When Allah *the Almighty* talks about the harm directed towards believing men and women, He specifies the particular type of harm with His saying: ‘...who undeservedly...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 58) since there is another form of harm which Allah *the Almighty* has legally sanctioned – that harm is the punishment that Allah *the Almighty* has obliged us to inflict upon those who step outside the bounds Allah *the Almighty* has set for us, such as the *hadd* (legal punishment)

= widows should wait for four months and ten nights before remarrying...’ (*al-Baqara*: 234)
See Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir Al-Quran Al-`Azhim*, 1/296.

for fornication, slander, drinking alcohol and so on. Although all these punishments cause pain and harm to believing men and women, that form of harm is sanctioned by the law and so the ones who carry them out are not punished as they would have been if they had harmed Allah *the Almighty* and His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. That is why Allah *the Almighty* says about those who commit unlawful sexual intercourse: ‘If two men commit a lewd act, punish them both...’ (*an-Nisa*: 16). The only reason Allah *the Almighty* legislated these *hadd* punishments, an infliction of harm upon believers, was to punish those who had overstepped His bounds and purify them of their sin, while at the same time acting as a deterrent for others. When ‘Umar *Allah be pleased with him* read the verse: ‘and those who undeservedly insult believing men and women...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 58), he started weeping, so one of the men who was sitting with him asked him, ‘Why are you crying, Commander of the Faithful?’ He replied, ‘Because I have brought pain upon the believing men and women.’ So, the man said, ‘Commander of the Faithful, you only cause them pain in order to educate them and set them right. Allah *the Almighty* commands us to stone and cut off.’ When he heard that, ‘Umar laughed and was happy.’⁽¹⁾

Concerning the legal penalties laid down by Islamic law, Allah says, ‘Do not let compassion for them keep you from carrying out Allah’s law...’ (*an-Nur*: 2). This is because compassion with respect to the bounds of Allah *the Almighty* is foolish and a false sort of mercy, for we are not more merciful towards creation than the Creator.

When Allah *the Almighty* emphasises a punishment and makes it severe He does so because He wants to deter us from overstepping His bounds and exposing ourselves to such punishments. When you read the saying of Allah: ‘Fair retribution saves life for you, people of understanding...’ (*al-Baqara*: 179), you might ask, ‘How can there be life in death?’ But yes, there is life in retribution because when you know that if you kill, you yourself will be killed, you will never dare to kill anyone. So, with this ruling, Allah *the Almighty* protects the person who intends to kill from committing his crime, and

(1) See *As-Suyuti, Ad-Dur Al-Manthur*, p. 6/657 and *Al-Qurtubi, Al-Jami` li Ahkam Al- Quran*, 8/5509.

meanwhile protects the person to be killed from being a victim. So how can this be considered as an infliction of harm? The meaning of: 'and those who undeservedly' (*al-Ahzab*: 58) is 'without them having committed a crime that merits pain or harm being afflicted upon them'. For the word(s) *iktasabu* '...undeservedly...' (*al-Ahzab*: 58) which is(are) used here, we have said that there is a difference between the two verbs *fa`ala* and *ifta`ala* – *fa`ala* refers to an ordinary action that involves no trouble or exaggeration while *ifta`ala* refers to an action that does involve trouble and exaggeration. The same thing is true in terms of *kasab* and *iktasab*: *kasab* is when you take for something more than you gave for it, such as, for example, when you buy something for five and sell it for seven, making a profit (and this is why it is a linguistic custom to say *kasab* when what is gained is good and *iktasab* when what is gained is bad), such as in the saying of Allah: '...each gains whatever good it has done, and suffers its bad...' (*al-Baqara*: 286), where *laha* (for) informs of what is possessed and *`alayha* informs of what is owed. That is because the lawful comes naturally and spontaneously, while the unlawful comes only after much effort, care and hard work. When you look at your wife, you do so easily and naturally, but when you look at a beautiful woman in the street, you do so guiltily and surreptitiously fearing that someone might see you doing it – this is the difference between the lawful and the unlawful.

There is only one verse in the entire Book of Allah in which the verb *kasaba* is used to refer to something bad, which is the saying of Allah: 'Truly those who do evil and are surrounded by their sins will be the inhabitants of the Fire' (*al-Baqara*: 81).

Why in this verse? As they say, it deals with those who have become accustomed to doing bad deeds – those whom bad deeds have surrounded them so thoroughly that they have become second nature, and have become so easy for them that they have taken on the characteristics of lawful acts so that they do them without difficulty. Indeed, they even declare openly that they are doing them and boast about them. It was their flaunting of their sins that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was referring to when he said, 'All the sins of my followers will be forgiven except those of the *Mujahirin* (those who commit a sin openly or disclose their sins to the

people).⁽¹⁾ And part of what he said in this Hadith was, ‘Allah screens it (bad deed) from the public and yet, in the morning, he himself exposed it.’ This person who finds happiness in committing acts of disobedience and boasts of that is a professional at concealing all signs of perturbation when committing unlawful acts – he does them as easily as he would do acts that are lawful. And that is why the verb that is used here is *kasab*, since, for this person, doing wrong has become second nature. On the topic of the hardship and extra effort that unlawful acts require, I remember the story⁽²⁾ of a man from our town called Sheikh Mustafa. One day, he went to the market to buy a cow and so he put the money he needed into his pocket. But so great was his anxiety and fear of thieves that he put his hand over his pocket and kept it there. But when he arrived at the market and they saw him with his hand clutching his book, all that did was tell them where their target was. But what tricks did they employ to rob him of his money? First one of them soiled his shoulders with camel dung and then rubbed himself up against Sheikh Mustafa until the Sheikh’s clothes became soiled. Thereupon Sheikh Mustafa became angry and started to clean the dung off his clothes, completely forgetting the money that was in his pocket, so the thieves used that opportunity to steal it. In the same way that the unlawful is hard at work and comes at great expense, so the punishment for it also involves hard work and great effort so that the punishment befits the crime.

That is why Allah *the Almighty* says regarding the punishment of those who abuse believing men and women without their having done any wrong: *ih tamal*, and does not say *hamal*, for there is a difference between *hamal* and *ih tamal*: *hamal* is used for something that it is within your power to bear, while *ih tamal* is used when the thing is beyond your power to bear and even if you were to bear it, you would only be able to bear it with great difficulty. So, the punishment here is of the same sort as the action – it is characterised by hardship and great effort just as the original act of disobedience was. ‘...will bear the guilt of slander and flagrant sin...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 58); *buhtan*, (slander) is saying something about another person which is not true - in

(1) See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 6069*; and *Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 2990*.

(2) *The story of Sheikh Mustafa and the purchase of the cow*

other words, lying about him. *Ithm*, on the other hand, is committing a sin against another by saying something about him which is true but that he would dislike hearing, such as addressing a blind man, for example, with the words, 'O! Blind man'!

That is why it is narrated in a Hadith that when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was asked, 'Tell me how the matter stands if what I say about my brother is true? He replied: 'If what you say of him is true, you have slandered him, and if what you say of him is not true, you have reviled him.'⁽¹⁾ That is you have told a lie about him. Allah *the Almighty* describes the word *ithm* here with the adjective *mubin* (manifest), for Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...flagrant sin...' (*al-Ahzab*: 58). The word *mubin* means clear and obvious. Wrongdoing becomes clear either by you confessing to it or by their being indisputable evidence linking you to it. So, if we were to ask you, 'You addressed this man with the words, "O! Blind man", but would you yourself like someone to describe with a characteristic of yours that you did not like'? You would of course reply that you would not like that. So, the wrongdoing here is clear and your confessing to it is enough to make it so. You should always treat people in the way that you yourself would want others to treat you so, just as you would not like others to rob you, you should also not rob them.

And just as wrongdoing harms you, so too does it also harm them. Then Allah *the Almighty* moves on to another one of the courtesies connected to family life when Allah *Glorified is He* says:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لِّأَزْوَاجِكَ وَبَنَاتِكَ وَنِسَاءِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ يُدْنِينَ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ جَلْبِيبِهِنَّ ذَلِكَ أَدْنَى أَنْ يُعْرَفْنَ فَلَا يُؤْذَيْنَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا

Prophet, tell your wives, your daughters, and women believers to make their outer garments hang low over them so as to be recognized and not insulted: God is most forgiving, most merciful [59] (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 59)

We notice that the first group towards whom the command is directed is the wives of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and then his

(1) See Muslim, *Sahih*, Kitab Al-Birr Wa-Sila, Hadith no. 2589; and Ahmad, *Musnad*, 2/230, 384 & 386.

daughters. This means that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not command his *ummah* to do anything that he himself was exempt from, but only commanded them to do something that he had first commanded the members of his own household to do. And commands of this sort are much easier to accept and much more likely to be implemented. It is as if he were saying, 'Before I command you to do something, I command myself first to show that I am not granted any special privileges'.

That is why we find mentioned in the story of the Muslim leader, Tariq ibn Ziyad⁽¹⁾, when he went to conquer Andalusia, he stood with his troops on one sea coast while his enemy were on the opposite coast. Then he said to his troops, 'My people, I will never command you to do anything that I exempt myself from. I will be the first of you to meet the enemy and will challenge their leader to single combat. Then, if I kill him, you will have been spared the trouble of fighting him, and if he kills me, then there will be no leader who needs you after me. I will be the first of you when it comes to fighting and will not send you into battle while I sit back and observe what happens.' This meant, 'I will not grant myself any special privileges'.

It was also by means of this principle of equality that 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* governed the people - he ruled over the world from Medina wearing a patched-up robe. One time, a man saw him sleeping under a tree like the common populace, so he said, 'You governed and were just, so you were able to feel safe and sleep, O 'Umar.' 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* knew that the first place in which corruption would appear would be amongst his retinue, close relatives, immediate subordinates and the centres of power which had built up around him, so, whenever he wanted to make a decision regarding any matter relating to his subjects, he would first gather his relatives around him and warn them, saying, 'I have decided to issue a resolution concerning

(1) Tariq ibn Ziyad Al-Laythi was the one who conquered Andalusia. He was originally of Berber stock. He became Muslim at the hand of Musa ibn Nusayr who put him in command of twelve thousand troops, most of them Berbers themselves. He crossed the sea with them and took control of the mountain *Jabal Tariq* (Gibraltar) which was named after him. And he continued to conquer more parts of Andalusia with Musa ibn Nusayr. He was born in 50 A.H. and died in 102 A.H. at the age of 52. See *Az-Zirikli, Al-'Alam*, 3/217.

such-and-such a matter. And, by the One Who holds my soul in His hand, if anyone amongst you opposes any aspect of that decision, I will make an example of him to all the Muslims! People, beware of anyone who comes amongst you claiming some sort of connection to me so that you then give him something that belongs by right to someone who does not know me. For, by Allah, if any of you do that, I will make an example of him to the rest of the Muslims!’

As the Quranic text was revealed with the wording: ‘O Prophet! Tell your wives...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 59), it indicates that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* used to pass on the text that came to him with the exact same wording with which Allah *the Almighty* revealed to him, that is, without changing it in any way whatsoever. If that had not been the case, he could have passed on that command to his wives by saying, ‘O Prophet, your wives and daughters should draw over themselves some of their outer garments’. But the fact of the matter was that he conveyed the Quranic text in exactly the same form as it was revealed to him so that everyone might know that the command was from Allah *the Almighty* and that Muhammad was only conveying what Allah *the Almighty* Himself had commanded. So, if anyone wanted to argue about a particular command, he would have to argue with the one who originally issued this command. When this particular verse was revealed, Allah *the Almighty* had honoured the Prophet’s nine wives and given them a choice (between this world and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* yet they had chosen him. Five of them were from Quraysh, namely; ‘Aisha, Hafsa, Umm Habiba, Umm Salama and Sawda bint Zam`a *Allah be pleased with them*; three from other tribes, namely; Maymuna bint al-Harith, Zaynab bint Jahsh, and Juwayriyya bint Al-Harith of Banu Mustaliq *Allah be pleased with them*; in addition to an Israeli descendant, Safiyya bint Huyayy ibn Akhtab *Allah be pleased with her*).

As for the children of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* it is known for certain that he *peace and blessings be upon him* sired both sons and daughters. All of his sons died young, but Allah *the Almighty* destined all of his daughters to live long enough to get married. Those daughters were Zaynab,

Ruqayya, Umm Kulthum and the youngest, Fatima *Allah be pleased with her* who was the only one who lived after his *peace and blessings be upon him* death. As for Zaynab, Ruqayya and Umm Kulthum *Allah be pleased with them* they all died during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

There is a story about Fatima *Allah be pleased with her* which involved both laughing and crying. Some ascetic scholars used to understand the verse: ‘and that it is He Alone who causes [you] to laugh and to weep.’ (*an-Najm*: 43), as that Fatima *Allah be pleased with her* used to say when she was asked what caused her to laugh and weep? She replied: ‘When I went in to see my father when he was ill, he said to me, “This is the illness from which I will die, Fatima”, so I cried. Then, as I turned to leave, he gestured to me and said, “Fatima, you will be the first of the people of my family to join me”, so I laughed.’ So, this is the reason why Fatima *Allah be pleased with her* did not remain on this earth for longer than six months after Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had passed away.⁽¹⁾ Scholars have understood from this Hadith that souls meet after death and do not have to wait until they are resurrected, since if it is so, then the order in which people died would make no difference with respect to the order in which they met. Prophet Muhammad’s words to her, ‘You will be the first of my family to join me’ indicated that he would meet with her directly after she died.

The actual point of reference in this story is indicated by what someone - I think it was companion `Ali - said to Fatima that Allah says: “and that it is He Alone who causes [you] to laugh and to weep” (*an-Najm*: 43), so Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* causes you to weep first and then to laugh, so as not to cause you to laugh and then to weep as his Lord does.’

(1) See: Ahmad, Musnad, 6/77 & 240 from a Hadith narrated on the authority of `Aisha *Allah be pleased with her* that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* summoned his daughter, Fatima *Allah be pleased with her* to his side and whispered something to her which caused her to cry. Then he whispered something else to her which caused her to laugh. `Aisha *Allah be pleased with her* adds, ‘I asked Fatima what Prophet Muhammad had whispered to her that made her cry and what he had whispered to her that had made her laugh.’ She replied, ‘The first time he whispered to me, he told me about his death so I cried. Then, the second time he whispered to me, he told me I would be the first one of his household to follow him, so I laughed.’

As for Zaynab⁽¹⁾ *Allah be pleased with her* she married Al-'As ibn Ar-Rabi'⁽²⁾ before it was forbidden to marry disbelievers. Al-'As was captured by the Muslims at the battle of Badr, so Zaynab *Allah be pleased with her* went to ransom him, giving a necklace that she had with her. 'When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saw it, he found that it was a necklace that had belonged to Khadija that she had given to her daughter. So, he said, 'If you find it proper to return the necklace to her and free the prisoner, then do it', thus putting the matter into the hands of those who were in the position to benefit from her. So they waived their right to the necklace.'⁽³⁾ As for Ruqayya and Umm Kulthum *Allah be pleased with them* they faced so many difficulties in their lives, as follows: before prophethood, Ruqayya *Allah be pleased with her* had been engaged to 'Utba ibn Abu Lahab, and Umm Kulthum *Allah be pleased with her* to his brother, 'Utayba. Then, upon prophethood and Abu Lahab's hostility to Prophet Muhammad, Allah *the Almighty* Allah revealed the verses: 'Doomed are the hands of him of the glowing countenance, and doomed is he! What will his wealth avail him, and all what he has gained?' (*al-Masad*: 1-2) Abu Lahab thus said to his son 'Utba, 'My head and your head are unlawful for me until you divorce Ruqayya', so he divorced

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- (1) See *Al-'Alam of Az-Zirikli*, 3/67: *Zaynab Allah be pleased with her the daughter of Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, was the eldest of all his daughters, She married the son of her maternal aunt, Abu Al-'As ibn Ar-Rabi', and bore him (two children), 'Ali and 'Umama. 'Ali died when he was young, but 'Umama survived and married 'Ali ibn Abu Taleb Allah be pleased with him after Fatima Az-Zahra' died. Zaynab died in the year 8 A.H. - i.e. two years before Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him himself died.*
- (2) See *Al-'Alam of Az-Zirikli*, 5/176: *'He was Abu Al-'As ibn Ar-Rabia ibn Abd Al-'Uzza Allah be pleased with him; he was one of the Companions. He married Zaynab, the eldest of the daughters of the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him. He married her in the time of ignorance before Islam in Mecca, and did not become Muslim until quite late. She was staying with her father in Medina until he became Muslim and then she was returned to him. He was most commonly given the nickname of Abu Al-'As, but was also nicknamed, 'Jarw Al-Bathaa' - 'the puppy of the valley' and 'the trustworthy one'. He died in the year 12 A.H.*
- (3) See *Ibn Sa'd, At-Tabaqat*, 10/31: *'He was taken prisoner during the battle of Badr by 'Abdullah ibn Jubayr, so his brother 'Amr ibn ar-Rabi' came to ransom him. Zaynab Allah be pleased with her the daughter of Prophet Muhammad, who was at that time still living in Mecca, sent with him a necklace that had belonged to her mother Khadija Allah be pleased with her. Khadija had given that necklace to her on the occasion of her marriage to Abu Al-'As.*

her. Then, later on, 'Utba walked past Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and did something in front of him in order to mock him, so he *peace and blessings be upon him* said to 'Utba, 'You have been eaten by one of the dogs of Allah.'⁽¹⁾ So, 'Utba told his father what Prophet Muhammad had said in his supplication against him. Abu Lahab knew well that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was truthful and that his supplications were answered and not rejected, so he became frightened for his son and started to take great care to safeguard him, appointing people to even accompany him on his trading trips. For surprise, despite all of this, he still did not believe. And so it came to pass on one of his trading trips that 'Utba was sleeping amongst his companions, surrounded on all sides by them. Then, one night, a lion came and snatched him from the midst of his people, leaving nothing behind of him except that by which he could be recognised. Some of those biased against Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* have commented on this story, saying, 'Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said 'dog', but what actually took him was a lion. However, one of the people of gnosis responded, saying, 'When a dog is attributed to Allah, it must be a lion (at the very least). For Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not say, 'One of your dogs', but said, 'One of Allah's dogs.'⁽²⁾ This is what happened with respect to 'Utba. As for 'Utayba, he divorced Umm Kulthum *Allah be pleased with her* but did not subject Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to any harm. Indeed, they say that he was too shy to even face him *peace and blessings be upon him* and that is why Prophet Muhammad did not supplicate against him. As for the times of happiness in the lives of Ruqayya and Umm Kulthum *Allah be pleased with them* they were when Allah

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- (1) See *Al-Bayhaqi, Dala'il An-Nubuwwa*, 2/338 & 339; see also *Al-Haythami, Majma' Az-Zawa'id*, 6/19. *At-Tabarani* traced the Hadith back to a *mursal* statement and said, 'The chain of narrations contains *Zuhayr ibn Al-'Ala'* who is weak.' It is also narrated by *Al-Hakim, Al-Mustadrak*, 3/539 in a Hadith from *Abu 'Aqrab* who classified it as *Sahih*. As for *Ibn Hajar*, he classified it as *Hassan*. See *Ibn Hajar, Fath Al-Bari*, 4/39.
- (2) See *Fath Al-Bari, Ibn Hajar Al-'Asqalani*, vol. 4, p.39: The word *kalb* may be used to refer to every rapacious beast of prey, including lions. *Ibn Sayyidih* said, 'The word *kalb* has commonly come to mean the sort that barks, although *taklib* (rapaciousness) may also be used to describe panthers and birds of prey.' *Imam Malik* said in the *Muwatta'*, 'Every animal that bites, attacks and terrifies people, like lions, tigers, panthers and wolves, are rapacious.'

the Almighty replaced `Utba and `Utayba with someone better than them both, for first Ruqayya *Allah be pleased with her* married `Uthman *Allah be pleased with him* and then, when she died, her sister Umm Kulthum *Allah be pleased with her* married him. And that was why `Uthman *Allah be pleased with him* was given the nickname 'the possessor of two lights'. When `Uthman *Allah be pleased with him* married Ruqayya *Allah be pleased with her* a woman sang the following song:

The best thing that any human being has ever seen
is Ruqayya and her husband `Uthman⁽¹⁾

Look at how great their recompense was! For whom did Allah *the Almighty* replace `Utba and `Utayba with? They were replaced with `Uthman *Allah be pleased with him* and what a wonderful replacement he was! In addition, receiving recompense in matters such as these is only really feasible when one accepts one's fate in similar situations. So, when a human being is struck by affliction, he should completely submit to Allah *the Almighty* hand the matters over to Him and say, as Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has taught us, 'We belong to Allah and to Him we will return. O Allah, protect me during my affliction - whatever affliction is - and replace it with something better than it.'⁽²⁾ If he says that in full knowledge of the fact that there is wisdom in everything that Allah *the Almighty* has decreed for us, then He *the Almighty* will certainly recompense him with something better. A famous story that illustrates this well is that of Umm Salama *Allah be pleased with her*. When her husband, Abu Salama *Allah be pleased with him* died, she felt extreme sadness at his departure. During her mourning, when some women came to see her to offer their condolences, one of them said to her, 'O Umm Salama, say as Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'We belong to Allah and to Him we will return. O Allah, protect me during my

(1) *The wording in the Tafsir of Al-Qurtubi (8/5510) is:*

The best two people mankind has ever seen are Ruqayya and her husband `Uthman.

(2) *See Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 918 in the Jana'iz chapter from a Hadith narrated on the authority of Umm Salama Allah be pleased with her that she said, 'I heard Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him say, "There is no Muslim who has been struck by affliction who says what Allah has commanded Him to say, 'We belong to Allah and to Him we will return. O Allah, protect me during my affliction and replace it with something better than it' except that Allah will replace it with something better than it.' It is also narrated by Ahmad, Musnad, vol. 6, p. 309.*

affliction and replace it with something better than it.' When she heard that, Umm Salama *Allah be pleased with her* exclaimed, 'But is there anyone better than Abu Salama?', since, in her eyes, he was the best of people.

However, despite that, she accepted what Allah *the Almighty* had decreed. No sooner had her waiting-period come to an end than she heard someone knocking at her door, saying, 'Umm Salama, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* himself asks for your hand in marriage.' When she heard that, she laughed out loud because Allah *the Almighty* had indeed replaced Abu Salama *Allah be pleased with him* with someone who was better than him.⁽¹⁾

After Allah *the Almighty* had first commanded the wives and daughters of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to take on this aspect of courtesy, He followed that by commanding the believing women to do the same, saying: 'Prophet, tell your wives, your daughters and the believing women to make their outer garments hang low over them so as to be recognised and not insulted: Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful.' (*al-Ahzab*: 59)

The reason He does so is because the family of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* does not just extend to his wives and daughters, but to the entire world. The word used for women here, *nisa`*, is a plural for which there is no singular from the same root. While the word *`azwaj* (wives) has the singular form *zawj*, and the word *banat* (daughters) has the singular form *bint*; the word *nisa`* has a singular form derived from its meaning only, not of its etymological root, i.e. *`imra`a*. As it is difficult to say *`imra`at*, we say *nisa`* instead. *Nisa`* originally comes from the word *nasi`* (delaying); because the creation of the woman was delayed to be after the creation of the man.

(1) See, Ibn Sa'd, *At-Tabaqat Al-Kubra*, vol. 10, p. 87, in a Hadith from Umm Salama *Allah be pleased with her* that Abu Salama *Allah be pleased with him* said when he was on his deathbed, 'O Allah, give my family someone better than me as a replacement for me.' Then, when he died, I said, 'We belong to Allah and to Him we will return. O Allah, my affliction is reckoned in an account with You, so protect me during it.' I wanted to also say, 'Replace it with something better than it', but I kept on thinking to myself, 'Is there anyone better than Abu Salama?' However, I persevered until I actually said it. Then, when her waiting period came to an end, Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* proposed to her, but she rejected him. Then Umar *Allah be pleased with him* proposed to her, but she also rejected him. So Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* sent a proposal to her and she responded, saying, 'Welcome to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and his messenger.' ...until the end of the Hadith.

Then Allah *the Almighty* mentions His command to the wives and daughters of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as well as the rest of the believing women, saying: ‘...to make their outer garments hang low over them...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 59). The verb used in this command is *yudnina*. It is in the jussive case because it is the apodosis of the imperative *qul* (say). It goes like ‘*uskut taslam* or ‘be quiet and you will be safe’, or *dhakir tanjah* ‘revise and you will succeed’. In the verse, there is an implied conditional: ‘If you say “draw (your garments) closer to you”, then let them draw (their garments) closer to themselves’. This is similar to what is found in Allah’s words: ‘Hence, [O Muhammad,] proclaim to all people the [duty of] pilgrimage: they will come unto thee on foot...’ (*al-Hajj*: 27), since those who are being addressed here are the believing women, headed by the wives and daughters of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. If any one of them fails to submit to the command, they would be leaving one of the conditions of faith unfulfilled.

As for the meaning of the word *idna`*, it is bringing one thing close to another. The same root word is used by Allah *the Almighty* in the Quran to describe the fruits of paradise when He says: ‘with its fruits within easy reach.’ (*al-Haqqā*: 23), thus using the word *daniya* (easy reach). In other words, they are close by and easy to reach and pick. The meaning of the phrase ‘draw their outer garments close to them’ is to pull them up off the ground and cover their bodies with them. As for Allah’s words ‘low over them’ (*al-Ahzab*: 59), they indicate that the garments shall cover the entire body, wrap around it completely and hang down as far as the ground.

As for the word *jalabib* (garments), it is the plural of the word *jilbab* about whose meaning there is some difference of opinion. Some people say that it is a garment which is worn over the top of an undergarment, such as an undershirt or a shirt and trousers. It is permissible for these undergarments to be short, but the *jilbab* itself must be loose, long and reach right down to the ground.⁽¹⁾ Other people said that a *jilbab* was a scarf that was used to cover the head and

(1) See *Al-Qurtubi, Tafsir*, vol. 8, P. 5511: He said, ‘*Jalabib is the plural of jilbab, which is a garment that is bigger than a khimar (headscarf). It is narrated from Ibn `Abbas Allah be pleased with him and Ibn Mas`ud Allah be pleased with him that it was a rida` (cloak), and it is also said that it was a qina` (veil), but the soundest position is that it was a garment that covered the entire body.*’

drawn over their breasts, i.e. the area just below their necks. However, that is not enough, for they must also be allowed to hang as far as the ground in order to cover the woman up completely since her entire body is considered to be an *`awra* (a private area). When it comes to garments, there are some that leave a woman uncovered, some that describe the contours of her body and some that attract other people's attention. However, it is a legal precondition in Islam for a woman's clothing that it should not expose her body, describe it or attract attention. But some women still wear clothes that they, in spite of covering their bodies completely and leaving no parts exposed, are very tight, describe the shape of her breasts and hips and magnify her feminine charms so much that it is almost as if she were not wearing any clothes at all.⁽¹⁾ A great literary expression of this may be found in the following statement written by one of them - and indeed, he is completely right in what he says - 'By going to extremes in making herself pretty and displaying her charms, a woman is insisting upon offering herself up to men.' In other words, she wants to attract their attention to her, and make those who are unaware of her notice her. It is as if she were saying to them, 'Here we are'! Although sometimes we give girls who have yet to be married a certain amount of leeway in this regard, since they might be considered to have an excuse, but what is the excuse of those who are married?! Then Allah *the Almighty* explains the wisdom behind this act of decorum when it comes to wearing clothes, saying: 'so' (*al-Ahzab*: 59), i.e. making one's outer garments hang right down to the ground and cover one's body completely, as well as making sure not to display one's feminine charms is 'to be recognised and not insulted' (*al-Ahzab*: 59).

Muslim women are known by their modest clothes, and thereby prevent anyone from being so bold as to subject them to sexual harassment or molestation.

(1) See *Al-Hakim, Al-Mustadrak*, vol. 4, P. 187, *Hadith from Dahiyya ibn Khalifa Al-Kalbi that Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him sent him to Heraclius. Then when he returned, he peace and blessings be upon him gave him a qubtiyya (an Egyptian garment) and said, 'Make half of it into a shirt for yourself and give the other half to your wife to use as a head-covering. When he had followed (those instructions), Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said, 'Command her to put something on underneath, so that it does not describe the contours of her body.'* *Al-Hakim said, 'This Hadith has a Sahih chain of narrations even though neither of them (i.e. Al-Bukhari and Muslim) narrated it. Adh-Dhahabi, however, said, 'Part of the chain is cut off.'*

A Muslim woman's dress and deportment tells you that she is not one of those cheap sorts of women who await any sort of signal from you, nor is she one of those women who exhibit themselves to men in a provocative way, seeking their full attention. Then, after that, Allah *the Almighty* uses the following words to complete the verse: 'Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful.' (*al-Ahzab*: 59) The Attributes of Mercy and Forgiveness here tells that His Punishment is not retroactive - those occasions upon which we have overstepped the mark beforehand are pardoned and forgiven by the Mercy of Allah *the Almighty*. The important thing is how women act after hearing the command to draw their outer garments about them and cover themselves up. By means of acts of decorum of this sort, Allah *the Almighty* insures the life of the Muslim woman. How does He do that, you might ask? Our response is 'The reality of insurance is taking from you during those times that you are wealthy and have means, and giving it back to you during those times that you are in need and do not have means'. In the same way, Islam protects women and allows them to keep their pride and dignity.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says:

لَئِنْ لَّمْ يَنْتَهِ الْمُنَافِقُونَ وَالَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ وَالْمُرْجِفُونَ فِي
الْمَدِينَةِ لَنُغْرِيَنَّكَ بِهِمْ ثُمَّ لَا يُجَاوِرُونَكَ فِيهَا إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿٦٠﴾
مَلْعُونِينَ أَيْنَمَا ثُقِفُوا أُخِذُوا وَقُتِلُوا قَتْلًا ﴿٦١﴾

**If the hypocrites, the sick at heart, and those who spread
lies in the city do not desist, We shall rouse you [Prophet]
against them, and then they will only be your neighbours
in this city for a short while [60] They will be rejected.
Wherever they are found, they will be arrested and put
to death [61] (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 60 - 61)**

Anyone who closely examines the procession of messages throughout history will notice that there were three different types of people that each messenger came into contact with in the course of spreading his message: those people who believed; those people who rejected; and those people who wavered between belief and rejection. This last group are the hypocrites. It is because whenever a messenger is sent, he is only sent to change the social condition of a people

whose society has become so depraved and corrupt that people can no longer bear it. So, the people who are suffering in that society await the coming of a new messenger, and so they rush to believe in him as soon as he appears since he brings with him new social principles that contain no injustice, no subjugation, no tyranny, no bribery, and no corruption. Therefore, those who have been badly bitten by events and made miserable by corruption, hurry to become believers. Such was the case with the people of Egypt, for as soon as Islam entered their country, they rushed to accept it. Why? Because, before Islam appeared, they had been living in great misery under the yoke of the Byzantines. In this same way, Persia believed simply by hearing about Islam and seeing the excellent example of the Muslims, after undergoing years of corruption at the hands of the non-Muslim rulers who had ruled them previously.

In the very moment that people start suffering from corruption in terms of the conditions in which they live, they start to look for a saviour, and if one comes to them, they will follow him, especially if he is someone from among them who has a distinguished past and from whom they have never once experienced a lie or any form of defect. A good example of this is found in the story of how Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* entered Islam: no sooner had Prophet Muhammad announced that he was sent by Allah, Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* rushed to believe in him without asking about a single thing. Why did he do that? Because he knew Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to be truthful and trustworthy, and so he trusted him absolutely. Something similar also happened when Khadija *Allah be pleased with her* became a believer: no sooner had Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came to her, disturbed by the experience he had had of the angel descending upon him, than she took him in her arms, set his mind at rest, told him that he was just and right and took him to see Waraqa ibn Nawfal to prove to him that he was in right and that Allah *the Almighty* had not abandoned him nor left him to his own accord. Part of what she said to him was, 'By Allah, you give hospitality to your guests, bear other people's burdens, help the destitute and give aid to those who have afflicted by calamities...' ⁽¹⁾.

(1) See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 3*; it is also narrated in six other places in his *Sahih*; see also *Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 160* from a Hadith narrated on the authority of=

That is why the people of knowledge say that Khadija *Allah be pleased with her* was the first jurisprudent in Islam, even before Islam was revealed. As for the people of corruption and all of those who benefit from it, it is natural that they would oppose him *peace and blessings be upon him*, since they profit from corruption and tyranny and want that state of affairs to continue. They want their lordship, hegemony, and social position to remain as it was and for everyone else to remain enslaved to them, giving them all their resources and abasing themselves before them. Those who had enslaved the people and set themselves up as their rulers, and in some cases, their gods, knew that the Messengers *Allah's peace and blessings be upon them* had only come to bring their rule and false godhood to an end. Hence, they saw no option but to oppose the call and to reject it; they saw no option but to fight against it if they wanted to preserve their rule and temporal dominion. It is amazing that we find people amongst the general populace who become accustomed to this servitude and are content to be humiliated in this way and live under the protection of these people, no matter the consequences may be. These people and those like them are the ones who say: 'And they say, too, "Why was not this Quran bestowed from on high on some great man of the two cities?"' (*az-Zukhruf*: 31)

Even after Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came bringing them salvation, they continued to look to the 'great' men who had enslaved them. Both of these two groups (the believers and the disbelievers) are being logical and consistent with what is in themselves since the believer believes in his heart and articulates that belief with his tongue, while the disbeliever rejects in his heart and also rejects with his tongue since he does not utter the testimony of oneness. A human being is made up of a heart and an outer shell; thus when it comes to belief, they must both be in harmony with one another. As for the third group, i.e. the hypocrites, they are neither

= 'Aisha *Allah be pleased with her*. The meaning of 'bear people's burdens' is helping those who are in difficulty and includes spending money on the weak, orphans and so on. 'Turn the non-existent to profit' means turning non-existent money into profit, for the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* had very good fortune when it came to trading. 'Give hospitality to guests' means feeding with the food that is typically given to guests, and 'calamities are the daily events. Look at *An-Nawawi's commentary on Muslim* 2/561 and *Fath Al-Bari of Al-'Asqalani* 1/24.

logical nor consistent with what is in themselves since they claim belief with their tongues, while their hearts are void of belief. They are cowards who outwardly show you love and affection but inwardly despise you, and that is why Allah *the Almighty* has placed them in the lowest levels of Hell. In addition, that is why the Arabs when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* asked them to say, 'There is no god but Allah' in order to bring an end to the dominion of the leaders of disbelief, refused to do so. Why? Because they knew that this statement was not just something that they had to say, but rather, it would bring with it consequences and responsibilities that they did not feel ready for, If it had simply been something that they could say and then that would be the end of it, they would have said it and the enmity between them and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would have come to an end.

This statement, 'There is no god but Allah' means 'There is no worship except to Allah *the Almighty*'; there is no humble submission except to Allah *the Almighty*; there is no legislation except for the sake of Allah *the Almighty*; there is no one who brings benefit except Allah *the Almighty* and so on. How could such meanings feel right to one who had become accustomed to worshipping and humbly submitting to other than Allah *the Almighty*?

When He *the Almighty* talks about hypocrites, He specifically mentions Medina, saying: 'If the hypocrites, the sick at heart, and those who spread lies in the city do not desist...' (*al-Ahzab*: 60). Hypocrisy did not appear in Mecca, the stronghold of unbelief and idolatry, but rather in Medina, the city where the Emigrants sought refuge with and where the majority of its inhabitants were people of the Book, people who were nearer to belief than to unbelief. So, why did this phenomenon appear therein?

The reason, they say, is because Islam was weak in Mecca and only became strong when the Muslims moved to Medina. Hypocrisy is a sign of the healthiness of Islam since had it not been strong, the hypocrites would have had no reason to pretend to be Muslims. So, the appearance of hypocrisy in Medina was a sign that Islam had become strong there and had become a force to be taken into account. So, those whose faith was weak and lacking became hypocrites and pretended to believe in order to partake of the good

that Islam had brought and take advantage of the protection it provided. If that had not been the case, then there would have been no incentive for the weak (of faith) to become hypocrites. Yes, hypocrisy appeared in Medina, about whose inhabitants Allah *the Almighty* Himself says: 'And [it shall be offered, too, unto the poor from among] those who, before them, had their abode in this realm and in faith – [those] who love all that come to them in search of refuge, and who harbour in their hearts no grudge for whatever the others may have been given, but rather give them preference over themselves, even though poverty be their own lot...' (*al-Hashr*: 9); about whom Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Faith will draw back into Medina like a snake draws back into its lair.'⁽¹⁾

It is also the Quran, however, that says about the people of Medina: '...and among the people of the [Prophet's] City [too] there are such as have grown insolent in [their] hypocrisy...' (*at-Tawba*: 101). But, by saying this, it is not saying that Medina is weak. On the contrary, this proclaimed the strength of Islam within it, since it had come to possess the level of power and might that made hypocrisy viable. Here Allah *the Almighty* says: 'If the hypocrites...do not desist...' (*al-Ahzab*: 60). As soon as you hear the words: '...not desist...' (*al-Ahzab*: 60), you know that Allah *the Almighty* has made an oath by something and that this is the apodosis of His Oath clause. Allah *the Almighty* only makes an oath when the matter is of great importance. We, human beings, make oaths to place greater emphasis on what we want to say, such as when we say, 'By Allah, if so-and-so does not do such-and-such, then I will do such-and-such.' What Allah *the Almighty* says, however, is true and comes to pass without any oath, so how do you think it is when He does make an oath?! That is why some of the people of gnosis say when they hear Allah *the Almighty* make an oath, 'Who is that who made the All-Generous so angry that He resorted to using an oath?'

The word *munafiqun* (...hypocrites...) is the plural of the word *munafiq* which is derived from root *nafaqa* ' of the jerboa. The jerboa is a small animal that resembles a mouse and lives in holes in the ground. The people of the

(1) See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 1876; and Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 147, in Kitab Al-'Iman, from a Hadith narrated on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him.*

desert know these animals well and hunt them by watching their holes and waiting for them to come out. However, these small animals have iniquitous and cunning minds. What is that they do? They construct two separate entrances to their holes; one well known and in the open and the other covered over by something. Then, when they feel the hunter's presence at that entrance, they hurry to the other. In this regard, they closely resemble the hypocrite who has the heart of an unbeliever and the tongue of a believer. You will notice that Allah *the Almighty* describes the hypocrites here in this verse with three different attributes: '...the hypocrites, the sick at heart, and those who spread lies in the city...' (*al-Ahzab*: 60), for the conjunction here, 'and', does not mean that those mentioned are three different groups. Rather, it is simply listing three different attributes of a single group.

These attributes are mentioned independently of one another because they were so clearly practiced amongst them that each one had almost come to represent its own separate group.⁽¹⁾ The Quran describes the hypocrites elsewhere as having a sickness in their hearts. Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And there are people who say, 'We do believe in Allah and the Last Day,' the while they do not [really] believe. [8] They would deceive Allah and those who have attained to faith – the while they deceive none but themselves, and perceive it not. [9] In their hearts is disease, and so Allah lets their disease increase; and grievous suffering awaits them because of their persistent lying. [10]' (*al-Ahzab*: 8-10) This indicates that the conjunction 'and' is being used to list a series of attributes for a single group, not a number of different groups. This is similar to how conjunction is used in Allah's words: 'And [it shall be offered, too, unto the poor from among] those who, before them, had their abode in this realm and in faith...' (*al-Hashr*: 9), for in this verse, both *dar* (realm) and *'iman* (faith) are used to refer to Medina. The word *murjifun* '...they who, by spread 'If the hypocrites, the sick at heart, and those who spread lies in the city' (*al-Ahzab*: 60) is the plural of *murjif*, which is derived

(1) See *Al-Qurtubi, Tafsir*, 8/5513; *Abu Razin* said, 'They were one thing.' In other words, they had gathered together all of three of these attributes within themselves. It is also said that, among the hypocrites, there were some spread false rumours; some who followed women around in order to create doubts as to their chastity and some who tried to instill doubts into the hearts of the Muslims.

from *irjaf* meaning 'the violent shaking that happens in an earthquake'. Allah *the Almighty* Himself uses this word when He says: '[Hence, think of] the Day when a violent convulsion will convulse [the world], [6] to be followed by further [convulsions]! [7]' (*an-Nazi'at*: 6-7) so, the *murjifun* are those who attempt to shake loose something that is stable and firmly rooted. The hypocrites are the same - whenever they see that Islam has become strong, they try to upset it and shake it loose in order to weaken it and bring about its end. These are those people whom we refer to in modern political speech as the 'fifth column'. They are that group of people who spread rumours and falsehoods that undermine a nation's solidarity and threaten its stability. The hypocrites often remained behind and said, 'the tribe of so-and-so and the tribe of so-and-so have joined together in order to attack Medina and bring an end to Muhammad and the Message that he has brought.' Their aim in spreading these rumours was to weaken the spirit of those Muslims who were new or weak. They even used this ploy against particular individuals. When they heard that someone was thinking about becoming Muslim or his heart was leaning towards it, they would come to him and say, 'Do you not know that so-and-so was taken by his family - or taken by his master - and tortured until he died because he followed Muhammad?' By such statements, they sought to turn people away from Allah's Religion. So the *murjif* is the one who tries by means of lies and intrigue to turn the people of Truth away from that Truth, filling their ears with falsehoods and lies. That is why Allah *the Almighty* threatens them, saying, 'If those hypocrites do not desist from spreading false rumours in Medina and trying to lead people astray, then they will have to answer to Us.' This was at a time when the truce between the Muslims and the Jews and their followers from among the hypocrites was in effect, so it is as if Allah *the Almighty* is saying to them: 'We said nothing of their crimes until Islam became strong and powerful. But Islam has now become strong and powerful, so if they break the contract they have made with us, we shall confront them.' And it is an amazing thing that these *murjifun* thought that neither Allah nor His Messenger Muhammad knew of the lies they were spreading. He *the Almighty* says: 'Or do they in whose hearts is disease think, perchance, that Allah would never bring their moral failings to light? [29] Now had We so willed, We could have shown them clearly to thee, so that

you would know them for sure as by a visible mark: but [even so,] you will most certainly recognise them by the tone of their voice. And Allah knows all that you do, [O men;] [30]' (*Muhammad*: 29-30). The meaning of *lahn al-qawl* (tone of their voice) is twisting words so that they deviate from their meaning, such as when they greeted, him *peace and blessings be upon him* with *as-samu* '*alaykum*, using the word *sam* (death) instead of the word *salam* (peace); or when they twisted the word *ra'ina* (look at us), saying instead *ra'una* (stupidity). Even stranger than that is what the Quran relates about them: '...and they say to themselves, 'Why does not Allah chastise us for what we are saying?' (*al-Mujadala*: 8)

This statement of theirs indicates how stupid they truly are in two ways: firstly by the fact that they wish to be punished; and secondly by the fact that they say those words to themselves, not to other people and not even to one another. We know that, because 'they say' is in the plural and 'themselves' is in the plural, and so it is as if every one of them were saying those words to himself. So, how could a single one of them then not ask himself who it was who told Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* what they said to themselves in secret? Did that not prove that Muhammad had a direct connection to his Lord and that he would inevitably expose them and reveal the secrets concealed within their breasts? This shows the level of their stupidity. Anyone who studies the history of the Jews and hypocrites in Medina will find that Islam did not take them unawares, but rather made a pact with them, guaranteed their safety and security and gave them the space they needed to live their lives to the full, so long as they did not do harm to the Muslims. However, it reached Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that they were conferring secretly in wrongdoing and enmity, so he sent for them and forbade them from doing that. However, they went back to doing that a second time, as Allah *the Almighty* Himself relates about them: 'Are you not aware of such as have been forbidden [to intrigue through] secret confabulations, and yet [always] revert to that which they have been forbidden...' (*al-Mujadala*: 8). So, no course remained except to confront them, as the following lines of poetry by the poet⁽¹⁾ prescribe:

(1) The poet is Ibrahim ibn Al-'Abbas As-Suli, the most recognised writer in Iraq during the time that he lived. He was originally from Khorasan, but was brought up in Baghdad.=

Patience, but if it does not suffice, then follow it
with a warning; and if that is not enough, then firm resolutions.⁽¹⁾

That is why in the apodosis of the conditional clause: 'If the hypocrites, the sick at heart, and those who spread lies in the city do not desist, We shall rouse you [Prophet] against them...' (*al-Ahzab*: 60), Allah *the Almighty* says: '...We shall rouse you against them...' (*al-Ahzab*: 60). The verb in this apodosis *nughriyann* (give mastery) is derived from the word *ighra'*, which is the name of an Arabic grammatical structure whose opposite is (attraction): it is to say something to make some act or matter beloved or attractive to the person you are addressing in order to make him do it, such as, for example, when you say to your son, 'Hard work! Hard work!'

As for warning, it is to scare someone away from some disagreeable matter in order to get them to steer clear of it, such as, for example, when you call out to them, 'Lion! Lion!' or say to them, 'Laziness! Laziness!' So the meaning of: '...We shall indeed give thee mastery over them, [O Muhammad]...' (*al-Ahzab*: 60) is 'We will give you power over them and make it desirable for you to confront and oppose them.' It is as if this act of confronting them had become something beloved and desirable, because it would serve as a means of paying them back for the fear and alarm that they had caused you. And while you have this mastery over them and possess strength and power coveted by others, they will never be able to remain in Medina with you. As for the saying of Allah, '...and then they will only be your neighbors in this city for a short while.' (*al-Ahzab*: 60), it refers to Medina. As for word *qalil* in the phrase: '...for a short while' (*al-Ahzab*: 60), it either refers to 'a few of them' or 'only a short period of time'. 'They will be rejected. Wherever they are found, they will be arrested and put to death.' (*al-Ahzab*: 61)

The *mal'un* (rejected one) is either one who is bereft of Allah's Mercy or who is exiled from Medina after their wicked innermost thoughts and

= He was the court scribe of Al-Mu'tasim, Al-Wathiq and Al-Mutawakkil; he was born in 243 AH. He was one of the poets of the Abbasid era.

(1) This line is from a poem written in the (Tawil) metre. See *Al-'Aghani of Al-'Asfahani and Al-'Awa'il of Abu Hilal Al-'Askari* (p. 419).

intentions were revealed to all by Allah *the Almighty*. That is why Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* expelled them from the Mosque, for, in their wickedness and iniquity, they had been attending the Mosque and even praying in the front row, thinking that it would keep their hypocrisy secret. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* however, would expel them by name, saying, ‘So-and-so and So-and-so, get out of the mosque!’⁽¹⁾ He used to know them by name, and why should he not when Allah *the Almighty* said about him: ‘Now had we so willed, We could have shown them clearly to you, so that you would know them for sure as by a visible mark...’ (*Muhammad*: 30).

‘...wherever they may be found...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 61), i.e. ‘they are found’, ‘...they shall be arrested...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 61), i.e. ‘taken into captivity’ ‘...and put to death’ (*al-Ahzab*: 61) Here, we should note the exaggeration and emphasis in the phrase: ‘...and put to death...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 61). In other words, kill them violently and do not let compassion get in the way of repaying them for the wrongs they have committed against Islam and the Muslims. (Kill them) because the nature of a hypocrite whose hypocrisy is innate has become so poisoned and polluted that it can never ever become pure again - hypocrisy is in their blood and constantly accompanies him wherever he goes. Indeed, their nature is such that it is inevitable that they will ultimately be expelled from any place in which they settle. Thus, although Allah *the Almighty* has split mankind up into different nations, He has placed every nation within its own land, giving them a level of internal cohesion such that they do not split into other societies and maintain their own identities. This means that they each have specific places and locations by which they are known. And in each of these countries, the quarter in which the Jews resided was well known, but it was inevitable that people would eventually come to realise their ignominy and shameful behaviour and so expel them or wipe them out. The last example of this was what took place in Germany. Allah *the Almighty* speaks truly when

(1) See *Al-Qurtubi, Tafsir*, vol. 8, p. 5515; it is narrated that when the chapter of *At-Tawba* was revealed, the Companions assembled and the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘O So-and-so, get up and leave for you are hypocrite! And you, O So-and-so, get up!’ Thereupon, their fellow Muslims got up and took charge of expelling them from the Mosque.’ See also (*Zad Al-Masir*) of Ibn Al-Jawzi (3/492).

He says about them: ‘And lo! Your Lord made it known that most certainly He would rouse against them, unto Resurrection Day, people who would afflict them with cruel suffering...’ (*al-A‘raf*: 167).

Then Allah *the Almighty* says:

سُنَّةَ اللَّهِ فِي الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَلَنْ تَجِدَ لِسُنَّةِ اللَّهِ تَبْدِيلًا

This has been God’s practice with those who went before.

You will find no change in God’s practices [62]

(The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 62)

After Allah *the Almighty* explains how His enemies will meet their end by being slain and how His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* will be victorious, He makes it clear that this is not some new development in terms of how He deals with His Messengers, but, on the contrary, has been a *Sunna* (usual practice) that He has followed and repeated again and again throughout history. Look at the previous Messengers sent by Allah *the Almighty* - is there even one whom Allah *the Almighty* sent and then deserted or abandoned and gave His enemies the final victory over him? A *Sunna* is a way that someone follows and that corresponds to his nature, that he repeats time and again and that he never abandons. So, if something happens once or twice, it cannot be called a *Sunna* - it must be something that is of a continuous and repetitive nature. In this particular case, *Sunna* refers to truth overcoming falsehood: ‘...with those who went before...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 62) i.e. those who have passed away from previous nations, Allah’s *Sunna* of giving Truth victory over falsehood still stands, and it will continue to stand until the Final Hour is established. ‘...You will find no change in Allah’s practices.’ (*al-Ahzab*: 62) Yes, it will never be altered or changed in any way because this is Allah’s *Sunna*. It is Allah’s *Sunna*, and Allah *the Almighty* has no equal or partner who can change what He has caused to be, nor emend any judgement He has caused to pass. Then, after making this clear, Allah *the Almighty* wanted to let us know that the Way of Guidance brought by Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* from His Lord, containing His Commands and Prohibitions and the means for us to be rid of our enemies, must be respected since it will hand all of mankind over to another life where their reception will be totally dependent upon the actions

that they have done; another life in which they will live with the One Who is the cause of all, not with secondary causes. So, beware of thinking that Allah *the Almighty* created you, and gave you your provision and the blessings and comforts you take for granted in this world, and that that is the end of the matter and that anyone who abandons His Way of Guidance will escape His Punishment. No, rather, you must always remember that it is to Him that you will return and that you will never slip from His Grasp.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

يَسْأَلُكَ النَّاسُ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ قُلْ إِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ
وَمَا يُدْرِيكَ لَعَلَّ السَّاعَةَ تَكُونُ قَرِيبًا ﴿٦٣﴾

People ask you about the Hour. Say, ‘God alone has knowledge of it.’ How could you [Prophet] know? The Hour may well be near[63] (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 63)

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was often asked about the Last Hour. Indeed, asking questions about matters about which we are held legally accountable is a healthy sign, since to ask such questions is a sign that someone believes in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* loves his religious duties and wants his life to be based on Islamic principles right from the start. Presupposing that Islam came upon certain practices that had been carried over from the time of ignorance before Islam and affirmed them, it is to be expected that people would come and ask what the position of Islam was concerning them, seeking by that to safeguard their religion and make sure they were doing the right thing. Allah *the Almighty* however, wanted to make matters easy for people, so He said: ‘O you who have attained to faith! Do not ask about matters which, if they were to be made manifest to you [in terms of law], might cause you hardship...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 101). Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘Leave me with what I have left to you, for those who came before you were only destroyed because of their excessive questioning of their prophets, and their opposition to them.’⁽¹⁾

(1) See Ahmad, *Musnad*, 2/247; Muslim, *Sahih*, no. 1337, in *Kitab Al-Hajj*; and by Ibn Maja, *Sunnan*, no.2 in a Hadith from Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him. The actual wording of=

So, the type of question that is sought is that which is about matters that a Muslim is held responsible for, even when those matters had been carried over from the time of ignorance before Islam. And, indeed, there were many matters and practices from that time that Islam affirmed, such as blood money, for example, the payment of which pre-dated Islam, was practiced by the pre-Islamic Arabs, and was then confirmed by Islam. Allah *the Almighty* commands Muslims to ask about matters such as these when He says: '...and if you have not [yet] realised this, ask the followers of [earlier] revelation.' (*an-Nahl*: 43) As for asking about the Last Hour, the Last Hour is an unseen matter that only Allah *the Almighty* knows so there is no use in asking someone about it. That is why Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* replied when he was asked when the Last Hour would be, 'What have you prepared for it?'⁽¹⁾ thus directing his questioner to the question he should have been asking and with which he should have concerned himself. This noble verse: 'People will ask you about the Last Hour...' (*al-Ahzab*: 63) came down after the battle in which the affront to Allah *the Almighty* His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* and the believers took place. Those who instigated this affront were those who did not believe in Heaven, or in Allah or in the fact that a transmission had come down from Allah *the Almighty* to them through the medium of a Messenger.

The reality of the matter, however, was that their effrontery against Allah *the Almighty* did not harm Him *the Almighty* but merely harmed themselves since harm does not reach Him *the Almighty*. Allah *the Almighty* desires nothing but

= the Hadith is as follows: 'Leave me with what I have left to you, for those who came before you were only destroyed because of their excessive questioning of their Prophets, and their opposition to them. So when I command you to do something, do as much as remove as of it as you can, and when I forbid you to do something, stop doing it.'

- (1) Anas ibn Malik Allah be pleased with him narrated that a desert Arab said to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'When will the Last Hour be?' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, 'What have you prepared for it?' The man said, 'Love of Allah and His Messenger.' So Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, 'You will be with those whom you love.' It is narrated by Muslim in his *Sahih* (2639); and by Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* (6167 & 6171). In the wording of the version narrated by Al-Bukhari, the man said, 'I have not prepared lots of prayers for it nor fasting or charity. But I love Allah and His Messenger,' so the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, 'You will be with those whom you love.'

good for them since they are His slaves and His creation. So when they abandon the program that He *the Almighty* has set up for them, they are harming none but themselves. As for their causing harm to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* they caused harm to both his person and his family. They subjected him to the type of effrontery that any self-respecting human being would reject, attacking him both physically and verbally. But despite that, prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* bore it with patience and stoicism, as did his Companions against whose persons and property abuse had also been directed. Anyone who reflects upon this will find meaning and philosophical significance in this abuse, for it was something that Allah *the Almighty* Himself wanted in order to test the believers and find out - and Allah knows best - which of them were firm in their faith.

That is why Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Do men think that on their [mere] saying, "We have attained to faith," they will be left to themselves, and will not be put to a test?' (*al-'Ankabut*: 2) We have already previously made it clear that faith is not merely a phrase that is said. Rather, it is a responsibility that demands action. It is for that very reason that the disbelievers of Mecca refused to utter the words of faith - they were fully aware of their true significance because they were a people who understood the power and meaning of words. The unshakeable resolve and stoicism of prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the believers prove that they had compared the degree of harm that human beings with their limited capacities could cause them in this world and that which Allah *the Almighty* could cause them in the Hereafter. Since the degree of harm that Allah *the Almighty* could cause them in the Hereafter would be consistent with His power and capacity, it is not something from which anyone could possibly escape. So, we say that there was a wisdom and philosophical significance to the abuse since, Allah *the Almighty* could have seized the enemies of His religion with the seizing of One Who is Almighty, All-Powerful if He *the Almighty* had so wished, just like He *the Almighty* seized the people of Noah by means of the Flood, the people of Pharaoh by drowning them and Qarun by making the ground swallow him up. But, instead, Allah *the Almighty* wanted them to receive their punishment at the hands of His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the

believers. Indeed, if a general punishment had come down upon them, they would probably have said that it was simply a natural disaster like earthquakes and volcanoes. That is why Allah *the Almighty* says, addressing the believers: 'Fight against them! Allah will chastise them by your hands, and will bring disgrace upon them, and will succour you against them...' (*at-Tawba*: 14). Then Allah *the Almighty* comforts and consoles His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with the words: '...And whether We show you [in this world] something of what we hold in store for those [deniers of the truth], or whether We cause you to die [before that retribution takes place – know that, in the end], it is unto Us that they will be brought back.' (*Ghafir*: 77) Thus, there are two ways in which Allah *the Almighty* responds to this abuse: one in this world by giving His Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* victory over them, like when He *the Almighty* says to him: '[Yet] the hosts [of those who deny the truth] shall be routed, and they shall turn their backs [in flight]!' (*al-Qamar*: 45); and one in the Hereafter on the Day of Rising. That is why He *the Almighty* says: 'People will ask you about the Last Hour...' (*al-Ahzab*: 63). The question which Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was asked was directed towards two matters, the first of which was in order to show him up and give him something that he would find impossible to answer. There were certain matters which the Jews knew about from their own books and prophets, so they wanted to embarrass prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by asking him questions about them, thinking that he would be unable to respond because he was illiterate, having never learnt to read or write, and had never received instruction from any teacher. However, Allah *the Almighty* helped His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and taught him the answer. Then, when he answered their questions correctly, they would be overcome with fury and try to pick holes in his answer in order to prove to themselves that Prophet Muhammad did not really know the answer. An example of this was the question they asked about the People of the Cave when they asked him how long they had remained there. Allah *the Almighty* replied to them by saying: 'And, 'They remained in their cave three hundred years'; and some have added nine [to that number]!' (*al-Kahf*: 25)

They replied, ‘According to what we know, they remained there for three hundred years, so where do you get those extra years from?’ But they were ignorant of the fact that divine rituals in religion are always measured according to the lunar calendar and not according to the movements of the sun. This is because the sun can only tell us when days begin and end, not when months begin and end. As for the Arab lunar calendar, it does have a sign that distinguishes the months from each other and that is the appearance of the new moon at the start of each month. If you were to compare the lunar year to the Christian solar year, you would find the lunar year to be shorter than the solar year by eleven days. Therefore, three hundred Christian years is the equivalent of three hundred and nine Muslim lunar years. It is as if they wanted to show Muhammad to be ignorant, so Allah *the Almighty* showed them that they were the ignorant ones. And it is amazing that the Jews would object to this method of reckoning time, since it was the very same method of measuring time that was used by Moses *Allah’s peace be upon him* in worshipping his Lord. Did Allah *the Almighty* Himself not say: ‘and [then] we appointed for Moses thirty nights [on Mount Sinai]; and we added to them ten, whereby the term of forty nights set by his Sustainer was fulfilled...’ (*al-A’raf*: 142)?

Allah’s words: ‘...and some have added nine [to that number]’ (*al-Kahf*: 25) are eloquent and miraculous in terms of the way they are expressed since they indicate that the extra nine years came about from within the three hundred years and are not outside of them. Then they asked him about a man who wandered the earth, so Allah *the Almighty* sent down the words: ‘And they will ask you about The Two-Horned One...’ (*al-Kahf*: 83). That should have been enough to show them the truthfulness of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and make them ask themselves how he could possibly know such things when he was illiterate and had never received instruction from any teacher. That is why we say that, although it is a defect for any human being to be illiterate, it was a mark of honour and distinction with respect to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* since it proved their accusations that a human being had instructed him to be false. Rather, it was his Lord who instructed him.

In the same way, the community to whom the Quran was revealed was also illiterate. This fact was also a mark of honour with respect to them, if

their community had been noted for its culture and learning, people would have said that Islam was simply an example of them taking their civilisation to the next level. But the fact is that they were an illiterate people governed by means of a tribal system whereby each individual tribe had its own structure and laws and its own leader. But despite that, a person came from amongst those people with a universal system of governance that was suitable for administrating the entire world from then until the end of time. And that is not possible without a Divine Way of Guidance. So, with respect to the Arabs, illiteracy was a mark of honour. Another mark of honour was their inability to imitate the Quran or produce anything like it, since the fact that Allah *the Almighty* challenged them with the literary style of the Quran proves how great they were when it came to using language - one does not challenge one who is weak in something, one only challenges those who are strong and proficient. So, the fact that Allah *the Almighty* challenged the Arabs to do this bears witness to the fact that they were the most eloquent of creation and the most skilled in the use of language. So the miracle that was sent to them was in that field in which they were unsurpassed.

Then the Jews asked Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* about the Last Hour: 'People will ask thee about the Last Hour...' (*al-Ahzab*: 63). When it says that they asked about the Last Hour, it means that they asked about the Day of Rising, since they denied its occurrence. Indeed, it was in their own best interests that such a day never comes since, on it, they would be questioned and taken to task for the crimes that they perpetrated in this world, including tyranny, associating others with Allah *the Almighty*, quarrelsomeness, slander, and spilling the blood of others. If these people were to look at matter of the resurrection and reckoning with their intellects - not with Quranic texts - they would discover that it is something that is completely logical and that will inevitably come to pass. Take us, for example: we were contemporaries of the rise of the Communist Party in Russia in 1917 and saw how they seized the feudal lords and capitalists in their country and punished them, doing terrible things to them and confiscating their possessions and holdings as a repayment for the injustice that they had visited upon the people. To these communists we used to say, 'It is indeed logical to seek retribution from those who have oppressed you, but what about all those other tyrants and oppressors

who died before your time or slipped from your grasp because you were unable to get to them in time? By Allah, if some people were to come to you and lead you to the place where one of these tyrants was living, would you not praise him and thank him for his help? So how about if he were to say to you that he would fetch the tyrant himself, then take him to task and exact vengeance upon him? Would that not be of help to you in your task of taking revenge upon the tyrants and oppressors?' That is why we say, 'Communists should be the first people to believe in the Day of Rising, the Resurrection, and the Reckoning, since on that day they can set matters right and get recompense from those who slipped from their grasp.' Another thing - do you not, whatever legislative system you follow, strive to create systematised and organised laws? What are laws but sets of rules that define for citizens what it is they can and cannot do? Do these laws of yours not contain the principle of rewarding those who do right and punishing those who fall short? It is inevitable in every society that there will be people who operate outside the system and so deserve to be punished. But what will the punishment be for those who, despite the extent of their corruption and tyranny, are able to deceive the entire society and conceal their crime?

Therefore, we must believe that there is another power from whom nobody can hide, whom nobody can deceive and from whom nobody can flee; a power that knows people's secret crimes, exposes them and calls them to account for them. This inevitably and naturally drives you to believe in Allah *the Almighty* as well as in the fact that He *the Almighty* is All-Aware and All Knowing: '...and not a leaf falls but He knows it; and neither is there a grain in the earth's deep darkness, nor anything living or dead, but is recorded in...' (*al-An'am*: 59).

Why do you deny that the Rising will occur when your own earthly organisations and governments enlist spies and intelligence operatives and listen in to the hushed whispers of the people in order to find out who is trying to operate unnoticed by the law? Is it not an example of Allah's bounteous grace that He *the Almighty* knows what is kept hidden from you and retaliates against your opponents on your behalf? It is natural and instinctive for man to believe in the Rising and Reckoning which is why you find those who deny them are those who have transgressed against themselves and fear the punishment that awaits them on that day. So, the only thing left for them is to

deny it and refuse to acknowledge its occurrence. For them, it is as if fleeing from it solves the problem. The chapter of *al-Kahf* (the cave) provides us with a good example of one of these people, and that is the companion of the garden who said: 'And neither do I think that the Last Hour will ever come...' (*al-Kahf*: 36), after having transgressed against himself and been ungrateful for the blessings that Allah *the Almighty* had given him, And then when he came to and came back to his nature, he said: '...But even if [it should come, and] I am brought before my Sustainer, I will surely find something even better than this as [my last] resort!' (*al-Kahf*: 36) Because his instinct to reject was more dominant, he used an expression of doubt when he said: '...But even if [it should come, and] I am brought before my Sustainer...' (*al-Kahf*: 36). In other words, 'And even supposing that I am brought before my Lord on the Day of Rising, He will have something in store for me there that is better than what he gave me in this world, for just as He honoured in this world, He will also honour me there.'

This is, however, a wrong-sighted and foolish belief, since Allah *the Almighty* only honours in the Hereafter those who honour themselves in this world by following the Divine Program He *the Almighty* has set up for them. Those who do not honour themselves by following Allah's Divine Program here will never be honoured by Him there. We often hear people say, 'I make my supplication, but Allah did not answer me', especially women. One time, a woman came to me, complaining that she had turned in supplication to Allah *the Almighty* and yet, despite that, her daughter had not married, her son had not got such-and-such and her husband had not got such-and-such. So I said to her, 'Lots of good things have come to you. Firstly, you have the knowledge that you have a Lord with whom you can take refuge in times of hardship, unlike those about whom Allah *the Almighty* says: 'yet when the misfortune decreed by us befell them, they did not humble themselves...' (*al-An'am*: 43). Let me ask you something: did you first answer Allah *the Almighty* with regard to the things He *the Almighty* asked of you, so that now you are in a position to expect Him to answer you with regard to the things you ask of Him? Did you answer Allah *the Almighty* with regard to this hair of yours? Did you answer Him with regard to your see-through clothes and the way you have changed Allah's creation?' The only response that she had to this was to say, 'By Allah, my

heart is pure and I harm no one...etc.’ So, you take Allah *the Almighty* to task for not answering you when you supplicate to Him, but do not take yourselves to task for not answering Him when He *the Almighty* calls on you, despite the fact that He *the Almighty* called on you first. If you first strive to answer Allah’s call to you, then you can be confident that He *the Almighty* will answer your call to Him. Now, let us return to the topic at hand, which was our discussion of the question that was related in the Noble Quran. By asking about the Last Hour, the questioner either wants to gain certainty that it is going to happen or thinks that it is taking too long to come, and wants it to happen now. Questions appear often in the Book of Allah *the Almighty* and the reason for that is because the Quran was not revealed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in one go. No, rather, it was revealed in instalments according to the events that unfolded around him in order to give people the opportunity to ask questions about them. And these questions either came about as a challenge to prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* or a request for more information about the rulings which Allah *the Almighty* had sent down to His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Such latter form of question came from those who were passionate in their belief and wanted every movement they made in life to be based completely upon the guidance their faith brought them. These people even ask about matters whose roots stretched back into the time of ignorance before Islam. Why did they ask when these actions had been affirmed by Islam? Because they wanted the actions upon which their lives were built to be based on worship, not pre-Islamic custom. When dealing with questions such as these, the Quran says on one occasion: ‘And they will ask you about [woman’s] monthly courses. Say: ‘It is an impurity...’ (*al-Baqara*: 222). So, when prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was asked this question, he did not say, ‘It is a vulnerable condition’ because he was not the one giving the answer, he was merely passing on a message from Allah *the Almighty* for it was Allah *the Almighty* who had said those words. So Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘...Say: ‘It is an impurity...’(*al-Baqara*: 222). The word *qul* (Say) is part of what Allah *the Almighty* said to me, and I am transmitting what He *the Almighty* said, word for word, exactly the same as He *the Almighty* said it to me.

Amazingly, some people call for the omission of the word 'say' from the Quran on the basis that it adds nothing new to the meaning. In fact, this word in question proves the truthfulness of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the fact that what he brought was divine and not out of him. He is no more than a conveyor of Allah's Message. Allah orders him to 'say' and he conveyed it exactly as it was. For example, Allah says, 'And they ask you as to what they should spend. Say, "What you can spare."' (*al-Baqara*: 219) Allah *the Almighty* also says elsewhere: 'They ask you as to what they should spend. Say, "Whatever wealth you spend, it is for the parents and the near of kin."' (*al-Baqara*: 215)

However, the Arabic word for 'say' sometimes appears in the Quran linked to the conjunction *fa* and sometimes not. Why is that? This is one of the miraculous features of the linguistic construction of the Quran. Whenever it is used directly without the conjunction, it indicates that the question has already been asked such as the question in the verse that reads: 'They ask you concerning the new moon. Say, "They are times appointed for [the benefit of] men and [for] the pilgrimage."' (*al-Baqara*: 189) While when it is linked to the conjunction, it indicates that the question had not been asked yet but would be asked in the future, as in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'And they ask you about the mountains. Say, "My Lord will carry them away from the roots."' (*Ta Ha*: 105) Thus, it means when they ask you in the future about the mountains, say, O Prophet Muhammad, 'My Lord will carry them away from the roots'. The answer was prepared in advance for a question that would inevitably be asked by them. Such is another instance of the miraculous nature of the Noble Quran as they could have abstained from asking that question. However, no way anyone can contradict the Speech of Allah or His Knowledge!

Since Allah says that they will say it, they will most definitely say it. Similarly, is the case we made very clear when we discussed the verse that reads: 'Perdition overtake both hands of Abu Lahab and he will perish. His wealth and what he earns will not avail him. He shall soon burn in fire that flames and his wife, the bearer of fuel, upon her neck a halter of strongly twisted rope.' (*al-Masad*: 1-5) Allah decreed that this stubborn disbeliever would die as a disbeliever and that he and his wife would end up in the

Hellfire. Abu Lahab and his wife heard these verses and knew that they were true. Yet, they did not believe, not even hypocritically, while others whose disbelief and stubborn rejection of Allah were even stronger such as `Amr ibn Al-`As and Khalid ibnul Walid, among many others, did believe in Allah.

That is because the One Who passed that judgement and informed us that Abu Lahab would never believe, knew that he would meet his end in that state, no matter how often he was warned. Abu Lahab was a striking example of the inanity of disbelievers for if he were to have gone to one of the assemblies of Quraysh after the revelation of those verses and announced his acceptance of the religion of Islam; he would have embarrassed the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and proved the falsehood of the Quran. Nevertheless, he did not and would never do it despite that he was a human being with free will.

Moreover, there is only one verse in the Quran where the answer for the question appears without being preceded by the word 'say', whether linked to the conjunction or not. That verse reads: 'And when My servants ask you concerning Me, then surely I am very near.' (*al-Baqara*: 186) Why is that? Scholars observed that the question here is related to Allah and thereby He answers it directly with no intermediary. The question was about something which was near and directly connected to you, thus the answer is also direct and immediate.

Before, we mentioned the aspects of the words relating to what they ask you. Next comes the Hour, about which they asked. The Arabic word for the Hour is the same as a clock (a well-known instrument) which tells the time during the day or night, equally for there is no hour longer than another. The clock or sundial that the Arabs invented was a repeater clock using water. It was a tank from which drops of water were dripping. Every drop of water that fell would cause the hands of the clock to make an equal move. The reason a clock used the same word as hour was because the hour was the shortest division of time for day and night known of at that time. It was only after that that we came to know of the minute, the second, and the milliseconds.

The Arabs in particular, were so keen to calculate time, thus thought of creating an instrument to measure it because Islam is based entirely around

acts of worship with prescribed times during which they must be performed. Hence, they invent the clock. Therefore, it seems that Allah, by calling the Day of Judgement an Hour, is using the nature of human beings; He is saying that the Hour that you are waiting for is like that instrument of measuring the times that make up the movements of your lives. That is why Shawqi *Allah rest his soul* said:

Every heartbeat that a man has is telling him

That life is minutes and seconds

Allah *Glorified is He* refers to both the technical hour and the Hour saying: 'And at the time when the hour shall come, the guilty shall swear [that] they did not tarry but an hour.' (*ar-Rum*: 55) Thus, Allah brings together the Hour that refers to the Day of Judgement and the hour that is part of our days and nights. Thus, the meaning of the verse under discussing is that people will ask whether the Day of Judgement exists or not. However, when you tell them it does exist, they will say, 'Then bring to us what you threaten us with, if you are of the truthful ones.' (*al-A'raf*: 70)

Allah mentions the inquiry of people about the Last Hour twice in the Quran. The first one occurs in the verse we are discussing, while the second is in the chapter of *ash-Shura* where Allah says, 'Allah it is who revealed the Book with truth, and the balance, and what shall make you know that haply the hour be near?' (*ash-Shura*: 17) We first notice that the Arabic word for near is not in the feminine form even though the word Hour is feminine. The scholars said that the reason for this is that it refers to the time when the Hour will occur and the word for time is masculine. Thus, the meaning of the verse is, 'And what shall make you know that haply the hour be near'. Some of the grammarians say that the Arabic word for near has the morphological form *fa'il* which remains the same regardless of whether it is in the masculine or feminine as in verse where Allah says, 'and the angels after that are the aiders' (*at-Tahrim*: 4).

We notice that in the first verse, Allah adds the verb 'to be' in the first verse, whereas, in the second verse, He omits it. Why is this? Scholars say that is because there are two types of questions that were asked about the Last

Hour, one about whether it existed or not and the other about a secondary matter that followed on from the fact that it did exist.

In our grammar lessons, we teach our students about (*kana*) and her sister verbs. Grammatically speaking, *kana* is a defective past tense verb that puts the predicate in the nominative case and the object in the accusative case. However, it can sometimes be used as an intransitive complete verb, making do with its subject, as in the verse: ‘And if [the debtor] is in hardship’ (*al-Baqara*: 280). Thus, Allah replies in these two verses to those who asked questions about the Last Hour, either because they denied its existence or because they believed in it but wanted to know when it was going to come.

As for the statement: ‘what shall make you know’ (*ash-Shura*: 17), it means who informed you of such-and-such a time as you ask someone; ‘did you know of something’?

In ‘*Ilm al-Usul* (the science of the principles of Islamic Jurisprudence), they divide knowledge into two types: ‘*ilm al-diraya* (the science of comprehending the text of Hadith), and ‘*ilm al-riwaya* (science of the narration of prophetic tradition). *Ilm al-riwaya* is like the one who memorises the Noble Quran in all its seven, ten, or fourteen variant readings, without knowing the meanings of its verses. This is because He, only, has the knowledge of the Quran, at the level of *riwaya*. As for the one who specialises in the commentary of the Quran and understanding its rulings and meanings, his knowledge is called knowledge of *diraya*. From this, we can say that *diraya* is: knowing something in a detailed way, while *riwaya* is: knowing something in a general way

It is due to Allah’s wisdom that those who have memorised the Noble Quran are — except in a few cases — not themselves scholars; for when scholars fail to remember a word while reciting the Quran, they are often driven by their learning to insert another word with a similar meaning, such as, for example, replacing *tabayyanu* (check it) with *tathabbatu*⁽¹⁾ (verify it); whereas those who have memorised the Quran by *riwaya* alone, when confronted by the same situation, will not recite beyond that point until they remember the word they have forgotten. It is by this that Allah *Glorified is He* preserves His Words.

(1) Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘(Hence,) O you who have attained to faith, when you go forth (to war) in Allah’s Cause, use your discernment...’ (*an-Nisa*: 94).

One thing we notice about this word (*diraya*) is that sometimes it comes in the present tense, as in: *wa ma yudrika* ‘...How do you know?’ (*ash-Shura*: 17), and sometimes it comes in the past tense, as in: *wa ma adraka* ‘what made you know...’ (*al-Mursalat*: 14). Each of these two usages has its own special significance: when Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...How do you know?...’ (*ash-Shura*: 17), it means that there is no way that anyone could ever tell you about this matter, not now and not in the future; whereas when Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘what made you know...’ (*al-Mursalat*: 14), it indicates that it was not possible for anyone to tell you about this matter before, but it is possible for Us to tell you about it now.

Examples of this (*wa ma adraka*) include Allah’s words: ‘And what makes you know what *Saqar* [scorching Fire] is? It spares nothing and leaves nothing.’ (*al-Muddaththir*: 26-28) He also says: ‘And what made you know what the Day of Judgement is? Woe, that Day, to the deniers.’ (*al-Mursalat*: 14-15) He also says: ‘The Inevitable Hour. What is the Inevitable Hour? And what made you know what the Inevitable Reality is?’ (*al-Haqqa*: 1-4) He also says: ‘The Striking Calamity. What is the Striking Calamity? And what could make you know what the Striking Calamity is?’ (*al-Qari’a*: 1-4) He also says: ‘But he has not broken through the difficult pass. And what could make you know what [breaking through] the difficult pass is? It is the freeing of a slave. Or feeding on a day of severe hunger.’ (*al-Balad*: 11-14)

He also says: ‘But as for one whose scales are light, his refuge will be an abyss. And what could make you know what that is? It is a Fire, intensely hot.’ (*al-Qari’a*: 8-11) He also says: ‘and what made you know what the Day of Recompense is? Then, what made you know what the Day of Recompense is? It is the Day when a soul will not possess for another soul [power to do] a thing; and the command, that Day, is [entirely] with Allah.’ (*al-Infitar*: 17-19) He also says: ‘Indeed, We sent the Quran down during the Night of Decree. And what made you know what the Night of Decree is? The Night of Decree is better than a thousand months.’ (*al-Qadr*: 1-3)

So, every time the phrase, ‘And what made you know...’ is used, it means that you did not know about it before, but Allah *Glorified is He* will tell you about it now or in the future. As for *wa ma yudrika*: ‘...How would you

know?’ (*al-Ahzab*: 63), it means that the matter under discussion is unknown and will remain unknown since Allah *Glorified is He* is not going to tell you about it. The timing of the Last Hour falls under this category: ‘How would you [Prophet] know? The Hour may well be near.’ (*al-Ahzab*: 63)

The True Lord did not inform us of its time because, sometimes, things can be more clearly shown by being left concealed. Allah *Glorified is He*, for example, keeps the time of our death secret from us, so, no human being knows when he will die. This concealment makes us expect it in every moment of our lives, and that makes death all the more real for us.

In the same way, Allah *Glorified is He* hides *laylatu al-Qadr* (the Night of Decree) among the final ten nights of *Ramadan* because He does not want you to simply strive to worship Him on a single night, but wants you to strive to worship throughout those ten nights so that your reward is increased and so that you come to love worship for its sake and not simply for the reward that it brings.

Similarly, Allah *Glorified is He* has hidden the timing of the Last Hour from us so that we may be in a state of constant expectation, awaiting it at every moment. Such a state is more conducive towards going straight and fearing to commit acts of disobedience since, for all you know, the Last Hour might come when you are engaged in an act of disobedience to Allah *Glorified is He*. So, it is precisely by keeping it obscure that it is made manifest.

It is one of the aims of the True Lord to make sure that rulings apply at all times since, if man were to know when his appointed time is, he would be on the loose (make his way through life without restraint): he would do whatever bad things he want to do and then repent just before he dies. That is the reason why Allah *Glorified is He* does not make death have a cause. So, when someone dies without a cause, you say that he died because he was dying. He spoke truly who said, ‘When death comes without any cause, it is the cause.’

May Allah have mercy on Shawqi for what he wrote about death when he said:

When it comes to death and what causes it, man is powerless
For he is held hostage by the contents of his book
By your life, the one who dies by the claws of a lion

Is the same, at the moment of death, as he who dies by its fangs
If death overlooks you, then every medicine will be of benefit,
But if it does not, then medicine will be one of its helpers.

How often do we see sick people die because of an injection that they are given by the doctor to cure them or because their operation was unsuccessful. A poet spoke truly when he said:



Glory be to the one who inherits doctors and their medicine
And shows the patient death at the hands of his doctors

Despite this, Allah *Glorified is He*, due to His kindness and mercy, has given us signs that tell us when it is coming; both minor signs and major signs. That is why the True Lord says about the Last Hour: 'The Hour is coming, though I almost keep it hidden...' (*Ta Ha*: 15). That is, 'I have almost removed its hiddenness by the minor and major signs I have given of its coming, for it is close at hand.' We said, before, that the *hamza* in *ukhfihā* is a *hamza* of removal .i.e., remove its hiddenness. It is very much like the *hamza* in *a'jama* (obscurity), for you say *a'jama al-kitab* .i.e. he removed the obscurity and ambiguity of the book by putting in the diacritic dots on the letters. It is for that reason that books that clarify the meanings of words are known as *ma'ajim* (lexicons). This meaning of removal can also be added to a verb by doubling its middle radical, as in *qashshartu al-burtuqala* meaning, I removed the *qishra* (peel) of (the orange).

As for: '...How would you know?...' (*ash-Shura*: 17), it means, 'No one will tell you about it nor will I'. In the same way that the True Lord withheld the knowledge of the Final Hour from creation, He also withheld it from His beloved Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. If He were to have told anyone about the Last Hour, He would have told His Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* even if that meant telling Him in secret without him then conveying it to others, but this never happened. This is why when the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* was asked about the Last Hour, He *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, 'The one who is asked (he himself) knows no more about it than the one who asks.'⁽¹⁾

(1) It is narrated by Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* 50; and by Muslim in his *Sahih* 10 in *Kitab Al-'Iman* in a Hadith from Abu Hurayra that among what Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* said=

Then, the True Lord says:


 إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَعَنَ الْكَافِرِينَ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ سَعِيرًا

 خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا لَا يَجِدُونَ وَلِيًّا وَلَا نَصِيرًا

God has rejected the disbelievers and prepared a blazing fire for them [64] There they will stay permanently, with no one to befriend or support them [65] (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 64-65)

By *la'ana* the unbelievers, means that He has removed them out of His mercy and sent them far way in this world '...and prepared a blazing fire for them.' (*al-Ahzab*: 64) That is, it is a fire that flares up, blazes and burns fiercely. This is what happens to them in the Hereafter on that day about which Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'We shall say to Hell on that day, 'Are you full?' and it will reply, 'Are there no more?'" (*Qaf*: 30)

This blazing fire will remain forever, never going out, and '...There they will stay permanently...' (*al-Ahzab*: 65). We have heard some scholars say about the word *abada* (eternally or permanently), that it is mentioned in every verse that talks about the delights of paradise but never mentioned in reference to the punishment of the unbelievers on the Day of Rising. However, those who say this cannot have read the Quran thoroughly, for the phrase: '...There they will stay permanently...' (*al-Ahzab*: 65), containing the word *abada* (permanently), is mentioned twice with reference to the unbelievers: the first time, here in this verse which we are currently discussing; and the second time in the chapter of *al-Jinn* when Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...Whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger will have hell's fire as his permanent home.' (*al-Jinn*: 23)

The fact that Allah *Glorified is He* mentions the word *abada* in every single verse that refers to the delights of paradise but only twice when the verse refers to the people of hellfire is one of the ways that His Mercy to His slaves

= to the Messenger of Allah *Glorified is He* peace and blessings be upon him when he had taken on the form of man was, 'Messenger of Allah *Glorified is He*, when will the Last Hour arrive?' The Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him replied, 'The one who is asked knows no more about it than the one who asks.'

manifests itself, since it shows that His mercy precedes His anger, thus emphasising to the believers that the delights of paradise will abide forever. By contrast, when He refers to the recompense of the disbelievers, He says *khalidin fiha* (timelessly in it) without using the word *abada*, (permanently). Perhaps the reason He does that is to soften the hearts of those disbelievers so that they might incline to the Path of Allah *Glorified is He* Who was merciful to them.

In these two verses, He only mentions the word *abada*, (permanently) to establish the principle. It is part of Allah's mercy to us that He gives the good news first and then gives the warning as gently as possible. This divine act of wisdom is purposeful and has often borne considerable fruit since it was a doorway through which many disbelievers embraced the faith and became believers. We previously mentioned the story ⁽¹⁾ of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* and the guest who came and knocked on his door. When Ibrahim *peace be upon him* asked him about his religion and discovered that he was not a believer, he shut the door in his face, and the man went on his way. However, Allah *Glorified is He* straightaway criticised His Prophet, Ibrahim *peace be upon him* for doing so and said to him, 'Ibrahim! I have given him what he needs from my kingdom for his entire life despite the fact that he disbelieved in Me, so do you want him to change his religion for one single night of your hospitality?' Consequently, Ibrahim *peace be upon him* hurried after the man until he caught him up and invited him to come back and enjoy his hospitality, so the man said, 'Did you not just deny me your hospitality a short while ago?' Ibrahim *peace be upon him* replied, 'Yes, but my Lord reproached me for what I had done to you.' When he heard that, the man said, 'What an excellent Lord! A Lord who reproaches His pious worshippers on behalf of His enemies! I bear witness that there is no deity but Allah and that you are the Messenger of Allah.'

The disbelievers' permanent stay in hellfire will be '...with no one to befriend or support them.' (*al-Ahzab*: 65), i.e. no possessor (other than Allah) who would take care of them, '...or support them.' (*al-Ahzab*: 65) That is, there will be none to help or defend them.

(1) *The story of the guest of Ibrahim peace be upon him with his disbelieving guest*

Then, the True Lord says:

يَوْمَ تُقَلَّبُ وُجُوهُهُمْ فِي النَّارِ يَقُولُونَ يَلَيْتَنَّا أَطَعْنَا اللَّهَ وَأَطَعْنَا الرَّسُولَ ﴿٦٦﴾

On the Day when their faces are being turned about in the Fire, they will say, ‘If only we had obeyed God and the Messenger’ [66] (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 66)

After mentioning the eternity that the unbelievers would spend in the Hellfire, the True Lord, then, provides a description of the state they will be in when they are there, saying: ‘‘On the Day when their faces are being turned about in the Fire...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 66). *Tuqlabu* is the verb, while *taqlib* is the noun which means changing something from one state to another. Another example of its usage is found in Allah’s words: ‘[Prophet], do not be deceived by the disbelievers’ [lucrative] trading to and fro in the land: this is only a brief enjoyment, after which Hell will be their home—a miserable resting place!’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 196-197) That is, the trips they used to make between Syria and Yemen, the trade they used to conduct on those trips and the wealth they accumulated on account of that trade.

As for Allah’s words, ‘On the Day when their faces are being turned about in the Fire...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 66), they mean when the angels turn them over. So, every time one side of their bodies is fully cooked, they turn them on to their other side, just as we do when we are cooking a kebab skewer over the fire in order to ensure that every part of the kebab is cooked.

The reason that the face is specifically mentioned is because it is the noblest part of the body by which a person is identified. Indeed, both *wajahah* (Honour) and *wajih* (Honourable), which are two words indicating nobility and honour, are derived from *wajh*, the Arabic word for face. Being the noblest part of the body, all the other parts of the body protect and defend it. We previously posed the following hypothetical question: if a car were to speed past you and spray your face and clothes with mud, what would you do? You would first turn your attention to your face and remove the muck that had landed there and then you would move on to your clothes.

To understand the important position that the face occupies, you should read Allah’s words: ‘What about the one who will only have his bare face

to protect him from his terrible suffering on the Day of Resurrection?...’ (*az-Zumar*: 24). The punishment that he will be subjected to will be so severe that he even uses the noblest part of his body, his face, as a shield to protect him from it.

Taqlib could also mean being moved from one punishment to another. The True Lord paints numerous pictures for us of how the faces of the unbelievers will be when they are in the Hellfire, may Allah *Glorified is He* protect us from that. In one place, He says: ‘On the Day of Resurrection, you [Prophet] will see those who told lies against God, their faces darkened...’ (*az-Zumar*: 60). In another, He says: ‘and on that Day there will be the sad and despairing faces* of those who realize that a great calamity is about to befall them.’ (*al-Qiyama*: 24-25)

Thus, the face does not take on a single form in the hellfire, but takes on many different forms and appears in many different states, indicating the many different forms of punishment and pain to which they will be subjected. The face is the primary guide to identify a person and what is going on inside of him. So, for example, when a companion of yours changes towards you, you notice that in his face and ask him: ‘what are you turning your face away from me?’ Those disbelievers say — while they are being overturned and tossed into the fire: ‘...“If only we had obeyed Allah and the Messenger.”’ (*al-Ahzab*: 66) It was those same people who, yesterday, had been giving affront to Allah *Glorified is He*, His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* and the believers.

As for the word *yalaytana* (derived from *layt*) in: ‘...If only we had...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 66), it is used to indicate wishful thinking: a wish the self wants and fixates itself upon even though it is highly unlikely to ever come about. In fact, generally speaking, it is used to indicate that which is impossible, just as the poet once said:

If only that youth could return one day

And be told what old age had done.

And also in the verse of another:

If only the planets could be brought close to me so I could arrange them

Into necklaces in your honour since my words alone do not gratify you.

One's youth never returns nor are the planets brought close to anyone. These are merely things for which the selves wish. It is exactly the same for the disbelievers who wish, in the Hereafter, that they had obeyed Allah and obeyed His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. There is no way that those wishes will be of any avail, since the time for doing that will have already passed.

Then, the True Lord mentions their counter argument as to why they did not obey Allah *Glorified is He* and they did not obey His Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* when He says:

وَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا إِنَّا أَطَعْنَا سَادَتَنَا وَكُبَرَاءَنَا فَأَضَلُّنَا السَّبِيلَ
رَبَّنَا آتِهِمْ ضِعْفَيْنِ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ وَالْعَنَهُمُ لَعْنَا كَبِيرًا

And ‘Lord! We obeyed our masters and our chiefs, and they led us astray [67] Lord! Give them a double punishment and reject them completely’ [68] (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 67 - 68)

Sadah is the plural of *sayyid*: a leader of others whose orders are obeyed and are changed by no one. As for *kubara'a*, they are those who take on positions of authority among their people according to how great the service that they do for them is. Masters and chiefs do not occupy such positions for nothing, but rather attain them because of the gifts and capabilities within them that make them worthy of such positions. That is why people have no objection to addressing them with the words, ‘My master.’ They have paid the price for their leadership and so they are the true leaders and masters.

Leadership can also be taken by force and the might of arms, without the leader presenting anything that makes him worthy of leading his people. This is a usurpation of leadership and people hate it. Therefore, Islamic Law does not disregard true leadership or the nobility and status that certain people occupy in society, but considers that to have monetary value in what can be called ‘Faces Company’, in which each partner’s capital is not his money, but rather his honour, his position in society and the love and respect that people have for him.

People love this true leadership where the leadership is taken by right because they love to reap its benefits. The same is not true with stolen leadership

where the leadership has been taken by force. The people derive no benefit from it whatsoever. On the contrary, it brings them harm and consumes their possessions and resources.

For this reason, slave-hood is a concept that we despise when it refers to the enslavement of one man to another because slave-hood gives the good of the slave to his master. By contrast, all pride lies in slave-hood being for Allah *Glorified is He*, whereby the slave takes good from his Master.

Reflect on how Allah *Glorified is He* made slave-hood to Him a mark of nobility for our master, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and a means of honouring, when He addresses him, saying: 'Glory to Him who made His servant travel by night from the sacred place of worship to the furthest place of worship...' (*al-Isra'*: 1) So, Muhammad's slave-hood to Allah *Glorified is He* was what allowed him to reach a station with his Lord that no other human being had ever managed to reach. The poet⁽¹⁾ spoke truly when he said:

It is sufficient pride for me that I am a slave
 Welcomed without need for appointments, by his Lord
 He, in His sanctity, is the Most Mighty,
 But I meet with Him whenever and wherever I wish!

If you want to meet your Lord, the matter is in your hands, for it is you who specifies the time and place of the meeting: whether in the street or at home; whether at work or in the mosque. The only thing you have to do is perform *wudu'* and say *Allahu akbar* (Allah is the Greatest), and you are at once in the Presence of your Lord. Then, it is you who brings the meeting to an end if you want to, for your Lord does not become tired of your company until you become tired of His. What greater honour could there be than this?

On the other hand, if you wanted to meet a president or a minister in this world, there would be many bridges you would have to cross and obstacles you would have to overcome before you would be able to do so. Even then, you would have no say with respect to the arrangement of the meeting. He would specify the time and place and even what you would be permitted to say during it. Then, he would bring it to its end.

(1) *From a poem written by Sheikh As- Sha'rawi himself*

By contrast, your slave-hood to Allah *Glorified is He* is different, for your Lord is the One Who asks you to come into His Presence and He is the One Who grows angry when you do not respond to His invitation. What an excellent lord your Lord is! What an excellent form of slave-hood your slave-hood to Him is!

Here, in the verse we are discussing, the disbelievers throw the blame at the feet of their masters and chiefs, saying: ‘...‘We obeyed our masters and our chiefs, and they led us astray.’ (*al-Ahzab*: 67) By this, they want to take revenge upon their masters and chiefs, and give themselves some relief by seeing them also being punished as payment for plunging them into idolatry and encouraging them to commit acts of disobedience. They will say: ‘‘Lord! Give them a double punishment...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 68), i.e. give them double the punishment because their misguidance was doubled too: they were themselves misguided and they misguided others.

In another part of the Quran, the True Lord tells us what the disbelievers say on the Day of Resurrection: ‘...‘Our Lord, show us those jinn and men who misled us and we shall trample them underfoot so that they may be among the lowest of the low.’’ (*Fussilat*: 29)

Indeed, there are many verses in the Quran in which the conversations which circulate among the disbelievers are related and the accusations that they level at one another, such as what Satan is narrated as saying: ‘...‘I had no power over you except to call you, and you responded to my call, so do not blame me; blame yourselves. I cannot help you, nor can you help me. I reject the way you associated me with God before. A bitter torment awaits such wrongdoers.’’ (*Ibrahim*: 22) They were not content with their leaders receiving double the punishment, but also wanted them to be rejected; not just rejected, but rejected completely: ‘...and reject them completely.’ (*al-Ahzab*: 68) The rejection is because they themselves went astray, and it should be complete because they led others astray.

One thing we notice here is that whenever the Lord is addressed, no vocative particle is used. Why is that? Because, they say, the vocative uses different particles depending upon the distance between you and the addressee. You use the vocative to ask someone to come to you. If someone is right beside you, you say, for example, ‘Mohamed, do such-and-such’; if someone is some

distance away, you say, 'a Mohamed...'; if someone is even further away, you say, 'ya Mohamed...'; and if they are a very long way away, you say, 'aya Mohamed...'. The further you are from the addressee, the more extended the vocative particle, and the more you raise your voice.

So, what should you say when you call your Lord, since even if you are not close to Allah *Glorified is He*, He is close to you? You should not use any vocative particles whether those for calling a close one, nor those for calling a far one. That is why the word *rabbi* (my Lord), to address the Lord, appears in sixty-five verses in the Quran without a vocative particle. The first instance of that is the call of Ibrahim *peace be upon him*: '...My Lord, make this land secure...' (*al-Baqara*: 126). The last is that of Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him*: 'My Lord, forgive me, my parents, and whoever enters my house as a believer. Forgive believing men and women...' (*Nuh*: 28).

Sufficient proof of this closeness of Allah *Glorified is He* is found in His words: 'We created man — We know what his soul whispers to him: We are closer to him than his jugular vein.' (*Qaf*: 16) Therefore, when the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was asked, 'Is Allah near so we should commune with Him or far away so we should call out to Him?'⁽¹⁾ So, Allah *Glorified is He* revealed the words: '[Prophet], if My servants ask you about Me, I am near...' (*al-Baqara*: 186).

Indeed, Allah *Glorified is He* is close to us, and any distance that develops between you and Him is from you alone. The time when a slave usually finds himself closest to his Lord is when he is in trouble and distress, even if he had been far from Him before those troubles started. There are only two verses in the Book of Allah in which the Lord is addressed with the vocative particle *ya*, the first in His words: 'The Messenger has said, "O my Lord, my people treat this Quran as something to be shunned."' (*al-Furqan*: 30) The second is when He says: 'The Prophet has said, 'O My Lord...' (*az-Zukhruf*: 88).

(1) *It is transmitted by As-Suyuti in 'Asbab An-nuzul p. 30 and he attributed it to Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abu Hatim, Ibn Mardawayh, Abu Shaykh and others in a Hadith from Mu'awiyya ibn Hayda who said, 'A desert Arab came to the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him and said, 'Is our Lord close to us so that we may converse intimately with Him or far away so that we must call Him?' The Prophet peace and blessings be upon him remained silent until Allah Glorified is He revealed to him, 'And if my servants ask thee about Me – behold, I am near...' (al-Baqara: 186).*

These two verses are relating the words of the Prophet, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* so why was the vocative particle not used except when it was Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who was calling upon his Lord? Some said: because our master, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was so passionate and concerned about his people being guided and his call being victorious and successful that his Lord even addressed him, saying: '[Prophet], are you going to worry yourself to death because they will not believe?' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 3)

The Messenger of Allah *Glorified is He peace and blessings be upon him* had gone through such difficulty that he had begun to see the victory as slow in coming, so Allah *Glorified is He* revealed the following words to him: 'We support Our messengers and the believers in the present life...' (*Ghafir*: 51).

Despite this, the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the believers with him were very shaken, as Allah *Glorified is He* Himself says: '...and they were so shaken that even [their] messenger and the believers with him cried, 'When will Allah's help arrive?' ...' (*al-Baqara*: 214) Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was frightened that he had gone far from his Lord, but that fear was simply a misgiving of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* or an accusation that he had levelled against himself.

When Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* went to call on his Lord and complain to him that his people had abandoned the Quran, he addressed him from the station of one who is far, saying, *Ya rabbi* (O My Lord). It was as if he thought there was some shortcoming in himself or that he had failed in his task, and that had placed him far away from his Lord. His Lord showed him that he was in the right and emphasised his call, even going so far as to make an oath by it. The True Lord says: 'Consider his cry, "O My Lord, truly these are people who do not believe." So turn away from them and say, "Peace": they will come to know.' (*az-Zukhruf*: 88-89) In other words, Allah *Glorified is He* is saying, 'I swear by your call, Muhammad, in which you said: '..."O my Lord! My people treat this Quran as something to be shunned."' (*al-Furqan*: 30) The True Lord swears by what He wishes on what He wishes: He swears by the angels and by inanimate things, and He swears by the plants but never once does He swear by any jinn or human being except the Messenger

Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in His words: 'By your life [Prophet], they wandered on in their wild intoxication.' (*al-Hijr*: 72) *La'amruka* means: 'by your being granted life' or 'by your life, O Muhammad!'

Just as He swears by His Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* so, too, does He swear by his words: Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Consider his cry, 'O My Lord, truly these are people who do not believe.' (*az-Zukhruf*: 88)

Then, the True Lord addresses His believing servants, saying:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ آذَوْا مُوسَى
فَبَرَّاهُ اللَّهُ مِمَّا قَالُوا وَكَانَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَجِيهًا

Believers, do not be like those who insulted Moses – God cleared him of their allegations and he was highly honoured in God's eyes [69] (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 69)

After speaking about those who caused affront to Allah *Glorified is He*, His Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the believers, He clarifies that such behaviour is not something that is specifically directed against Muhammad, but has been the prevailing response against every messenger of Allah *Glorified is He peace be upon them*. Moreover, the prohibition against giving offence to Muhammad does not mean this behaviour is allowed with any of his fellow messengers *peace be upon them*. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'O Believers, do not be like those who insulted Moses. Allah cleared him of their allegations...' (*al-Ahzab*: 69).

Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* had two distinct relationships in the course of delivering his message, one with the people of Pharaoh and one with the tribe of Israel. But Musa *peace be upon him* was not a messenger to the people of Pharaoh, he was only sent to the tribe of Israel. And that is why Musa and Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon them* said to Pharaoh: '... 'We are your Lord's messengers, so send the Children of Israel with us and do not oppress them...' (*Ta Ha*: 47). So, his main aim was to free the tribe of Israel from the enslavement of Pharaoh. As for calling Pharaoh to believe in Allah *Glorified is He* and showing him miracles to convince him to do that, he did that as a sideline to his main call to the tribe of Israel. Despite this, Musa *peace be upon him* was

not safe from Pharaoh's attempts to harm him. Pharaoh said about him: '...‘this messenger who has been sent to you is truly possessed.’’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 27) Pharaoh also said: 'Am I not better than this contemptible wretch who can scarcely express himself?' (*az-Zukhruf*: 52)

It was natural for Musa *peace be upon him* to suffer harm at the hands of Pharaoh since he had come to show the falseness of his self-proclaimed divinity; but how was it that he also suffered offence at the hands of the tribe of Israel, a people whom he can come to save from the clutches of Pharaoh, the torment and servitude which had been their daily lot in life?

Scholars said that the tribe of Israel gave offence to Musa *peace be upon him* by causing affront to the One Who sent him, Allah *Glorified is He*, when they said about Him: '...‘Show us Allah face to face’...' (*an-Nisa'*: 153); and when they said: '...‘So Allah is poor, while we are rich...’' (*Al-'Imran*: 181).

Moreover, they gave offence to Musa *peace be upon him* when they said in protest about the Manna and Quails with which Allah *Glorified is He* had provided them: '...’Moses, we cannot bear to eat only one kind of food, so pray to your Lord to bring out for us some of the earth's produce, its herbs and cucumbers, its garlic, lentils, and onions.’ He said, "Would you exchange better for worse? Go to Egypt and there you will find what you have asked for..." (*al-Baqara*: 61).

It is known that *mann* (manna), was a type of liquid resembling honey that fell from the trees in the early morning like morning dew; and that *salwa* were birds closely resembling Quails that Allah *Glorified is He* drove into their arms so that they did not have to tire themselves at all to get them. However, they were a people who did not believe in the Unseen and did not want that ready-made food. Rather, they wanted something tangible which they could grow and prepare by themselves.

Then, they abused Musa *peace be upon him* personally by accusing him of killing his brother Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon him* when they both climbed the mountain⁽¹⁾ and Harun *peace be upon him* died there. They said, 'Musa

(1) According to Ibn Abu Hatim, this was what 'Ali ibn Abu Taleb may Allah be pleased with him said. Ibn Kathir mentioned it in his *Tafsir* 3/520 in his commentary on this verse, saying, 'Musa and Harun *peace be upon them* went up the mountain and Harun *peace be upon him* =

harboured feelings of rancour towards his brother so he killed him.' For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* made the angels carry the body of Harun *peace be upon him* past the tribe of Israel so that they could see that it was whole and uninjured. That is the meaning of Allah's words: '...Allah cleared him of their allegations...' (*al-Ahzab*: 69).

Others said, 'Rather, they accused Musa *peace be upon him* of having something wrong with his body because of the fact that he was so shy and modest, being very careful to always keep himself properly covered whenever he bathed or went to the toilet saying that he only did that in order to cover up some physical defect he had.'

Some of them said that he had leprosy, while others had the effrontery to accuse him of having something wrong with his reproductive organs. Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to show him to be free of that which they ascribed to him, so, one day, when Musa *peace be upon him* went into the river to bathe, Allah *Glorified is He* commanded the rock on which he had placed his clothes to take them far away. So, Musa *peace be upon him* ran after the rock, calling out, 'O rock! My clothing! O rock! My clothing!' and the people saw him to be free of the defects of which they had accused him.⁽¹⁾

= died there. So, the tribe of Israel said to Musa *peace be upon him* 'You killed him because he was shyer and easier on us than yourself.' They continued to abuse him in that way until Allah *Glorified is He* commanded the angels to take up the body of Harun *peace be upon him* and carry him past the circles of the tribe of Israel and tell them about his death. None know where he is buried except from the vulture and Allah *Glorified is He* made it deaf and dumb.'

- (1) From Abu Hurayra may Allah be pleased with him that the Messenger of Allah *Glorified is He* peace and blessings be upon him said, 'Musa *peace be upon him* was a shy man who kept himself fully covered. His shyness was so great that no portion of his skin was left visible. So, the tribe of Israel abused him on account of that and said, 'It can only be the fact that he has some defect in his body that causes him to cover himself thus - he must have leprosy or scrotal hernia or plague or some such thing.' Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to show Musa *peace be upon him* to be free of that which they ascribed to him. So, one day, Musa *peace be upon him* went alone to a secluded spot, placed his clothes upon a rock and bathed himself. Then, when he finished and had come back to the rock to take his clothes, the rock suddenly began to run away with them. So Musa *peace be upon him* took hold of his staff and walked naked, his body in the best form that Allah *Glorified is He* had created. And in that way Allah *Glorified is He* cleared him of the accusations that had levelled against him. Then the rock came to a halt so Musa *peace be upon him* took his clothes, put them on and struck the rock such a blow with his staff=

It is also said that when the dispute between Qarun (Korah) and Musa *peace be upon him* came to a head, Qarun (Korah) hired a woman who was a prostitute to stand up in front of the people and accuse Musa *peace be upon him*. So, Allah *Glorified is He* willed it that when the people gathered around her, she said instead, ‘Qarun (Korah) did such-and-such,’ thereby clearing Musa *peace be upon him* of that which he had been accused.⁽¹⁾

The True Lord says here: ‘O Believers do not be like those who insulted Moses— Allah cleared him of their allegations...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 69), first clearing him of defect and then establishing his nobility and honour

The True Lord says: ‘... and he was highly honored in Allah’s eyes.’ (*al-Ahzab*: 69) What greater honour could there possibly be than for Allah *Glorified is He* Himself to establish the innocence of Musa and show up the lies of his enemies? This great honour demonstrated that his hopes and supplications were accepted. Thus, no one would ever again have the effrontery to ascribe any defects to him or accuse him of a crime that he had not done because they knew that Musa *peace be upon him* had a Lord who protected him and defended him.

It is an example of the just way in which Allah *Glorified is He* deals with His creation that He recompenses anyone who is falsely accused of a crime that he has not done, by covering up a crime that he has actually done and not exposing him to the people: one in exchange for the other. This applied except for one thing in the case of Musa *peace be upon him*: when he saw that

= that, by Allah *Glorified is He*, it left three or four or five deep gashes in it. That is the meaning of Allah’s words: ‘O you who have attained to faith! Be not like those [children of Israel] who gave offence to Musa ...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 69). It is narrated by Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* 6/436.

(1) It is narrated by As-Suyuti in *ad-Durr Al-Manthur* 6/436. He attributed it to Ibn Abu Shayba in *Al-Musannaf*; Ibn Al-Mundhir; Ibn Abu Hatim; Al-Hakim who classified it as *sahih*; and Ibn Mardawayh from Ibn ‘Abbas may Allah be pleased with him that they accused him of fornication, and brought the woman forward, saying to her, ‘Will you testify against Musa *peace be upon him*?’ So Musa *peace be upon him* said to her, ‘I entreat you to say nothing but the truth.’ So she said, ‘If you entreat me to tell the truth, then by Allah *Glorified is He*, they summoned me and gave me a wage in exchange for accusing you of fornicating with me. I bear witness that you are innocent of that, and that you are the Messenger of Allah *Glorified is He*.’ So Musa *peace be upon him* fell to the ground in prostration to his Lord, weeping.

his Lord has responded to his supplication, he was almost deceived by the extent of the generosity of his Lord towards him, and so he said, 'O my Lord, since they said such-and-such about me. I ask you to prevent any more false sayings about me.' So Allah *Glorified is He* replied, 'O Musa, I did not do this for Myself (prevent people from speaking untruthfully of Allah), so how is it that I should do that for you?' This meant that what they were saying about Allah *Glorified is He* was even worse than that.

Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* allowed disbelief to remain so that the hearts of all those who were treated ungratefully for whatever good they made could be at rest. It was as if He were saying, 'Do not be sad, for I am your Creator and your Provider. Yet, they still disbelieved in Me and were ungrateful for what I had granted them.' Then, the true Lord says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا ﴿٧٠﴾ يُصْلِحْ لَكُمْ أَعْمَالَكُمْ
وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٧١﴾

Believers, be mindful of God, speak in a direct fashion and to good purpose [70] and He will put your deeds right for you and forgive you your sins. Whoever obeys God and His Messenger will truly achieve a great triumph [71]
(The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 70 - 71)

We previously discussed the meaning of *taqwa*, (being mindful and fearful of Allah), which is to shield yourself from your Lord's Wrath. The True Lord has two types of attributes: those of Majesty and those of Beauty. The attributes of Beauty are bounteous favour, mercy, forgiveness, richness, benefit etc., while the attributes of Majesty are compulsion, revenge, seizing by force and so on. Thus, *taqwa* is to place between yourself and your Lord's attributes of Majesty a shield that will protect you from them, for you will not be able to bear the grip or vengeance of Allah *Glorified is He*. Despite this, one of the men of knowledge said, 'Strive to be fully with your Lord.' That is possible because, by putting up a shield between yourself and your Lord's attributes of Majesty, you are drawing near to His attributes of Beauty.

If you find yourself confused by the fact that Allah *Glorified is He* says: *wa ittaqu Allah*, '...“Beware of Allah...” (al-Ma'ida: 112) and: *wa ittaqu*

an-Nar, ‘Beware of the Fire...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 131), then you should know that the fire is a soldier in the army of Allah’s Wrath and that; whoever has *taqwa* of Allah *Glorified is He* automatically has *taqwa* of the fire. Thus, there is no contradiction.

As for the meaning of Allah’s words: ‘...speak in a direct fashion and to good purpose’ (*al-Ahzab*: 70), the word *sadidan* means: true words lead to the truth. The word *sadid* is derived from the *sadad* (aiming) of an arrow when it hits the target and does not miss. Your target, in saying those words, is to find delight in The Essence of Allah *Glorified is He* in the Hereafter, and to throw aside the means of this world and live with the Causer of means.

In this world, when you want to eat, you must look to the food that has been prepared for you and consider the time, the effort, and the money it needed to be prepared. By contrast, in the Hereafter, the mere fact of your thinking about something causes it to appear in front of you. This state of being fully with your Lord is something you must assiduously strive to attain to.

Then, the True Lord mentions what will result from us speaking true words: ‘He will put your deeds right for you and forgive you your sins. Whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger will truly achieve a great triumph.’ (*al-Ahzab*: 71) That is: this will happen in the Hereafter. He described the triumph as mighty because, in this world you receive Allah’s gifts through the means He granted you, whereas in the Hereafter, you receive Allah’s gifts directly from the Essence of Allah *Glorified is He*; and there is nothing greater or mightier than this!

Then, the True Lord says:

إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْأَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ فَأَبَيْنَ أَنْ
يَحْمِلَهَا وَأَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا وَحَمَلَهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ ظَلُومًا جَهُولًا ﴿٧٢﴾

We offered the Trust to the heavens, the earth, and the mountains, yet they refused to undertake it and were afraid of it; mankind undertook it – they have always been inept and foolish [72] (The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 72)

The word ‘*ard* (offer) is parading an exhibit before those to whom the exhibit is directed. An example of this is a military parade, where soldiers

who are representatives of the army and other weapons are paraded before the leader such as in the story of Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* that Allah *Glorified is He* tells us about: '[Mention] when, there were paraded before him, in the afternoon, well-bred light-footed horses.' (*Sad*: 31) Another example of this is when you say: '*aradtu* 'I presented the matter to so-and-so,' meaning, 'I told him about it so that he could form an opinion about it and say whether he accepted it or not. So '*ard* is offering a choice and incurs no obligation.

The True Lord says that He offered the trust to His creation - i.e. the entirety of creation, including mankind, the animals, the plants, and inanimate objects - to see which of them would accept the responsibility of bearing it and which would refuse. The implication of there being an offer is that there are ones who will accept and ones who will reject.

Therefore, we say that it is mistake to say that the earth, the sky, the mountains, and so on are compelled and have no free will. Rather, we must amend the expression somewhat and say that they are compelled by their own free will, since when Allah *Glorified is He* offered them the trust, giving them the choice of whether they wanted to bear it or not, they were afraid of it and said, 'Let us escape this trial through the gate of grace...' (rather than putting ourselves to the risk of opening the door of wronging ourselves), and chose not to have choice or free will.

In common usage, the word *amana* (trust), customarily means either money or objects of value which you are afraid to lose, and so you entrust someone with them: a person you believe will look after them until such time that you need them again. It is not for you to take a cheque from the one with whom you entrust your money nor to bring forth witnesses, since if you did, it would not have become a trust. Thus, there is no way of proving its existence except through the trustworthiness of the one who took it—if he chooses, he can admit that he has it and gives it back, and if he chooses, he can deny it.

Thus *al-amana* (a trust) is the self's carrying the burden of being capable to choose actions...etc. If the self is compelled by means of a cheque or by the testimony of witnesses, then it is no longer termed an *amana* (a trust).

The *amana* which the True Lord offered to His creation was the *amana* of free will— choosing the ability to choose to believe or not to believe; to obey

or not to obey. Every creation apart from mankind refused to bear that trust as they felt no enthusiasm at the time it was offered to them; the same time they will bear the trust, for fear that when the time comes to give it back, their conscience fails them.

There is a difference between the time of receiving and bearing a trust and the time of giving it back. Those who only take notice of the time of receiving the trust accept it, but those who also take note of the time of giving it back refuse it. That is because, despite one's best intentions to give it back, circumstances might change; conscience might change or something might happen to you that puts you in need of it and forces you to make use of it. Then the time of giving it back to its rightful owner arrives and you are unable to do so.

Everything in existence refused to bear the burden of the trust and chose to have no free will and be fully controlled by the Creator, apart from man because he was as his Lord described him: '...inept and foolish.' (*al-Ahzab*: 72)

That is how the righteous servants of Allah *Glorified is He* reach the station of true slave-hood to Allah *Glorified is He*—by directing their own free will according to the Will of their Lord. Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who gave them the choice between believing and disbelieving and they choose to believe; He is the One Who gave them the choice between obeying and disobeying and they choose to obey. So they directed their free will towards that which their Lord loved, and entered into the ranks of His slaves who have been brought near.

It is as if you had relinquished your lower self's choice to act as it pleased, and accordingly became like the heavens, mountains, and earth when they gave up their own free will in favour of the Will of their Lord. Moreover, you arrived at the point where—despite the fact that you are endowed with free will—you chose to only follow the path that your Lord had laid down before you.

At this point, it pleases some to ask, 'How could the trust possibly have been offered to the heavens, mountains and earth when they are inanimate objects, how did they refuse?' They may ask many other similar such questions. Our reply to them is this: 'You have walked straight into a maze! Was the

offer made by you to the inanimate objects so that they were not able to understand, or was it made by their Lord and Creator?'

When you see an action is done by you or done by Allah *Glorified is He*, beware of disassociating the action from the actor. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'How could He who created not know His own creation, when He is the Most Subtle, the All Aware?' (*al-Mulk*: 14) He is their Creator and is the One Who addresses them, and you have not denied that. Moreover, Allah *Glorified is He* taught some of his Messengers *peace be upon them* the language of the birds, allowing them to communicate with them and understand what they were saying like His Prophet Sulaiman *peace be upon him* whom He states his saying: '...we have been taught the speech of birds, and we have been given a share of everything...' (*an-Naml*: 16). He also says about him: '...Sulaiman smiled broadly at her words...' (*an-Naml*: 19).

Furthermore, He says about the mountains singing the praises of their Lord with David (*peace be upon him*): '...“You mountains, echo Allah’s praises together with him, and you birds, too.”...’ (*Saba*: 10) Yes indeed, the mountains praise and glorify their Lord in every moment. But the thing that distinguished Dawud (David) *peace be upon him* was the fact that his glorification was in perfect harmony with that of the angels so that it seemed that they were all one single group singing one single song.

So, the Creator addresses whatever of His creation He so wishes to, and if He were to have taught you how to speak to inanimate objects, you would also have been able to address them. Reflect, for example, on the story of the Hoopoe bird whom Sulaiman *peace be upon him* sent to the people of Sheba and whom, when he got there, found them worshipping the sun instead of Allah *Glorified is He*. Reflect on that bird’s perfect understanding of the doctrine of *tawhid* (oneness of Allah). So, relax and attribute the action to the one who did it. By doing so, you will be at peace. Indeed, in your own daily lives, there are good examples for you of this. Say, for example, that your son was to come into the house with an appearance that showed you that he was hit by somebody: would your first question to him not be, 'Who did this to you?' You must first establish who the perpetrator is before you can form any judgement or come to any decision regarding the matter. If the perpetrator

was your neighbours' son, for example, then you would have moved heaven and earth to bring him to rights, but if your son were to have said instead, 'Uncle So-and-so hit me', you would have calmed down and said to the boy, 'You must have done something to deserve being punished thus.' Then, if you were to have gone to see that uncle later, you would have found out that your son had indeed done something bad. Thus, one action can be both bad and good—the important thing is who actually did the action.

The different verses of the Quran support one another when it comes to this matter, and enable us to understand it better since the One Who says: “‘We offered the Trust to the heavens, the earth, and the mountains...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 72), also says: ‘... There is not a single thing that does not celebrate His praise...’ (*al-Isra*’: 44). Every single thing in creation extols the glory of Allah *Glorified is He*. This proves that everything in existence is able to express itself. We are amazed when we hear scholars say that this communication is simply mute expression and not spoken word, for that opinion is refuted by the words of Allah *Glorified is He* Himself: ‘...though you do not understand their praise...’ (*al-Isra*’: 44).

We are able to understand one aspect of their glorification when we see the harmonious way in which the different elements of creation are knitted together and the wondrous order of things. Yet the True Lord tells us that we will never understand their glorification. The glorification He is referring to must be one that is actually spoken and no one can understand that glorification except for those whom Allah *Glorified is He* has acquainted with their language. We do not think it is farfetched for things to glorify their Lord when we look around and see members of various parties or professions communicate with one another using sign language and ciphers that no one else can understand.

Indeed, it is possible for you to hear words in your own language that you do not understand the meaning of, let alone all the other different languages used by the different races of mankind. If you are unable to understand certain meanings in your own language, and if you do not understand the language of other peoples who are from your own species, then why do you reject the notion that other species in existence also have languages by which they communicate with one another and express themselves?

Furthermore, are all languages and means of communication actually spoken? Are there not, for example, sign languages that some people use to communicate with and understand others? Despite all of this, there are certain forms of communication and certain expressions that are the same in every language and that everybody is able to understand such as the ability of those who are mute to understand each other, and such as laughter and weeping; for there is no such thing as Arab laughter or French weeping.

‘Bearing the trust’ means taking it on and putting it into practice, as Allah *Glorified is He* Himself says when He discusses the meaning of bearing a burden: ‘Those who have been charged to obey the Torah, but do not do so, are like asses carrying books...’ (*al-Jumu’a*: 5).

They did bear it in the sense of taking it as a way and memorized it, but they did not bear it in the sense of actually implementing that way and putting it into practice. Thus, in Allah’s eyes, their likeness became that of a donkey that carries a load of books but cannot actually benefit from them. This, in itself, is not a criticism of donkeys or an accusation that they are stupid as some people claim; for it is not a donkey’s job to understand, but merely to carry. The one who accepts a path without benefiting by it or putting it into practice resembles the donkey in this matter, adopting a characteristic specific to donkeys—carrying things they do not understand.

When it comes to other matters, donkeys understand well enough and carry out their tasks in ways that human beings may well be unable to do. For example, it is a well-known fact about donkeys that they never forget a place they have been to before and never lose track of the way even if a long time has passed. However, human beings often lose their way on paths they have walked some time before. Even if you were to allow a donkey absolute freedom of movement, it would take you back to the same place. So which of the two is stupid, the human, or the donkey?

Therefore, some people ask, ‘why do they accuse donkeys of stupidity?’ Some people answered: ‘Because they try to assign a task to them that Allah Himself did not assign them. Donkeys were created to carry things, but you want them to have a level of understanding about things that rational human beings may themselves lack.’

We said previously, ‘If you were to try to make a donkey jump over a trench that was too wide for it to be able to get to the other side, it would never obey you no matter how hard you beat it and would refuse to make the jump, whereas, if it is something it is capable of, it looks at the trench as if it is calculating its exact width, and then leaps over it without you forcing it. This behaviour indicates it is a being that has a good grasp of the consequences of its actions and understands what it is doing.

Hence, a thing cannot be viewed in isolation of the task for which it was made, and cannot be asked to do any more than that. As an example for this, we mentioned the iron rod. The beauty of the iron rod is seen in its straightness, but if you were to want it to be a hook, it could only be made fit for that task by bending it. So, when it is bent, you cannot say that it is crooked because that crookedness is the very thing that makes it right for its task.

That is why we said when we discussed Allah’s words: ‘...for the ugliest of all voices is the braying of asses (Donkeys).’” (*Luqman*: 19) This is not a criticism of the voice of the donkey because Allah *Glorified is He* made donkeys’ voices high in that way because of the fact that they live in the wild countryside and often disappear from sight behind rocks or trees or simply wander off far from their owners. So their voices were made thus in order to indicate where they were and to help their owners to find them.

Loud high-pitched voices are only ugly when they are not performing a task and are used out of place. A single thing might be diversified, but its task requires it to be unified. For example, if the blood—upon which a human being’s life depends—clots while still inside the veins, it leads to paralysis of the limb and needs an injection of medication in order to start flowing again. By contrast, if the blood becomes too liquid, it leads to haemophilia, meaning that, if a person were to be cut, the bleeding would not stop and the wound would not scar over because the blood did not clot and block places from which it was coming out. So, clotting of the blood is necessary outside of the veins and liquefaction of the blood is necessary inside the veins. There is wisdom to both of them when they are in their rightful place.

As for Allah’s words: ‘...and were afraid of it...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 72), they mean that the earth and the mountains were afraid at the time of taking

on the trust, out of fear that when the time came to give it back, they would be unable to do so. So ‘...mankind undertook it...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 72) because of his capacity to think, to choose (for himself) and try things out, However, sometimes, his thinking brings harm upon him.

As previously illustrated, human being might stuff himself to eat his favourite meal; thus, he distends his stomach until he suffers from indigestion and becomes ill, whereas, when animals such as donkeys and buffaloes, are full, they will not overeat because they are governed by a natural instinct that does not permit them to go to excess. This instinct preventing animals from going to excess is a defining characteristic. Hence, man is described in Allah's saying as: ‘... They have always been inept and foolish’ (*al-Ahzab*: 72). The Arabic morphological form used in these two adjectives emphasises the intensiveness of the man's incompetence and ignorance. It is understandable that someone could do wrong to others because he thinks that he could get benefit somehow from them, however it is unbelievable to do wrong to himself by denying it good things or bringing harm; that defies logic and is a sure sign of stupidity. When someone disregards an act of obedience to satisfy a temporary worldly desire for himself, he denies it infinite good and limitless pleasure; he is his own self's enemy. Therefore, Muslim scholars say that the person's inner self is the worst of enemies. If his enemy is another person, he is able to notice and take precautions against him, but when the enemy is inside him, the matter is much more difficult.

Allah *Glorified is He* has made it clear that the gravest wrong deed is to associate others with Allah, as He *the Exalted* says: ‘... for, behold, such [a false] ascribing of divinity is indeed an awesome wrong!’ (*Luqman*: 13) This wrongdoing brings no harm to Allah, but only to the person who associates others with Him. Accordingly, the person, after being described as a wrongdoer, he is then described as an ignorant and foolish; this is a sure sign of his ignorance and lack of knowledge. The Arabic description here indicates the compositional wisdom of Allah's words which denotes the extremely oblivious person, who falls into error and turns away from truth because of ignorance.

لَيُعَذِّبَ اللَّهُ الْمُنَافِقِينَ وَالْمُنَافِقَاتِ وَالْمُشْرِكِينَ وَالْمُشْرِكَاتِ
وَيَتُوبَ اللَّهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ﴿٧٣﴾

**God will punish the hypocrites and the idolaters, both men and women, and turn with mercy to the believers, both men and women: God is most forgiving, most merciful [73]
(The Quran, *al-Ahzab*: 73)**

It is remarkable that the previous verse ends with the two descriptions: ‘... Inept and foolish’ (*al-Ahzab*: 72), while this verse ends with Allah's Attributes: ‘... Most Forgiving, Most Merciful’ (*al-Ahzab*: 73). Thus, the descriptions of the wrongdoer ‘inept’ and ‘foolish’ are counterbalanced by Allah's Attribute ‘Most Forgiving’ and ‘Most Merciful’ respectively. Allah *Glorified is He* forgives those who transgress and do wrong, and dispenses mercy to those who are ignorant. Indeed, the layout of the Quran is a way of manifestation of Allah's Mercy.

Allah *the Almighty* is known by those who believe in Him to be ‘Most Forgiving’ and ‘Most Merciful’, but they should not let Allah's Attributes fool them into thinking that they can transgress and commit wrong action, relying on the fact that He will forgive them and act mercifully towards them. Thus, they say with reference to Allah's words: ‘Mankind, what has lured you away from Allah’ (*al-Infitar*: 6). This means that man is deluded with Allah's Mercy and Generosity, the matter which makes him disobeys or reject Him.

Thus, mankind has been taught to refer their aberration to Allah's Generosity. In rural communities, a farmer may say to another, ‘Why do you not stand still in your prayer? Why do you fidget so much? Do you not know that if you were to owe a shilling to someone, it would not be right to give him a worn-out coin?’ The other replies, ‘By Allah, if he were generous, he would accept it!’

The verse raises another key issue, as Allah says: ‘Allah will punish the hypocrites and the idolaters, both men and women...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 73). The purpose of offering the trust to mankind and making them responsible for their actions was neither to punish them nor to impose the ruling on them because the Arabic verb ‘will punish’ is prefixed by a particle for consequence, not for causation. Allah *the Almighty* made mankind responsible for their

actions so that they would follow Him, not so that they would be punished. This particle merely indicates what will eventually result, as in Allah's saying: 'Pharaoh's household picked him up—later to become an enemy and a source of grief for them...' (*al-Qasas*: 8). When the Family of Pharaoh took Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* in, they did so to be a source of delight to them, not to be their enemy. But what eventually happened was that he became their enemy and source of grief. So, the particle is used when the person does an action for a specific reason, whereas it results in another consequence to demonstrate the stupidity of the doer of the action.

As for Allah's words 'The hypocrites and the idolaters, both men and women...' (*al-Ahzab*: 73), hypocrisy is earlier defined. It is worse than disbelief because the disbeliever is at least consistent with his beliefs; within his heart and on his tongue. His words conform to his hearted belief; whereas, the hypocrite is not consistent with himself, as he believes in one thing and says the other. The hypocrite outwardly displays belief while keeping his true feelings of disbelief hidden; i.e. his thoughts are conflicted. Therefore, he deserves to be called the worst of enemies and to be positioned in the lowest level of the hell-Fire. His treachery and deception show his bad soul that apparently appears to be with you, but is, in reality, the enemy. Furthermore, this verse shows that Allah clearly draws a distinction between the punishment that is due to the hypocrites and idolaters, and the recompense that is due to the believers. Allah *Glorified is He* does not conjoin mercy with punishment in the same phrase; but rather, He *the Almighty* separates the two verbs from each other in two different sentences by repeating the subject of the verbs, to make sure that each requital is kept separate from the other, and that the rulings are kept apart. As previously mentioned, Allah *the Exalted* shows His Attributes of Majesty in dealing with the disbelievers and the hypocrites, and the Attributes of Beauty in dealing with the believers; each of them is used in its own specific and independent context.

the chapter of

Saba'

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Dispenser of Mercy

The chapter of *Saba'*⁽¹⁾.

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ
وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ وَهُوَ الْحَكِيمُ الْخَبِيرُ

**Praise be to God, to whom belongs all that is in the
heavens and earth, and praise be to Him in the life
to come. He is the All Wise, the All Aware [1]
(The Quran, *Saba'*: 1)**

‘Praise be to Allah...’ (*Saba'*: 1) is Allah’s saying uttered by Him to teach people to say Praise is directed towards Allah who merits being praised on account of His Beautiful Attributes; contrariwise, dispraise is directed towards someone who merits criticism on account of his awful characteristics.

The person might praise something without any interest simply because he likes its characteristics worthy of being praised such as when people praise the manufacturer for perfecting a product without serving any purpose.

So, applause sometimes takes place because the object is praiseworthy; nonetheless, they have no impact upon the commending person in any way.

(1) *The chapter of al-Ahzab is the 33rd chapter in the order of the Noble Quran. It is a chapter revealed in Medina and comprises of 73 verses. It was revealed to address the hypocrites’ criticism of Messenger Muhammad Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him and the harm they were inflicting upon him, the issues surrounding his marriages to women and especially his marriage to his cousin Zaynab bint Jahsh Allah be pleased with her and the correct courtesy that must be shown upon entering the apartments of Prophet Muhammad Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him. The chapter of Al-Ahzab was revealed in Medina just after chapter of Al-Imran and just before the chapter of Al-Mumtahana. It was the 89th chapter to be revealed in terms of the order of revelation. See As-Suyuti, Al-Itqan fi ‘Ulum Al-Quran, 1/27.*

Undoubtedly, praise becomes obligatory especially when the effects of praising, glorifying, and exalting Allah influenced the person

Thus, it is said that, 'Every act of praise, even if it is directed towards a human being, in reality comes back to Allah *Glorified is He* because when a human being is praised, he is only applauded due to a good trait granted to him by Allah *the Almighty*. Accordingly, all acts of praise, without exception even if to a human being, are in fact praise to Allah.'

The phrase: 'Praise be to Allah...' (*Saba'*: 1) appears 38 times in the Quran, five times of which appear at the very beginning of *al-Fatiha*, *al-An'am*, *al-Kahf*, *Saba'* and *Fatir* chapters.

Allah *the Exalted* begins these chapters with praise because He has formed creation from absolutely nothing, so they owe Him praise for that blessing. Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* provided mankind with the essential elements of life with regard to the material needs of the human being such as the abundant foodstuffs ensuring the preservation of life, then the ability to thereby procreate ensuring the preservation of the species. However, the human being is also required to lead his life in perfect harmony with others, so it is imperative that they support and coordinate each other. Otherwise, creation would have destroyed itself.

This mutual support would be impossible, but for the presence of the way adjusting this coexistence and curbing people's whims and desires in this world. Otherwise, some people would set affairs right, while others destroy. As for the Hereafter, Allah prepares people in a different way to something better because they live in this world with each other, but in the Hereafter, they will live with Allah, the Original Causer.

In this world, people pay attention to worldly means; they sow, reap, cook, bake, weave, spin, etc.; whereas, in the Hereafter, they live by the Will of Allah, the Original Causer. In this life, they fear to miss the worldly delights, but in the Hereafter, the delights will be unceasingly everlasting. The enjoyment in this world is limited to the capabilities of the human being, whereas, the enjoyment in the Hereafter is unrestrictedly granted by the Power of Allah.

Hence, Allah *Glorified is He* created people and gave them blessings out of nothing, set out the way protecting values and regulating life even before creation. Before Allah created mankind, He created the entire universe subservient to him such as the craftsman who assigns a particular function to his handiwork before making it.

Thus, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'He is the Lord of Mercy [1] who taught the Quran [2] He has created man: [3] and taught him to communicate [4]' (*ar-Rahman*: 1-4). The way that is mentioned in the Quran has been laid down at first to assign the task and designate the laws that will preserve the mankind, before his creation.

Anyone, who reflects on the verses of praise with which these five chapters begin, will find that they encompass all these stages, for in the beginning of *al-An'am* chapter: 'Praise belongs to Allah who created the heavens and the earth and made darkness and light; yet the disbelievers set up equals to their Lord!' (*al-An'am*: 1) Allah *the Exalted* speaks about the beginning of creation. Then He says: 'He is the one who created you from clay...' (*al-An'am*: 2), this being the first stage of creation

Then, in the beginning of *al-Kahf* chapter, Allah mentions the matter of putting the way and the values into place, saying: 'Praise be to Allah, who sent down the Scripture to His servant and made it unerringly straight' (*al-Kahf*: 1). This is the governing law that curbs whims and appetites and regulates the life so that human beings are mutually supportive rather than being mutually opposing.

In the beginning of *Saba'* chapter, in the verse under discussion, Allah *Glorified is He* mentions praise in the Hereafter: 'Praise be to Allah, to whom belongs all that is in the heavens and earth, and praise be to Him in the life to come...' (*Saba'*: 1). Praise in the Hereafter is compounded and multiplied because Allah, in this world, is praised for creating the means by which people live. But in the Hereafter, there are no means – but rather, the one who directly causes things is Allah the Exalted. So, praise in the Hereafter is greater because man lives with Allah Himself.

Moreover, Allah says, in the beginning of *Fatir* chapter: 'Praise be to Allah, Creator of the heavens and earth, who made angels messengers with two, three,

four [pairs of] wings. He adds to creation as He will...' (*Fatir*: 1). People praise Allah for the values and the way He lays down for them through His angels, who are Allah's messengers to human beings; some of them are guardians, others direct their affairs and the third group prostrates to them.

The chapter of *al-Fatiha*, *Um Al-Kitab* (the Epitome or the Mother of the Quran), combined all these matters, as Allah says: 'Praise belongs to Allah, Lord of the Worlds' (*al-Fatiha*: 2). The Lord is the Creator and the Provider, as Allah says: 'The Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy [3] Master of the Day of Judgement [4]' (*al-Fatiha*: 3-4). Afterwards, Allah highlights the importance to follow the way: 'It is You we worship; it is You we ask for help [5] Guide us to the straight path: [6] The path of those You have blessed, those who incur no anger and who have not gone astray [7]' (*al-Fatiha*: 5-7). As *al-Fatiha* combined the beginning and the end of the creation as well as the life in this world and the Hereafter; thus, it is called the Opening (Epitome) of the Book, the seven Oft-repeated verses and the Mother of the Quran.

Thus, Allah teaches people to glorify Him by saying: 'Praise be to Allah...' (*Saba*': 1). As people are different from each other in their gifted talents, capabilities as well as in way and word-choice of glorification; the well-educated is dissimilar to the illiterate person in choosing words to glorify Allah. Accordingly, Allah soothes people that He *the Exalted* teaches them the most preferable wording of praise to Him.

In the Noble Hadith, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* praised and extolled Allah, as follows: "Glory be to You, we cannot count Your praises. You are as You have lauded Yourself"⁽¹⁾ In giving a long sermon on the way of praising Allah, the lecturer says, 'All praise is due to

(1) *It is narrated in Musnad Ahmad (6/58 & 120), and in Sahih Muslim (486) excerpted from the Hadith narrated by 'Aisha Allah be pleased with her as she said: 'One night I missed the Messenger of Allah from his bed. I searched for him. My hand fell over his feet while he was in prostration with his feet erect. He was supplicating: "Allahumma inni a'udhu biridaka min sakhatika, wa bi-mu'afatika min 'uqubatika, wa a'udhu bika minka, la uhsi thana'an 'alaika, Anta kama athnaita 'ala Nafsika (O Allah! I seek protection against Your Wrath in Your Pleasure. I seek protection in Your Pardon against Your chastisement; I am not capable of enumerating praise of You. You are as You have lauded Yourself)."'*

Allah' and he does have fallen short at all. This particular wording taught by Allah is another blessing that deserves praise because it puts everyone on an equal footing in praising and extolling Allah's Graces.

When someone praises Allah for having taught this formulation of praise, he says, 'All praise is due to Allah'. So, there is a continuous chain of specific unchanged form of praise that never comes to an end; the person praises Allah for teaching him this form of praise and so on. The significance is that the person continues to praise Allah forever; thus, He is incessantly praised.

As previously mentioned, the different times on earth and the difference between the time in the east and that in the west ensure that Allah is being worshipped unceasingly and continuously in every moment of the day. In every single minute round the clock, the prayer is being performed, the phrases of supplication; 'Allah is the Greatest', 'I bear witness that there is no deity but Allah' and 'I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah' are repeatedly proclaimed as well as all acts of worship are carried out. The whole universe constantly worships and supplicates to Allah in a wondrous perfect order; the most important thing is that the human maintains it well.

As for Allah's words '... and praise be to Him in the life to come...' (*Saba'*: 1), it is already made clear that praise in the Hereafter is greater and more substantial than that in this world because people live in this world with means granted by Allah, whereas they live in the Hereafter with the Essence of Allah, the Original Causer. In this world, bliss is limited and terminable; whereas, bliss, in the Hereafter, is everlasting. Hence, Allah says on the Hereafter: '... And the last part of their prayer, "Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds"' (*Yunus*: 10).

Allah *the Exalted* says, relating the words of the believers in the Hereafter: 'And they will say, "Praise be to Allah who has kept His promise to us and given us this land as our own. Now we may live wherever we please in the Garden." How excellent is the reward of those who labour!' (*az-Zumar*: 74) Additionally, Allah also says "Praise be to Allah, who guided us to this: had Allah not guided us, we would never have found the way" (*al-A'raf*: 43).

Upon being asked on the reason of praising Allah for owning the earth and the heavens, the reply is that the most remarkable thing is the people

being served by Allah's blessings that they do not possess. The stupendous thing is that He is benefiting them by means of things that are not in their possession, for the heavens and the earth are Allah's possessions, but despite that He *the Almighty* places them under their service.

Likewise, a person who does not buy a car for himself, despite his affordability, because he has many brothers owning cars and every day, he rides in one of theirs; the matter which costs him nothing. So, it is a remarkably greater advantage to get benefit from others' holds than to benefit from one's own possessions. Whatever Allah *the Almighty* possesses of blessings, He places them for people's benefit; the matter which deserves their praise to Him. O Allah! Do not deprive us of Your blessings!

Another notable thing is that Allah soothes His slaves that he is the only Controller of the Dominion of the earth and the heavens; otherwise, they would have been barred from them. Allah *the Exalted* has the sole ownership of the Dominion and Power where He has no partner to prevent His blessings from reaching them.

Therefore, when Allah says to something: '... "Be", and it is' (*Al-Imran*: 47), He knows that it cannot be but to 'be', as Allah says about the earth: 'obeying its Lord as it rightly must' (*al-Inshiqaq*: 2). Allah *Glorified is He* never says 'Be' to something without being sure that it will certainly obey Him.

Hence, as previously said that Allah firstly testifies that there is no deity but Him before He asked people to bear witness: 'Allah bears witness that there is no god but Him...' (*Al-Imran*: 18). This testimony is from Allah to Himself because He is the Controller in His creation with no partner.

Afterwards, the angels and then His slaves who have knowledge bore witness, as Allah says: 'Allah bears witness that there is no god but Him, as do the angels and those who have knowledge...' (*Al-Imran*: 18).

The testimony of Allah is testifying from Himself to Himself, however that of the angels is based on witnessing, whereas that of His slaves who possess knowledge is based on knowledge and proof.

It is also noticed that Allah says: '... To whom belongs all that is in the heavens and in the earth, and praise be to Him in the life to come...' (*Saba'*: 1).

He repeats the relative pronoun in Arabic 'in the heavens and in the earth'. This is similar to the way Allah says with respect to glorification on one occasion: 'Everything in the heavens and in the earth glorifies Allah...' (*al-Jumu'a*: 1). Whereas, on another occasion, Allah says: '... Everything in the heavens and earth glorifies Him...' (*al-Hashr*: 24).

There is a difference between the two kinds of expressions, as there are some common creations shared by the heavens and earth, some creations that exclusively belong to the heavens and others that only belong to the earth.

Thus, when Allah wants to take account of them all, He says: '...Everything in the heavens and earth...' (*al-Hashr*: 24), whereas, when He wants to distinguish between them or to distinctively mention each group on its own, He repeats the pronoun and says: '... All that is in the heavens and is in the earth and praise be to Him in the life to come...' (*Saba'*: 1).

The heavens and the earth are the outside cover encompassing all blessings that are found therein, so whoever owns the cover, owns also the contents.

Then, Allah concludes this verse by saying: '... He is the All Wise, the All Aware...' (*Saba'*: 1). The All-Wise is the One Who puts things in their rightful places, and no one can do this except Allah, the All-Aware, the One Who has full knowledge of the intricacies and hidden details of things.

Subsequently, Allah illustrates an example that shows this wisdom and knowledge, as He says:

يَعْلَمُ مَا يَلِجُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا وَمَا يَنْزِلُ مِنْ
السَّمَاءِ وَمَا يَعْرُجُ فِيهَا وَهُوَ الرَّحِيمُ الْغَفُورُ

He knows all that goes into the earth and all that comes out of it; He knows all that comes down from the heavens and all that goes up to them. He is the Merciful, the Forgiving [2]
(The Quran, *Saba'*: 2)

The verb 'goes into', meaning 'is merged into', is also used in another verse: 'He makes the night merge into the day and the day into the night...' (*Fatir*: 13). Allah makes each of them merge into the other, so the increase in

the length of the night decreases the length of the day and vice versa. This causes the difference between times.

There are things that go into the earth without the interference of mankind such as, the rainwater that comes down from the sky. From rain, people take their own needs while the remaining seep into the ground, as Allah says: '...Guides it along to form springs in the earth...' (*az-Zumar*: 21).

Furthermore, the implanted seeds go into the earth to feed people to guarantee the preservation of their lives. These foodstuffs come about as a result of seed multiplication for many times over. Moreover, the dead corpus buried into the ground goes also into the earth. There is a significant point of comparison between the implanted seed and the buried corpus that is mentioned in Allah's words: 'From the earth We created you, into it We shall return you, and from it We shall raise you a second time' (*Ta Ha*: 55). By following the same thought process, as the grain sprouts into seven ears, which in turn produce a hundred grains, also the dead corpus buried into the ground after death, will lead a better life after death as well as its disgraces will be covered over.

As for Allah's words 'He knows all that comes down from the heavens' (*Saba*: 2), what are things that descend from the heavens? Life-preserving rain comes down from the sky. But for water, everything would have died, with respect to the material aspect of human's existence. However, as for his spiritual existence, angels come down with the values and the approach that will bring life to his heart and soul. Guarding angels who administer the affairs of all created beings also come down, about whom Allah says: 'Each person has guardian angels before him and behind, watching over him from (by) Allah's Command...' (*ar-Ra'd*: 11).

Some people do not actually grasp the meaning of this verse, asking, 'How can angels protect him from the Command of Allah *the Almighty*; whereas, Allah's Command ought to be carried out, so how can they protect him against it'. The verse means that their protection stems from the command of Allah - not a voluntarily deed resulting from themselves.⁽¹⁾

(1) *It is narrated by Ibn 'Abbas Allah be pleased with him that: 'Allah's protection is from His Command by His Command.' This is narrated by Abu Ash-Sheikh, who added: 'By=*

Allah *Glorified is He* shows His Power of sending down rain; however the process of filtering water in laboratories requires a lot of money, time, and effort to produce it. Conversely, Allah's Power filters water for human beings without being even aware of this. The heat of the sun evaporates the water which rises and forms clouds, afterwards the winds drive the clouds to the place where Allah sets His will to fall down to the ground as rain. Allah's Wisdom decrees that the water surface covers three quarters of the earth to be as wide as possible so that there could be enough rain to meet the needs of all living organisms.

This phenomenon is illustrated by a glass-full of water which, if left exposed to the air for a month, will only decrease by a few centimetres, but if it is poured onto the ground, it would dry up quickly because water surface area is expanded so it is easily evaporated. Rainwater is the sweet and cold potable water used to quench the thirst of humans, animals, and birds, to water the crops and the high ground and, whatever remains, to be guided along to form springs in the earth, until it is needed. Rain is one of the greatest signs of Allah's Power.

Allah's saying: '... And all that goes up to them...' (*Saba'*: 2) means the act of rising up, as that being mentioned in Allah's saying: '... Good words rise up to Him and He lifts up the righteous deed...' (*Fatir*: 10). Rising up means that the reactions of people towards Allah's Commandment imposed upon them are gone up

It is noticed that Allah uses the literary style of the words, as He uses the preposition (in) rather than (to) in the Arabic verse: '... And all that goes up in (to) them...' (*Saba'*: 2). It is known that prepositions have intrinsic meanings, but other words should be attached to them to be able to express and understand such meanings. So when the preposition (in) is used in conjunction with another word, it has the meaning of being contained within something, such as, 'water is in the cup', but if you were to use it on its own, it would not indicate any meaning whatsoever.

= *the permission of Allah.* It was narrated by Ibn Jarir, Ibn Al-Mundhir and Ibn Abu-Hatim. Sa'id ibn Jubayr narrated, 'He protected it for them by His Command of Allah.' This version was narrated by Ibn Jarir. These were narrated by As-Suyut in *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur* (4/612).

The scholars thought that many linguistic expressions contained particles that were thought to be additional or express the meaning of a totally different particle. An example of this is their interpretation of Allah's words: '... And all that goes up in (to) them...' (*Saba'*: 2) that (in) here has the meaning of (to) because it holds some aspect of the meaning of something contained.

Another instance clarifies this issue, as Allah says: '... Then crucify you (in) on the trunks of palm trees...' (*Ta Ha*: 71). Some scholars say that (in) here means 'on' the trunks of palm-trees. However, this is an imprecise interpretation of Allah's saying since the word (in) here bears both meanings; (in) and (on).

Crucifying someone is tying him up onto another thing, the matter which is expressed by the preposition (on). Nevertheless, this somewhat falls short, since if the person wants to use the preposition (on), he should say, 'I will most certainly crucify him strongly on the trunks of palm-trees,' thereby making the parts of the crucified person enter into the cross on which crucifixion takes place. Yet, the only way to convey the exact full meaning of crucifixion, without adding the word 'strongly' is by using the particle (in) to convey both the meaning of being tied onto something as well as that of being contained within it.

To further illustrate this point, if a matchstick is tied loosely with a fine thread onto somebody's hand or finger, the thread barely holds the matchstick in place. But if the matchstick is tied forcibly with the thread, the matchstick will be pushed so far into the skin that it almost disappears within it. This is the same form of crucifixion intended by the verse; forcibly crucifying the victim to the crucifix by using nails ropes or something else.

Similarly, Allah says: '... And all that goes up in (to) them...' (*Saba'*: 2) because (to) does not convey the intended meaning, It only conveys the meaning of final destination, such as, 'I travelled from Cairo to Alexandria', while the sky is not the final place to which good words ascend, but rather, their final destination is Allah. The sky which is defined as everything that is above earth is no more than the path that channels them to their final destination.

This meaning of the preposition (to) is also clear in Allah's words: 'Hurry towards your Lord's forgiveness...' (*Al-Imran*: 133). The preposition (to) is

used because forgiveness is the final destination towards which believers rush. However, Allah says: 'They are the ones who race into (towards) good things...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 61) because 'good works' are not the final destination to which they are rushing, but rather, they are the stages through which a believer rises. Once the believer reaches a good thing, he looks out upon another better one. So, good works resemble the path on which he moves, rather than a target at which he aims.

Similarly, Allah says about those who denied the Messengers: '... But they tried to silence them...' (*Ibrahim*: 9). Some scholars allege that this means that they put their hands to their mouths. Contrariwise, this is not the case because the verse expresses their full rejection of the faith principles that had been brought by the messengers. When the Messengers brought the faith principles, the disbelievers rejected the means and said, 'Save your words! They will not avail you with us at all.' Afterwards, they placed their hands inside their mouths and chewed on their knuckles in exasperation and fury against what they had heard from their messengers. This meaning could not be expressed except by this formulation.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says: '... He is the Merciful, the Forgiving' (*Saba'*: 2). Allah's Attribute, the Merciful, means 'the One Who prevents any harm happening right from the beginning, as in Allah's words: 'We send down the Quran as healing and mercy to those who believe...' (*al-Isra'*: 82). The word 'Healing' means that the person was afflicted by an illness arising from heedlessness, so the Quran reminds and heals him of that heedlessness. In case that there is no heedlessness, then the Quran is a mercy that prevents illness from taking place right from the beginning. The word (Merciful) is an intensive adjective derived from the word (mercy).

In the same way, (Forgiving) is an intensive adjective derived from the word (forgiveness). Allah often emphatically uses this particular Attribute throughout the Quran because He created man and knows that he will not always keep to the Straight Path. Rather, it is inevitable that he will, one day, go astray from it, hence Allah says: '... Our Messenger has come to make clear to you much of what you have kept hidden of the Scripture and to forgive much [you have done]...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 15).

But for the Attributes of Mercy, Pardon and Forgiveness, sinners would go on acting sinfully and would feel despair of returning back to the Straight Path. That person is called the loser, who disturbs the whole society; but if he knows that Allah forgives his wrong actions and accepts his repentance, then he will repent and seek Allah's forgiveness.

Allah establishes repentance to grant mercy to the whole creation and do them a good turn. As Allah forgives the sinner, He shows mercy to the whole society by sparing them from his evil and shows mercy to the sinner by sparing him the consequences of his sins. Hence, Allah says: '... He turned to them in mercy in order for them to return [to Him]...' (*at-Tawba*: 118). This means that Allah establishes repentance in order to open the way before the sinners to travel back to Allah, so they could leave their wickedness and evil means to keep them from turning into tyrants.

On reflecting on Allah's words: '... If you tried to count Allah's blessings you could never calculate them...' (*Ibrahim*: 34), it is found that there are two verses of the Quran starting with this exact wording, but each ends differently from the other. In the first verse, Allah says: '... If you tried to count Allah's blessings you could never calculate them: man is truly unjust and ungrateful' (*Ibrahim*: 34). In the second verse, He *the Almighty* says: 'If you tried to count Allah's blessings, you could never take them all in: He is truly most forgiving and most merciful' (*an-Nahl*: 18).

Some people may object to this verse because the word (blessing) appears in the singular form in Arabic which cannot be counted. The refutation of this objection is that the blessing that may ostensibly seem to be single actually comprises many different ones. This has become clearer as science has advanced and people have become aware of the different elements that make up a thing. Apple, for example, appears to be a single blessing, but science shows that it contained many different elements and benefits.

In addition to the blessing itself, there is the giver and the receiver. As for the blessing, there is so much grace included within one blessing so that it can never be counted or computed. Thus, Allah uses the word 'if', indicating doubt, instead of saying, 'when', because nobody can be eager to count the blessings, i.e. they are not expected to be countable. Indeed, no one has ever dared to try

to count Allah's blessings even after the establishment of universities and colleges specialising in statistics, which enumerate everything except this. The impossibility of attaining this matter is based on the fact that counting process implies the possibility of having an accurate evaluation of the blessing; the matter which cannot be achieved.

Concerning the receiver of the blessings, the man, he is a persistently wrongdoer for himself and the others and a stubbornly ingrate for the blessings he receives. If he is taken to task for that, then he would be deprived of that blessing, but he is protected from being deprived because Allah, the Giver of the blessing, is All Forgiving and All-Merciful.

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَا تَأْتِينَا السَّاعَةُ قُلْ بَلَىٰ وَرَبِّي لَتَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ عِلْمُ
الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْزُبُ عَنْهُ مِثْقَالُ ذَرَّةٍ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا
أَصْغَرُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ وَلَا أَكْبَرُ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ ﴿٣﴾

Still, the disbelievers say, ‘The Last Hour will never come upon us.’ Say, ‘Yes, by my Lord, [it will], by Him who knows the unseen! Not even the weight of a speck of dust in the heavens or earth escapes His knowledge, nor anything smaller or greater. It is all recorded in a clear Record [3] (The Quran, *Saba'*: 3)

Allah mentions here the Last Hour, i.e. the Day of Judgment, as He does in the end of *al-Ahzab* chapter: ‘People ask you about the Hour...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 63). In another verse, the disbelievers are said to deny its coming, as Allah says: ‘Still, the disbelievers say, “The Last Hour will never come upon us” ...’ (*Saba'*: 3).

Indeed, they deny it because they have sinned against themselves and insistently followed the path of misguidance and know that the Day of Judgment will not be in their best interests. Accordingly, they evade it by denying such as other refuters of that Day allege, ‘If Allah has really foreordained everything for His slaves, so He foreordained their obedience and disobedience. Thus, why does Allah punish the sinners for disobeying Him?’ It is noteworthy that none of them thought about the contrary of that claim, ‘Why does Allah reward the believers for obeying Him?’ This shows

that their claim is erroneous and illogical and that they fear the punishment. Those disbelievers who uttered these statements are quite sure that they have committed a lot of wrong deeds, so they deny the Resurrection such as the person who is stated to have said: 'Or that the Last Hour will ever come—even if I were to be taken back to my Lord, I would certainly find something even better there' (*al-Kahf*: 36).

Their recurrent questions and rejection of the Last Hour indicates their fear, in addition to their terror of even believing in it. They knew well that even if they were able to keep their actions hidden from people, they could not do so with Allah. Moreover, if they were able to evade the punishment of this world, they would not be able to avoid the judgement on the Day of Reckoning. They recognised that no controversial debate or falsification of facts would benefit on the Day of Resurrection.

As Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'Verily, I am only a human and the claimants bring to me (their disputes); perhaps some of them are more eloquent than others. I judge according to what I hear from them). So, he whom I, by my judgment, (give the undue share) out of the right of a Muslim, I in fact give him a portion of (hell) fire.'⁽¹⁾

So, the judge adjudicates according to the evidence he has, but it is possible for a clever speaker to mislead him, thereby unjustly taking the rightfully share of others, just as some lawyers do today. This manipulation takes place in this life only, but as for the Hereafter, people will stand before Allah, the Utterly-Just Judge.

Those disbelievers deny the Resurrection because it is the mystery that bewilders them. Its reality terrifies and robs them of sleep, shakes them out of fame and brings their leadership to an end. Despite feeling safe in this world

(1) *It is narrated by Al-Bukhari in his Sahih (2458 & 2680), as well as by Muslim in his Sahih (1713). It is excerpted from Hadith Um Salama Allah be pleased with her. It is also narrated, in another narration, that Messenger Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said: 'I am a human being and the claimants bring to me (the dispute) and perhaps some of them are more eloquent than the others. I judge him to be on the right, and thus decide in his favour. So he whom I, by my judgment, (give the undue share) out of the right of a Muslim, I give him a portion of Fire; he may burden himself with it or abandon it'.*

due to their fame and power; yet they will come on the Day of Rising defeated and broken before Allah, as mentioned in the verse: '[Allah will say], 'Now you return to Us, alone, as We first created you: you have left behind everything We gave you...' (*al-An'am*: 94).

Similarly, in the world of economics, there are some people who recurrently ask about the bank interest in Islam, to the extent that they might even ask a thousand scholars the same question. They do not make do with the opinion of one scholar because they want to hear a favourable answer that conforms to their own personal whims; they wish to have a scholar's opinion that lawfully approves bank interests. This is a thorny issue that occupies the minds of many people, but as long as it continues to uncomfortably create doubt, it will remain one of those vicious matters about which Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'Virtue is noble behaviour, and sin is that which creates doubt and you do not like people to know about it.'⁽¹⁾

Afterwards, Allah responds to their rejection of the Final Hour and says, addressing His Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*: '... Say, "Yes, by my Lord, [it will]..." (*Saba'*: 3). This means that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would negate their negative previous statement in a loud voice. It is known that whenever the negative is negated, thus, the opposite meaning is actually affirmed.

Furthermore, the verse emphasises the matter by making an oath: '... Say, "Yes, by my Lord, [it will]..." (*Saba'*: 3). Allah teaches Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to make an oath by His Essence, in absolute confidence that it will come; indeed, Allah does not teach His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* a false oath. Allah always speaks the truth when He does not make an oath, so how is it like when He does make an oath?

As for Allah's words after that, 'By Him who knows the unseen...' (*Saba'*: 3), they indicate that He only tells people about the Last Hour and

(1) It is narrated by Ahmad in his *Musnad* (4/182) as well as by Muslim in his *Sahih* (2553) in *Kitab Al-Birr wa As-Sila*. It is excerpted from the *Hadith of An-Nuwas ibn Sam'an* who said: 'I asked Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* about virtue and sin, and he said, "Virtue is noble behaviour, and sin is that which creates doubt and you do not like people to know about it'.

swears about its coming because He possesses the knowledge of the Unseen. Not only will it inevitably come, but also people will be reckoned for their sins; the major and the minor ones as well as the known and the hidden ones, for Allah, the All-Knower of the Unseen knows everything.

Then Allah says: ‘...By Him who knows the unseen! Not even the weight of a speck of dust (atom) in the heavens or earth escapes His knowledge, and nor anything smaller or greater. It is all recorded in a clear Record’ (*Saba’*: 3) meaning that ‘nothing escapes his knowledge’. In a great number of verses, Allah resembles the tiny object to the atom or the speck of dust, which could be seen in the sunrays, but due to its incredibly small size, it does not cast any sort of shadow. Thus, anything that could not be seen does not mean that it does not exist, but rather, it is minute to the extent that people need precise visual tools to see it. The naked eye cannot see everything, but a strong beam of light helps to see incredibly minute things. Hence, it is said that light and atom are the most precise measures of existence.

Thus, the engineers use these elements to check the erectness of their buildings and ensure the precision of the works. If the newly built wall that seems to be flat and straight is left for a number of days, the dust will reveal any bumps or protuberances. This happens due to the specks of dust on the wall that fall down vertically. Similarly, the faults only appear by shedding a bright light on them, even when they are so small that they cannot be seen by the naked eye. Allah says: ‘He does not wrong anyone by as much as the weight of a speck of dust...’ (*an-Nisa’*: 40) because the speck of dust was the smallest thing known to man, However, this is not the case nowadays.

When Germany was defeated in World War I, it refused to be vanquished and resolved to take revenge on its enemies. So, every German citizen occupied himself within his own field of studies. Among their accomplishments is that they came up with the way of breaking up the atom; i.e. breaking up the indivisible part. This was the first time that the world thought of splitting the atom. This process is similar to the pressing of the sugar cane between two cylinders; as the distance between the two cylinders is reduced, pressing is effectively increased. In the same way, Germany made a cylinder for breaking up the atom.

After this invention, the people, trying to refute Allah's words, say, 'The Quran mentions that the atom is the smallest part in existence, but the atom is now broken up into smaller parts.' Yet, if they carefully examined the whole Quran, they would have read this verse: 'Still, the disbelievers say, "... By Him who knows the unseen! Not even the weight of a speck of dust in the heavens or earth escapes neither His knowledge, nor anything smaller or greater. It is all recorded in a clear Record' (*Saba'*: 3). The Quran takes into account the progress that science would make in breaking up the atom and the Words of Allah are prepared for every scientific advance.

The stylistic precision in this verse shows that Allah firstly mentions the atom as the smallest known thing to man then and afterwards He mentions the smaller fragment, no matter how many times it would be broken down, to always prove the authenticity of Allah's words.

Somebody might ask here, 'If Allah grants us knowledge of the atom and the tiniest of things, then what is so special about mentioning that He knows things that are bigger than that?' Others reply, 'This is an example of the subtle language of the Quran that things are hidden either because they are extremely delicate such that people's instruments are not fine enough to perceive them, or because they are extremely greater than their perception - their size is too great for them to encompass them. So, this means that Allah has mastery over the smallest of things and the largest of things.

Not only Allah's knowledge encompasses everything in existence, but also He *the Almighty* records this in the Incomparable Eternal Book. There is a great difference between informing someone of a piece of information and recording this. When knowledge is not recorded, the person may say whatever he wants, otherwise, it becomes a proof of his words.

Whenever Allah highlights any issue, He keeps it in the Quran. As long as Allah keeps something in the Quran, this means that it will inevitably come to pass; otherwise, He would not have recorded and preserved it. He *the Exalted* fully knows that nothing will come to pass in His Dominion without knowing about it. So, His knowledge came first then He writes it.

As they denied the Day of Reckoning, Allah reminds them of the fact that His knowledge encompasses absolutely everything big and small for a profound

wisdom. The reason is to distract them from thinking about the Last Hour, to make them instead think about their own sins and to know that they will be taken to task for them and that nothing escapes Allah's Knowledge. When all these happen, they will regret that they had asked about this, as Allah says: 'You who believe, do not ask about matters which, if made known to you, might make things difficult for you...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 101). So, as they asked about the Last Hour, as Allah distracted, troubled, and upset them as they came to know that the knowledge of Allah encompasses everything in the Heavens and the earth. Therefore, it is not merely a matter of showing up knowledge, but rather, it is a matter of knowledge that will result in their being reckoned after getting this information. So Allah says:

لِيَجْزِيَ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ
 أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ

**So that He can reward those who believe and
 do good deeds: they will have forgiveness and
 generous provision [4] (The Quran, *Saba'*: 4)**

It is quite an amazing thing that the provision is described as being generous, for this is the Attribute of the Provider of the provision. This is a rhetorical usage to convey the abundance in the provision itself which makes its way to the believer, as the poet⁽¹⁾ says:

Use the means to gain your provision,
 Then do not occupy your mind with it.
 For you do not know its address,
 While your address is known to it
 Afterwards, Allah says:

(1) These lines are an excerpt of Sheikh Ash-Sha'rawi's poems.

وَالَّذِينَ سَعَوْا فِي آيَاتِنَا مُعْجِزِينَ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مِّن رَّجْزٍ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٥﴾

**But as for those who work against Our Revelations,
seeking to undermine them, there will be a torment
of painful suffering [5] (The Quran, *Saba'*: 5)**

If the Arabic word *sa'aw* refers to the act of swiftly walking across a distance, what is meant by the phrase *sa'aw fi ayatina* (swiftly walked against Our messages)? How can the disbelievers swiftly walk against Allah's signs or verses? The answer to this question can be deduced from other Arabic phrases, such as the phrase, 'That man walked (*sa'a*) to the manager against his colleague.' This means that the man reported disgraceful matters about his colleague, perhaps to promote and benefit himself.

Therefore, the phrase: 'And those who swiftly walked against Our messages,' (*Saba'*: 5) means that they claimed scandalous issues regarding these divine messages in order to incite and turn people against them. They wanted to encourage those who started paying attention to these messages to forsake them, and perhaps, wanted to force those who were convinced by their concepts to leave them behind. They strove against Allah's messages in order to nullify them because they knew the effects that the Quran would have on other people's hearts. Indeed, if people gave it their ears, it would inevitably affect them and pull them towards belief in Allah *Glorified is He*. People's hearts would fall under its influence and their tongues would never stop reciting its verses.

These are similar to the people who said: 'Do not listen to this Quran, but rather talk frivolously about it, so that you might gain the upper hand' (*Fussilat*: 26). If the Quran had only been ordinary words without any effect, they would not have forbidden people from listening to it. Indeed, they would have not raised their voices over its recitation, in fear of what it would do to those who heard it.

Allah *Glorified is He* said regarding their efforts: '...trying to defy them (*mu'ajizeen*)' (*Saba'*: 5). This means that they tried to defy Allah's messages. The Arabic word *mu'ajizeen* is the plural form of the word *mu'ajiz*, the active participle of the verb '*ajaza*. Lexically, its structure resembles the structures

of the words *qatala* and *muqatil*. Regarding meaning, the verb '*ajaza* means to race or compete with a person (*naafasa*). The Arabic word *naafasa* (competed with) was used to refer to a competition that involved two opponents holding their breath (*nafas*), as in underwater competitions.

It is narrated⁽¹⁾ that when 'Umar *may Allah be pleased with him* and 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas *may Allah be pleased with him* passed by a lake, 'Umar said, 'Let us dive underwater to see which of us can hold his breath for a longer period.' They used to compete in that manner because they considered the length of time a person can spend underwater an indication of the strength of their respiratory system and the healthiness of their lungs. Later on, the Arabic word *munafasa* was used for every form of competition.

Similarly, the word '*ajaza* means that each of two parties strove to prove the weakness of the other party. Therefore, the word *a'jazani* means, 'They forced me to do a job that I was incapable of doing.'

From this lexical interpretation, we can understand that the purpose of the disbelievers in striving against Allah's messages was to disprove the capacity of these messages. That was their way to prevent the Prophetic call from reaching Allah's creation.

How could they try to disprove Allah's messages, when He has guaranteed that His messengers would eventually be victorious and that He would never abandon them? The battles that were fought between the messengers and those who rejected them were a reason through which Allah *Glorified is He* granted His messengers victory.

Allah *Glorified is He* said: 'Fight against them! Allah will chastise them by your hands, and will bring disgrace upon them, and will succour you against them; and He will soothe the hearts of those who believe,' (*at-Tawba*: 14). He also said: 'For, long ago has Our word gone forth unto Our servants, the message-bearers, that, verily, they indeed would be succoured, and that, verily, Our hosts would (indeed) be victorious,' (*as-Saffat*: 171-173). It might be admissible to say that the disbelievers only sought to disprove and fight

(1) *The story of the diving race between 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab and 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas may Allah be pleased with them*

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the believers with him. As for Allah, the All-Powerful and the All-Conquering Being, it is indeed not possible for anyone to overpower Allah *Glorified is He* or render Him incapable.

So, the words: ‘...strive against Our messages...’ (*Saba'*: 5) meant that they used their schemes and obstacles to undermine the call of Islam. They sought to defeat the purpose of its message and wanted to render Allah’s words powerless. Indeed, they wanted to put their authority in place of its divinity, by trying to disprove the messenger, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* stated the punishment that awaits those disbelievers opposing His messages: ‘Those will have a torment of painful and grievous (*rijz*) chastisement’ (*Saba'*: 5). The words *rijz* and *rujz* refer to ‘sins that have a heavy burden’. At its lexical root, it refers to any sinful act that deserves a serious punishment. That is why Allah *Glorified is He* said: ‘And all the defilements (*rijz*) you should shun!’ (*al-Muddaththir*: 5) We should avoid committing these sins in order to avoid the weighty punishment that results from such sins.

Their suffering will be grievous because of their vile actions. In the Quran, the punishment of the disbelievers is sometimes described as being painful (*aleem*) or humiliating (*muheen*). At other times, it is described as being considerable and tormenting (*atheem*). These descriptions indicate different realms of punishment.

A painful (*aleem*) punishment causes pain to the one who is subjected to it. If that person is stoic and claims to be able to bear it, or is a person who considers himself as an esteemed individual, then a humiliating (*muheen*) punishment will be more effective in affecting his condition. However, a punishment that is described as a humiliating punishment does not have to be painful. Some people may feel humiliation when they are just chided or rebuked without any physical pain. Therefore, the most effective description of a punishment is to describe it as a tormenting (*atheem*) punishment.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* said:

وَيَرَى الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ الَّذِي أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ هُوَ
 الْحَقُّ وَيَهْدِي إِلَى صِرَاطٍ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَمِيدِ ﴿٦﴾

**[Prophet], those who have been given knowledge can
 see that what has been sent to you from your Lord is
 the truth, and that it leads to the path of the Almighty,
 worthy of all praise[6] (The Quran, *Saba'*: 6)**

These are words of encouragement to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. His Lord is telling him in this verse, ‘O Muhammad. Do not despair or become concerned due to those people who strive against our signs, seeking to defeat the purpose of your message. Indeed, Allah *Glorified is He* was the One who allowed them to strive in spreading corruption. However, He was also the One Who supported you with other people who believed in your messages. These believers supported your call when they realized that it was the truth, and that the disbelievers’ words were calls of drivel and falsehood.’

Allah *Glorified is He* reassured His Messenger, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by telling him that those disbelievers would never be able to put out the Light of Allah. Allah *Glorified is He* said in another verse: ‘They aim to extinguish Allah’s light with their utterances: but Allah has willed to spread His light in all of its fullness, however unbearable it may be to the disbelievers,’ (*as-Saff*: 8). He also said in another verse: ‘He (Allah) it is who has sent forth His Apostle with the (task of spreading) guidance and the religion of truth, so that He may cause it to prevail over all (false) religions – however unbearable this may be to the polytheists,’ (*at-Tawba*: 33).

Allah *Glorified is He* said in the verse we are studying: ‘And those who are blessed with (innate) knowledge are aware that (it is) the message that has been revealed upon you, from your Lord, (that) is indeed the truth,’ (*Saba'*: 6). This means that they bear witness that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* spoke truthfully, and that His message lead to the true path. These believers are the contrasting opposite to the disbelievers, who were mentioned in the previous verse.

The disbelievers were futilely seeking to defeat the Prophetic message, and are therefore, unsupported by the aid of Divine Power. In fact, their efforts

will be effectively opposed and eradicated. On the other hand, knowledgeable believers who bear witness to Prophet Muhammad's message are supported by this Divine Power. Therefore, this group of believers will be triumphant.

Allah *Glorified is He* said: 'Those who⁽¹⁾ are blessed with (innate) knowledge are aware,' (*Saba'*: 6). These are either the knowledgeable people who believed in Prophet Muhammad and affirmed his miraculous message, or are the knowledgeable people from among the people of the Book, namely the Jews and Christians. Indeed, the sincere and impartial individuals among the people of the Book knew the truthfulness of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* just as they knew their own children. These were the ones who travelled to Yathrib before Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* became a Messenger. They stayed there, waiting for him to be sent. They even used to pray for Allah's victory over the polytheists by saying to them, 'The time has almost come for a new prophet. We will follow him, and he will support us in defeating you, just as the people of 'Ad and Iram were killed.'

However, only some of them eventually believed and testified to the truth of Prophet Muhammad's message. Many of these people of the Book denied the message of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* when he was eventually sent. Allah *Glorified is He* said describing their disbelief: 'Whenever there came unto them something which they recognized (as the truth), they would deny it,' (*al-Baqara*: 89).

Allah *Glorified is He* said in the Quran: 'And (if) the disbelievers say (unto you, O Muhammad), "You have not been sent (by Allah)," say to them, "None can bear witness between me and you as Allah does, and (none can bear witness as) those who truly understand the divine book,"' (*ar-Ra'd*: 43). These people who truly understood the concept of divine revelations were

(1) *With regard to the interpretation of those who are endowed with knowledge, there are two positions. Some scholars say that they are the Companions of Prophet Muhammad. This is what Qatada said, according to As-Suyuti's explanation in Ad-Durr Al-Manthur (6/674). It was also the view of Ibn 'Abbas, according to Al-Qurtubi's explanation in his Tafsir (8/5530). The other view was that they were the believers from the people of the Book. This is what Muqatil and Ad-Dahhak said, according to the explanation of Al-Qurtubi. Al-Qurtubi said, 'It is also said that these are all the Muslims, and that is the most correct position because of its comprehensiveness.'*

the people of the Book (the Torah and the Gospel), namely the Jewish and the Christian people.

Knowledge is defined as every certain matter that corresponds to reality and has evidence that proves it. Any issue that does not meet those criteria is not considered to be a part of knowledge. If an issue is not certain, it may be a matter of doubt, assumption, or delusion. On the other hand, if an issue is certainly believed by a person but does not correspond to reality, then it is a form of ignorance.

We previously said that the ignorant person is not the person who does not know a particular fact, but rather, he is a person who believes in a concept that does not correspond to reality. The person who does not know a particular fact is uneducated or unlettered. His mind is devoid of that issue and resembles an unpainted canvas. Hence, an illiterate person may accept knowledge more easily than an ignorant person. This is because, with an ignorant person, you must first show them the error of their ways before you can convince them of true knowledge.

If a matter is certain and does correspond to reality, but you find yourself unable to find any evidence to back it up, then the receiver can only accept the matter by blind imitation. This is like teaching your children verses from the Quran, such as the verses: ‘Say, “He is the One Allah: the Eternal, the Cause of All That Exists,”’ (*al-Ikhlās*: 1-2). The child memorises these verses exactly as they are but is unable to provide evidence for their concepts. In such circumstances, the child is merely an imitator of another trustable person, such as their father or teacher. Later on, when the child reaches a stage at which they are able to provide evidence for the truthfulness of such matters, they will have truly reached a level of knowledge.

Despite the many different types of knowledge, it is possible to divide all known knowledge into two categories. The first category is the knowledge of Divine Law. The second category is the knowledge of the material world. The source of religious knowledge and its jurisprudence is Allah *Glorified is He* and it is conveyed to us through a Messenger by means of a miracle. No people are to have any influence over this type of knowledge. Indeed, the only role that humans are obliged to carry out, regarding religious knowledge, is transmitting

and delivering it to other people, exactly as it was conveyed by their Messenger. It is this knowledge that defines the lawful and unlawful actions according to the divine commandments. Knowledge of this Divine Law should not interfere with material knowledge, but rather, was revealed to bring people's different whims under control. That is the reason people differ with respect to this form of knowledge.

As for the worldly knowledge of this material world, it is composed of the sciences that look into all the different forms of existence: inanimate objects, plants, animals, and human beings. This knowledge arises from the activity and discernment of human minds. People do not differ with one another with respect to this knowledge, because material sciences are based upon observation, research, and direct experience. That is why people fight to acquire this knowledge and sometimes even steal it from each other.

It is by means of this material knowledge that mankind can make advancements in the course of their life. The Creator has given us all the ingredients of life and its necessities. If people want to acquire life's luxuries, they must make use of their intellects and reflect upon the existence that surrounds them in order to discover the secrets and signs that Allah *Glorified is He* has hidden within His creation. Then, they can use these discoveries to improve their lives.

In the past, when people wanted water, they would need to get it from a river or a well. When water became scarce or difficult to obtain, people would pray to Allah *Glorified is He* to send down rainwater from the sky. They could do nothing else.

However, when better material and scientific methods developed, mankind obtained access to special sources of water and learned how to bring it down from higher levels to the low plains. They invented water tanks and pipes, and even started to receive water directly in their own homes, simply by turning on a tap. When the water is cut off from these people, they do not call upon Allah *Glorified is He* to send water from the clouds. Instead, they try to find out the reason behind the water shortage. To them, it could be a broken pipe or an electricity cut that has caused the pump's motor to stop. Therefore, technological advances have made people more reluctant to ask for Allah's bounties directly.

This material knowledge is based on reflection and intellectual efforts, and is not related to religious contemplation. In fact, with respect to these material triumphs in scientific research, believers and disbelievers are the same. The people who strive harder to take hold of this material knowledge will be granted its means. That is why we find that the majority of inventions and discoveries, such as the discovery of electricity, the telephone, and the television, were mostly made by disbelieving scientists.

So the knowledge referred to in the words: 'Those who are blessed with (innate) knowledge are aware,' (*Saba'*: 6) is, most probably, the religious knowledge of Divine Law. The religious scholars are the ones who believed that Prophet Muhammad's message was the truth, by means of the miracle that he brought.

However, the scientists who are blessed with material knowledge still have a great role in affirming the truth of Allah's Messengers and supporting them, by presenting the scientific signs of Allah's existence. Indeed, just as the Quran is the recited Book of Allah (*Kitab-ul-Allah Al-Maqrû*), the material world around us, in all of its forms, is the witnessed Book of Allah (*Kitab-ul-Allah Al-Manthoor*).

This is clear when we recite the verse in which Allah *Glorified is He* said: 'Are you not aware that Allah sends down water from the skies, whereby We bring forth fruits of many hues. (And) in the mountains are streaks of various shades of white and red hues, as well as (others) that are raven-black, just (as) there are in men, and in crawling beasts, and in cattle, different hues as well' (*Fatir*: 27). Therefore, in this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* mentioned the plants, the inanimate objects, the human beings, and the animals.

Then he completed the verse with the Words: 'Of all His servants, only those who are blessed with knowledge will, indeed, stand in awe of Allah's Might' (*Fatir*: 28). Thus, these particular verses referred to the scientists who were blessed with material knowledge of the universe and who carried out research in its different forms and laws. Such laws may be concerned with scientific, sociological, or medical principles, or they may involve other specialities in existence.

People who have these forms of material knowledge are more likely to fear Allah's Might than non-scientific people because they saw the secrets in His creation and can effectively show them to other humans. Moreover, if they are believers, they can be supporters of Allah's way by calling people to believe in Him. Furthermore, in addition to showing Allah's Divine Power to the people, their words can also provide material proofs to support the scholars of Divine Law. Therefore, material knowledge or sciences have a great role in guiding people to Allah's way.

In conclusion, both types of knowledge can build awareness that the messages conveyed by Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* were the truth.

On the one hand, the scholars of Divine Law bear witness to the truth of Prophet Muhammad's direct messages. These scholars were primarily the Muslim scholars who believed in Prophet Muhammad's Message. However, they also included the knowledgeable scholars from the people of the Book, who testified to the truth of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

On the other hand, many scientists also supported Allah's way and testified to His existence, by revealing the secrets of His Power. Allah *Glorified is He* said: '(He is) The Knower of the Unseen; not so much as a dust's weight in the heavens or in the earth shifts away from Him; neither is anything smaller than that, or greater, except that it is in an Evident Book,' (*Saba'*: 3). A speck of dust is a miniscule particle that cannot be seen by the naked eye, except with the help of rays of sunlight. This verse means that Allah *Glorified is He* knows everything in existence, and there is not a single particle in the heavens or the earth that escapes His attention. Therefore, believing scientists should research the scientific phenomena that prove the Omnipotence of Allah *Glorified is He*.

The polytheists of Quraysh were asked, 'Who created the heavens and the earth and everything in them?' They answered, 'Allah.' Allah *Glorified is He* said: 'And thus it is (with most people): if you ask them, "Who is it that has created the heavens and the earth?" They will surely answer, "Allah."' (*Luqman*: 25) Allah *Glorified is He* also said: 'Now if you ask those (polytheists who worship deities with Allah) as to who it is who has created them, they are sure to answer, "Allah." How then, are their minds astray?' (*az-Zukhruf*: 87)

These polytheists did not dare to claim that Allah *Glorified is He* was not the Creator of this world! Furthermore, none of the disbelievers or heedless atheists in our times can claim that they created any part of His magnificent universe.

People are amazed by certain inventions and seek to immortalise the names of their inventors in the books of history. If you were to ask a primary school student, 'Who invented the light-bulb?' they would immediately say, 'Edison.' If you were to ask them about the first man to walk on the moon, they would say, 'Neil Armstrong.'

Although people seek to immortalize such pioneers and create statues in their honour, yet, they rarely ask themselves, 'Who created the sun? Who created the moon? Who makes the wind blow?' These phenomena are basic concepts of our life and are not luxurious items like the achievements we already mentioned. Therefore, when this matter of creation is presented to you, it is inevitable that you call the following verse to mind: 'Thereupon, the disbeliever was dumbfounded,' (*al-Baqara*: 258). The modest disbeliever has no option but to recognize, even if momentarily, that Allah *Glorified is He* had created this world.

When Allah *Glorified is He* makes a statement and a human being makes a different statement, the human's statement will always be obliterated in the face of Allah's statement. That is because human beings base their laws only on events that they have seen, and do not take the emergent events of the future into account. Therefore, laws made by human beings are impotent, inadequate and always need to be amended.

Human beings illuminate their houses to the degree of their financial ability, but when Allah's sunlight comes in, it makes all other forms of light futile. For instance, we are now sitting in a mosque, and the mosque is illuminated by electricity. We can seemingly see everything, but are still not able to see the particles of dust in the air of the mosque. However, if you were to look at the rays of sunlight shining through the window, you would see the particles of dust floating in the air. So, this dust cannot be seen except in the light of the sun.

In the same sense, the knowledge of human beings does not reveal all the unseen concepts of this life. These concepts can only be revealed by the light

of Allah *Glorified is He* which we represented in our example by the light of the sun. If the sun, which is a structure created by Allah *Glorified is He* was able to show us the miniscule dust particles that were hidden from us, how could the Creator of that sun not know what is hidden from us? Thus, the major role of material science is to provide proofs that help support the truth of the Messenger's call.

There is another concept which clearly illustrates the importance of science in calling people to believe in Allah *Glorified is He*. We can see this concept in a verse that described the punishment of the disbelievers on the Day of Judgment: '(And) every time their skins are burnt off, We shall replace them with new skins, so that they continue to taste the suffering,' (*an-Nisa'*: 56). These words were reported to us as a subtle reference to the pain receptors in the skin. Indeed, we knew nothing about them, until scientists studied the physiology of the body. They discovered that these pain receptors, from which the impulses of pain originate, are present in the skin. Then, the impulses pass to the spinal cord and the brain.

Therefore, the scholars of Divine Law used this matter as a proof for the truth of Allah's Words. The skin is the organ through which they will be made to taste the pain. In this way, science has helped us to prove the truthfulness of the Noble Quranic words.

Similarly, science has benefited us by proving that the earth is round and that it orbits around the sun. Allah *Glorified is He* informed us that the night and the day succeed one another. This is also a subtle reference to the round shape of the earth. This is clear during our times, as we see the day and night are flowing in continuous succession. However, at the beginning of the earth's creation, had the earth been flat, one of the two phases would have existed without the other! The only way for this succession to be true, since the beginning of creation, is if the earth was created as a sphere. Therefore, Allah's statement could only be understood that the earth was created as a sphere. It had a side in daylight as it was facing the sun, and another side in darkness as it was facing away from the sun. Therefore, the day and night were both there at the first moment of the earth's creation. Then, when the earth moved around, the night and the day succeeded one another. This phenomenon could not be possible without the earth being round.

Therefore, the verse we are studying can be referring to those who have been given knowledge of the Divine Law, revealed by Allah *Glorified is He* or to those who have been given knowledge of material existence, based upon research and observation.

In either case, Allah *Glorified is He* referred to them as: ‘...those who are blessed with (innate) knowledge’ (*Saba*: 6). This show us that, regardless of whether a person’s knowledge is of the Divine Law or of the material existence, this knowledge has been granted to that person by Allah *Glorified is He*. Therefore, people’s knowledge is not attained by their own power, but, indeed, is a divine blessing. Allah *Glorified is He* does not refer to these people with knowledge as, ‘...those who know,’ but rather said: ‘...those who are blessed with (innate) knowledge...’ (*Saba*: 6).

In fact, although knowledge is a blessing from Allah *Glorified is He* even forgetfulness can sometimes be a great divine blessing that serves mankind. Here is an urban tale that illustrates that concept. It is said that the idea of using yeast to make bread rise during baking was a result of forgetfulness. Yeast causes bread to rise because it forms a gas that, when heated in an oven, expands the dough. This creates the gap between the two faces of the bread. It is this yeast that gives bread its distinctive appearance.

The urban tale told the story of a woman who made some dough. Then, she became distracted with other chores and forgot to bake it. After some time had passed, she remembered the dough and baked it as it was. At that moment, she discovered that this dough that was left for some time rose higher than her previous bakes. If this story was true, every piece of proper bread that we eat today could be, possibly, a result of that woman’s distraction.

A similar urban tale is narrated regarding the discovery of roasting of raw meat. The tale told the story of a man who slaughtered a sheep to eat it, and then lit a fire to keep himself warm. A wolf then came along, seeking to take the sheep away from the man’s grasp. The man got involved in a struggle with the wolf and a piece of the meat fell into the fire. After he had finally rid himself of the wolf, he liked the smell of the roasting meat.

Aside from these urban tales, we do observe that Allah *Glorified is He* guides His creation, even if by events of forgetfulness or apparent coincidences. We

should realize that all types of knowledge, even material forms of knowledge, are gifts from Allah *Glorified is He* to His creation. Sometimes, Allah may not give you the knowledge itself, but can give you the tools that will guide you and enable you to arrive at that knowledge.

When we were learning about elementary geometry, we studied a book written by the authors H. S. Hall and S. R. Knight. The book described the method of proving the validity for a geometrical conclusion. If we have a number of successive inferences to reach the final conclusion, each of these inferences has to be established in itself before establishing the final assumption. However, the first essential calculation does not have to be proven because it is instinctively accepted.

Similarly, the source of any knowledge comes to us instinctively, as it was created by Allah *Glorified is He* for us. Any form of knowledge is a gift from Allah, whether it was derived from religious divine law or from the material world. Allah *Glorified is He* said: ‘And be pious to Allah, and Allah teaches you (herewith),’ (*al-Baqara*: 282). This means that Allah *Glorified is He* inspires and guides us to our needs, even if by means of apparent coincidences. We previously said that every secret in creation has a method for its delivery. These secrets may be disclosed as a result of human research, or can be revealed through seemingly coincidental encounters, like the way that penicillin was discovered, for instance.

Allah *Glorified is He* said: ‘(It is) Allah. There is no deity except Him, the Ever-Living, the Self-Subsistent Lord of all beings. Slumber does not overtake Him, nor does sleep. To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth. Who is there that could intercede with Him, unless it be by His permission? He knows all that lies before men and all that is hidden from them, whereas they cannot attain to any of His knowledge, except that which He wills (them to attain)’ (*al-Baqara*: 255).

Thus, regarding the material knowledge, Allah *Glorified is He* said that His creatures will never attain any gifts from this knowledge, ‘...except that which He wills (them to attain).’ This refers to the elements of knowledge which Allah *Glorified is He* permits to be born in this world. If He wills, He can

give you this knowledge through your own research. Even in the absence of research, He can give you this knowledge by means of an apparent accident.

There is knowledge that Allah *Glorified is He* alone knows, and this is the unseen *ghayb*, which He does not disclose to any of His creation. Allah *Glorified is He* said: '(He is) The Knower of the Unseen, so He does not disclose His Unseen to anyone, unless it be to an apostle whom He has been pleased to select (for that knowledge),' (*al-Jinn*: 26-27). Therefore, no one has any part of this knowledge, except by his divine selection. As for material knowledge, there is a time and place in which it is born.

Now, we can return to the verse we are studying. Allah *Glorified is He* said: 'And those who are blessed with (innate) knowledge are aware that it is the message that has been revealed upon you, from your Lord, (that) is indeed the truth,' (*Saba*: 6).

In the literary style employed by the verse, Allah *Glorified is He* did not just say that these people of knowledge, '...are aware that the message that has been revealed upon you, from your Lord, is the truth.' Instead, Allah *Glorified is He* emphasized the uniqueness of this message by saying: '...are aware that (it is) *huwa* the message that has been revealed upon you, from your Lord that is indeed the truth.' This was done by the employment of the Arabic pronoun *huwa*. This word indicated that anything other than this Prophetic message is not a reliable account of the truth. The only truth is this message which has been revealed to His messenger, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

This is similar to the words that Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* said: '(Allah,) who has created me and, it is He (*huwa*), the One Who guides me,' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 78). He did not say, 'Allah *Glorified is He* who has created me, guides me.' This would allow the possibility of someone else guiding him as well. It is only through saying: '...and, it is He (*huwa*), the One Who guides me,' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 78) using the pronoun *huwa*, that he confined the source of his guidance to Allah *Glorified is He* alone.

Prophet Ibrahim also said: 'And it is He (*huwa*), the One Who gives me to eat and to drink, and, when I fall ill, it is He (*huwa*), the One Who restores me to health,' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 79-80). Here, Prophet Ibrahim confined the source

of his food, drink and healing to Allah *Glorified is He*. A human being might think that their created guardian, as their parents, is the source of their food and drink, when they are simply the means through which these blessings are delivered to us from Allah *Glorified is He*.

Similarly, you might think that healing comes at the hands of a doctor. However, the doctor is only a person who tries to treat you, and the healing comes from Allah *Glorified is He* alone. Allah *Glorified is He* stated that Ibrahim said regarding the matters of life and death: 'And (Allah) will cause me to die and then will bring me back to life,' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 81). Here, he does not use the pronoun *huwa* because bringing about life and death are not attributed to anyone other than Allah *Glorified is He* in the first place. Therefore, there is no presumption of them being shared by any other power. It is obvious that the words in this verse are referring to death, and not to murder. There is a distinctive difference between both, as we previously clarified.

Therefore, Allah's words: '...that it is the message that has been revealed upon you, from your Lord, that is indeed the truth,' (*Saba'*: 6) clarified that there is only one truth. This truth was revealed by Allah *Glorified is He* to His Messenger. Everything else is false.

There cannot be two truths in one matter, despite the fact that a matter maybe viewed from a separate angle. For example, you might say that you paid farewell to a friend at the airport, at a particular time, before he travelled away to another city. Somebody else could object to that incident by saying that he saw your friend in his house an hour later. At that point, you may both accuse each other of lying. If you hurry to the phone and call the friend who you thought had travelled, he may inform you, for instance, that he did not travel and had to return from the airport due to a family emergency. Therefore, in this case, both the opposing statements were true, but they were viewed from separate angles.

Truth is a fixed concept that does not change and cannot be denied. How could you deny the truth when you support your claims by using the words, 'Truth be told, this is my right.' Your rights in this life are based upon the fact that they are your true shares in worldly sustenance. Thus, this truth brings you a personal benefit in this life, in addition to it being the fixed and contrasting opposite of falsehood.

That is why Allah *Glorified is He* said after that: ‘...and that it guides to the way of the Almighty Allah, the One to Whom all praise is due,’ (*Saba’*: 6). If you cannot accept the truth for what it abstractly is, and cannot support it with intrinsic dedication, at least accept it because of the benefit that it brings you. These are two distinct reasons for holding steadfastly to the concept of truth.

The terms: ‘...the Almighty (*Al-Aziz*),’ (*Saba’*: 6), declare the Divine attribute of Absolute Might, which states that Allah *Glorified is He* cannot be conquered or overcome. The Arabic word used is *Al-Aziz* (the Omnipotent Almighty Being).

As a simple lexical example, the Arabic word *azeez* can be used in the phrase, ‘This task is difficult (*azeez*) for me,’ which means that you are not able to overcome the task’s difficulty. In the more transcendental and absolute sense, the word refers to the divine attribute of Absolute Might, which cannot be overcome by any other power. This is an attribute that should instil awe in the hearts of Allah’s servants. Therefore, when you choose to reject the divine truth in His messages, you should realize that you are disobeying the Almighty Allah *Glorified is He* who cannot be overcome. His Omnipotent Power can conquer your world, and indeed, can never be conquered.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* mentioned another Divine attribute that inspires His servants to yearn for His blessings. Allah *Glorified is He* said: ‘...The One to Whom all praise is due (*Al-Hameed*),’ (*Saba’*: 6). This refers to the fact that all creatures praise Allah *Glorified is He* for the blessings that He bestowed upon them. This attribute increases your yearning for further blessings from Allah *Glorified is He* by praising His previous bounties.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* said:

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا هَلْ نَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ رَجُلٍ يُنَبِّئُكُمْ إِذَا مُزِقْتُمْ
كُلَّ مُمَزَّقٍ إِنَّكُمْ لَفِي خَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ ﴿٧﴾

But the disbelievers say, ‘Shall we show you a man who claims that, when you have been utterly torn to pieces, you will be raised in a new creation? [7] (The Quran, *Saba’*: 7)

Allah says ‘And the disbelievers said (unto their companions)’ (*Saba’*: 7). Generally speaking, any statement that is said must be directed from a speaker

to a potential listener. The disbelievers were the ones who said these words. Either they were saying this statement among themselves during their nightly gatherings for entertainment, or these words were uttered by the leading disbelievers to those who followed and imitated them.

These disbelievers said, 'Shall we point out to you a man (*rajul-in*) who will tell you that (after your death,) when you will have been scattered in countless fragments, you shall – lo and behold! – be (restored to life) in a new act of creation?' (*Saba'*: 7) When we read these words, our attention is drawn to the fact that they describe Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with the word *rajul-in* (a man) without identifying him, thereby seeking to mock and belittle his message.

This fact in itself indicates their inanity and heedlessness, for they themselves described Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him* as the Messenger of Allah *Glorified is He* in another instance. Their words in that instance were narrated in the Quran: 'Do not spend anything on those who are with Allah's Apostle' (*al-Munafiqun*: 7). Similarly, when they found that a long period of time had passed between two revelations to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* they claimed, 'The Lord of Muhammad has forsaken him.'⁽¹⁾ This was also another astonishing statement from them, as they acknowledged that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had a Lord, in a moment of greatest trial and hardship for him! They said: "Shall we point out to you a man who will tell you that (after your death,) when you will have been scattered in the smallest forms of fragments, you shall – lo and behold! – be (restored to life) in a new act of creation?" (*Saba'*: 7) As for their Words: '...who will tell you (*yunabi'kom*) that...', the Arabic verb *yunabi'kom* is derived from the word *naba'* which is used to indicate the revelation of an important piece of news. So, for instance, if I were to say to you, 'I ate this food today in that restaurant,' that would not be considered a *naba'* since it refers to an ordinary everyday activity. It is only a *naba'* when the piece of news is noteworthy, important and of immense value like that which is

(1) Jundub ibn 'Abdullah Al-Bajli said, 'Angel Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* did not come to Prophet Muhammad *may the peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him* for a period of time, so the idolaters said, "Muhammad has been abandoned by his Lord." This was narrated by Ibn Kathir in his *Tafsir* (4/522).

mentioned in Allah's words: 'About what do they (most often) ask one another? About the overwhelming news (*naba'*) (of resurrection)' (*an-Naba'*: 1-2).

As for the meaning of the verse: '...when you will have been scattered (*muziqtum*) in the smallest forms of fragments (*kulla mumazzaq*),' (*Saba'*: 7) the word *mumazzaq* is derived from the word *tamzeeq* which is ripping something that is whole into parts and scattering the parts far and wide. For example, a chair is a whole (*kull*) that is made up of parts: wood, nails, glue, cotton, and fabric. In order to do *tamzeeq* of that whole chair, I must separate all the parts which it is made up of from each other, thereby breaking that whole structure down into parts.

Here, we must draw a distinction between the two words *kull* which means 'whole' and the word *kulli* which means 'generic class'.

A *kull* is a whole structure that is made up of lots of distinct and different parts. For instance, in our example of the chair, the material of wood is different from the material of nails which are different from the glue which is different from the fabric. Every part of the whole (*kull*) chair has its own unique class of material.

On the other hand, the word *kulli* is the 'generic class' that is used to refer to many separate things which all share the same reality. For instance, the word human, when used to refer to a number of individuals, is generic, since the word human can be used for a whole group of people, and every individual within it can be referred to as a 'human'. However, with the word *kull* (whole), I cannot say that wood is, by itself, a chair.

After clarifying the process of *tamzeeq*, why are the words '*kulla mumazzaq*' added afterwards? These words indicate that the ripping process will be strong enough, that the whole body is ripped to its parts, and furthermore, these individual parts are also ripped to their basic particles. Thus, this process of degeneration has different stages and forms, and the words: '...you will have been scattered in the smallest forms of fragments,' (*Saba'*: 7) indicated that they will be broken down into the smallest structures that things can be broken to. We do observe this process in the disintegration of dead bodies into their most basic constituents and elements until they completely disappear into the earth and nothing whatsoever remains of them.

Another example of this concept is found in Allah's words: 'For (many are) they (who) say, "What! After we have been (dead and) lost in the earth, shall we indeed be (restored to life) in a new act of creation?"' (*as-Sajda*: 10) They were referring to the process in which they will disappear inside the earth and get lost within its labyrinths.

The process of *tamzeeq*, where the body is broken into tiny fragments, can happen due to any one of numerous causes. For example, the body of someone who dies and is buried disintegrates in the soil, while the body of someone who is burnt is dissipated by the fire and then, perhaps, his ashes are blown around and scattered by the wind. The body of someone who is eaten by wild animals or birds is torn apart by them. Despite this disintegration, fragmentation, and scattering, the Power of Allah *Glorified is He* is able to resurrect that human body anew after they have died.

Read Allah's words in the following verses: '*Qaf* (An Arabic letter). Consider this sublime Quran! But nay – they deem it strange that a warner should have come unto them from their own kind; and so these disbelievers said, "A strange thing this is! After we have died, and become mere dust, how will we be resurrected? Such a return seems far-fetched indeed!"' (*Qaf*: 1-3). Therefore, the Quran responded to them: 'We do know how the earth consumes their bodies' (*Qaf*: 4). Do not be astonished, as Allah *Glorified is He* knows the place of every atom that has been scattered, and is indeed, able to return these atoms to each other. Allah *Glorified is He* said: '...for with Us is a record unfailing' (*Qaf*: 4). It is not just knowledge that Allah *Glorified is He* possesses, but this knowledge has been recorded, and so it cannot be changed or altered.

Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* said, stating their statement of disbelief: 'Shall we point out to you a man who will tell you that (after your death,) when you will have been scattered in the smallest forms of fragments, you shall – lo and behold! – be (restored to life) in a new act of creation?' (*Saba'*: 7) This is a new act of creation because the body will be brought back into its original form, just as a suite is rewoven after being brought apart.

أَفْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا أَمْ بِهِ جِنَّةٌ بَلِ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ
 فِي الْعَذَابِ وَالضَّلَالِ الْبَعِيدِ ﴿٨﴾

Has he invented a lie about God? Is he mad?’ No! It is those who do not believe in the life to come who will suffer torment, for they are in gross error [8] (The Quran, *Saba*: 8)

This is another spoken statement that has a speaker and a potential listener. It is possible that the one who said this sentence was the same person who previously said: ‘Shall we point out to you a man who will tell you that...,’ (*Saba*: 7), and it is possible that it was his listener who replied: ‘Does he (Muhammad) (knowingly) attribute his own lying inventions to Allah – or is he afflicted by insanity?’ (*Saba*: 8)

They said: ‘Does he (knowingly) attribute (*aftara*) his own lying inventions to Allah’ (*Saba*: 8). The verb *aftara* is derived from the word *iftira*’ which means ‘telling deliberate lies.’ They also said: ‘...or is he afflicted by insanity (*jinna*)?’ (*Saba*: 8) The word *jinna* means madness. Generally, an insane person’s words tend to be idle and senseless chatter. No weight can be attached to them and one cannot describe them as either true or false.

Why did they accuse Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* of being insane, immediately after accusing him of telling deliberate lies? This is because their accusation was itself a lie, and every liar is afraid that they will be exposed for everyone to see. Therefore, the disbelievers tried to plot another fabrication to save themselves if their first fabrication is eventually disproven.

They said: ‘does he (knowingly) attribute his own lying inventions to Allah, or is he afflicted by insanity?’ (*Saba*: 8) It could easily be established that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was an honest person who had always told the truth, and that he was neither a liar nor a fabricator of falsehood. Thus, they needed to resort to a second fabrication to continue to disprove his message. That would allow them to claim nonchalantly, ‘We did not know whether he was a liar or was simply insane.’

It is astounding that the disbelievers of Mecca claimed that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would falsely attribute verses to

Allah *Glorified is He* when they had always considered him a truthful and a trustworthy man. Indeed, they had never heard a lie pass his lips, nor had they seen him orate sermons or compose poetry. They were a people of eloquence and fine words, and had a taste for the nuances of language and a strong understanding of the stylistic devices of Arabic speech. Indeed, they should have used their intellects first before directing such accusations against Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Additionally, eloquence or outstanding talents of speech do not suddenly appear in a person after the age of forty years. Generally, such remarkable talents appear near the end of the second decade or the beginning of the third decade of a person's life. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had spent forty years amongst them before conveying a single word to them from Allah *Glorified is He*.

That is why the Quran used such proofs to argue against them. In the following verse, the Quran states the words of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in which he said: 'Indeed, a whole lifetime have I dwelt among you before this (revelation came unto me): will you not, then, use your reason?' (*Yunus*: 16) They should have reflected upon the matter of his truth using their intellects, as they were a people versed in eloquence and the fine arts of the Arabic language. They had seen orators and poets living among them, who have filled the world with words. Have they ever seen anything like these orations or poems from Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*?

Thus, when some of them claimed that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was afflicted with insanity, it was a precautionary alternative fabrication. When the truthfulness of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was easily pointed out, they said, 'We said that he was either a liar or a madman.' Allah *Glorified is He* responded to these people by saying: 'Nay (*Bal*), (there is no madness in this Prophet) but they who will not believe in the Hereafter are (bound to lose themselves) in suffering and a profound aberration,' (*Saba'*: 8).

Generally, the Arabic word *bal* is used to negate and deny the false concepts that were mentioned in the sentence before it. It also affirms the sentence coming after it. So, here, the word *bal* (nay) completely negated and refuted

that Prophet Muhammad was a liar or a madman. Certainly, the disbelievers have never heard him utter a lie nor seen upon him any sign of madness *peace and blessings be upon him*. The disbelievers themselves, had previously praised Prophet Muhammad and called him, 'The truthful and trustworthy one'. Generally, insane people are neither praised nor blamed for their words, and cannot be judged for the truth or falsehood of what they say. Indeed, these disbelievers never saw any signs of insanity in his character.

Allah *Glorified is He* said: 'Nun (An Arabic letter), Consider the pen, and all that they write (therewith)! You are not, by your Lord's grace, a madman! And, verily, for you shall be a reward never-ending. For, behold, you indeed have sublime morals,' (*al-Qalam*: 1-4). Can a madman be described as having a noble character? Can he be described with fine manners or trustworthiness or any of the other noble qualities of nature?

They claimed that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was insane when they had previously bore witness that he had the most praiseworthy qualities a human soul can possess. It was to the extent that they used to place their valuable possessions in his trust, and that is why Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, left 'Ali ibn Abu Taleb in his place when he immigrated to Medina. 'Ali was charged with the obligation of returning the trusts and deposits that had been left with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to their rightful owners.⁽¹⁾

After Allah *Glorified is He* had shown the falsehood of their lies against Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* He also declared the punishment that they will meet on account of their lies. Allah *Glorified is He*

(1) Ibn 'Ishaq said, 'According to what has been narrated to me, no one knew of the departure of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* when he went except for 'Ali ibn Abu Taleb, Abu Bakr As-Siddiq may Allah *Glorified is He* be pleased with him and the family of Abu Bakr may Allah be pleased with him. As for 'Ali, according to what has been narrated to me, Prophet Muhammad *peace and th blessings be upon him* told him about his departure and commanded him to take his place in Mecca so that he could return the things that had been placed in the trust of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was in Mecca, whenever any person feared for some property of theirs, they would leave him in his trust because of the trustworthiness and truthfulness with which he was known for. (The Sira of Ibn Hisham 2/485).

said: 'Nay, (there is no madness in this Prophet), but they who will not believe in the Hereafter are (bound to lose themselves) in suffering and a profound aberration.' (*Saba'*: 8) They will suffer because they accused Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* of lying and falsely attributing things to Allah *Glorified is He* and indeed, Prophet Muhammad never lied.

They were also in a profound aberration because they described Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as being insane. That claim aimed to discredit his message, even if he did not lie. So, they will meet a severe punishment for accusing him of telling lies against Allah *Glorified is He* and they will also be profoundly misguided for accusing him of insanity.

Allah *Glorified is He* said:

أَفَلَمْ يَرَوْا إِلَى مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ
وَالْأَرْضِ إِن نَّشَاءَ نَحْصِفْ بِهِمُ الْأَرْضَ أَوْ نُسْقِطَ عَلَيْهِمْ كِسْفًا
مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّكُلِّ عَبْدٍ مُّنِيبٍ ﴿٩﴾

Do they not think about what is in front of them and behind them in the heavens and earth? If We wished, We could make the earth swallow them, or make fragments from the heavens fall down upon them. There truly is a sign in this for every servant who turns back to God in repentance [9]

(The Quran, *Saba'*: 9)

The Arabic *hamza* was used in the beginning of this verse, in the word *a-falam*, to indicate that it was a question. The meaning is, 'How can they see these warnings and fail to take heed of Allah's signs in His creation?' Those signs were obvious to them because they lived in a desert, where the sky was totally exposed to them. There were no tall buildings to block the signs of Allah *Glorified is He* from their view, as is the case with the city-dwellers, who rarely see the sun or the moon clearly. Indeed, when eclipses happen, city residents only know about them from reports they read in the newspapers. As for the Bedouins, they live in the vast desert where the full extent of the sky can be seen. The sun is their intimate companion during the day, and the moon and the stars are their intimate companions during the night. They can easily look upon these signs and reflect upon them.

That is why an Arab man⁽¹⁾ once said, when he was in his natural state reflecting upon the sky that surrounded him, 'The sky is full of constellations, the earth is full of broad valley ways, and the ocean is full of waves. Footsteps indicate the presence of a travelling person and droppings indicate the presence of camels. Do not all of those things indicate the existence of the All-Pervading, the All-Aware (Allah)?'

Thus, Allah's clear signs were in front of these disbelievers, while they accused Prophet Mohammad and paid no heed to the signs of Allah. Allah *Glorified is He* said: 'Did they, then, not see how the sky and the earth lie open before and behind them?' (*Saba'*: 9)

The meaning of the words: '...the sky and the earth lie open before them,' (*Saba'*: 9) was that these monumental parts of creation were in front of their eyes. The meaning of the words: '...behind them,' was that most (of these spectacles) were still hidden from their views. It is also possible for us to add, that these monuments extended, 'to the right of them and to the left of them.' Indeed, whichever direction they looked, they would have found nothing but skies. However, Allah *Glorified is He* did not say, '...under them,' because human beings are not capable of piercing through the earth right to the other side.

Reflect upon that immense sky that has been created without being held up by a single visible support! We are not even able to keep up a small tent without fastening it with ropes and pegs and raising it on top of a tent-pole. Then, if a strong wind were to blow upon it, it would uproot its poles and pegs and cause it to collapse upon itself. So how can you pass by Allah's signs in the sky and the earth without reflecting upon them?

Then Allah *Glorified is He* said: '(Or that,) if We so willed, We could cause the earth to swallow them,' (*Saba'*: 9) like it swallowed up Qarun (Korah).

(1) He is Qiss ibn Sa'ida ibn 'Amr from the tribe of Banu Iyad. He was one of the wise men of the Arabs and one of the greatest orators among them in the time of ignorance before Islam. He was the bishop of Najran, and came as a visitor to the emperor of the Byzantines, who honoured and exalted him. He lived to an old age and met Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him before his Prophethood. Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him saw him at 'Ukaz, and when he was later asked about him, said, 'He will be gathered as a nation on his own.' (Al-'A'lam of Az-Zirikli 5/196)

He also said: '...or cause fragments of the sky (*kisafan*) to fall down upon them,' (*Saba'*: 9) like the claps of thunder that came down upon those who denied the Messengers in previous times. The word *kisafan* is the plural of the word *kisfa* which means 'a piece'.

'In all of this, behold, there is a message (*aya*) indeed for every servant (of Allah) who is wont to turn unto Him (in repentance)' (*Saba'*: 9). The word *aya* (lesson) here means that it is a warning lesson for every servant who tries to turn his back upon his Lord's Commandments. It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* has placed these signs in creation to remind every heedless person and to answer every disbeliever. Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to awaken their hearts by a desire to go back to their Lord, for if a disbeliever were to come back to his Lord, his Lord would accept him. Indeed, Allah *Glorified is He* has created this creation and wanted them to have a pleasant abode. However, they must be tested to select those of them who deserve happiness, and make a distinction between those who are obedient to the way of Allah *Glorified is He* and those who disobey Him.

This is why Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'The likeness of me and you are that of a man who lights a fire, and then the flies and moths started to crowd around it. I grab unto you to stop you from falling into the fire while you slip away from me.'⁽¹⁾ So, Allah *Glorified is He* keeps the door of hope open for his servants, to allow the disbelievers among them to return to His commandments.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was related to have said, 'Allah *Glorified is He* is more pleased with the repentance of one of His servants than any of you are pleased at finding a camel after losing it in the desert.'⁽²⁾

(1) *It is narrated by Muslim in his Sahih (2285) as part of a Hadith from Jabir ibn 'Abdullah may Allah be pleased with him. It is agreed upon by Al-Bukhari in his Sahih (6483) and Muslim in his Sahih (2284) as being part of a Hadith from Abu Hurayra may Allah be pleased with him.*

(2) *It is narrated by Muslim in his Sahih (2747) as part of a Hadith from Anas ibn Malik may Allah be pleased with him that Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said, 'Allah's pleasure at the repentance of a slave who turns back to him is greater than that of one of you who is riding his camel, and then that camel escapes from him, taking with it all of his food and drink. So that man, losing all hope of finding it, makes=*

Therefore, through repentance and turning back to Allah *Glorified is He* Allah will open the door by which one can return to Him. This continues to be true, even if the person is forced to repent by forces such as old age or illness.

These forces may help keep people at a distance from the clutches of their appetites. This may prompt them to turn to Allah *Glorified is He* and fix the things that have gone wrong in their relationships with their Lord and Creator. Eventually, when they come back to Him on the Day of Resurrection, they will be purified from their sins. Indeed, this is because all of mankind is Allah's creation and is crafted by Him, and certainly, every creator wants goodness and happiness for his creation.

We previously mentioned a Qudsi Hadith which made it clear that the heavens, earth, mountains and oceans, all rebelled against the children of Adam, and asked the permission of their Lord to wipe them out. The sky said, 'My Lord, give me permission to drop fragments of the sky upon them, for they have eaten up all your resources and prevented you from being thanked.' What did Allah *Glorified is He* say in response to this? He said, 'Leave Me and My creation alone! If you had created them, you would have been merciful towards them. If they turn back to Me, I am their Beloved, and if they do not turn back to Me, then I am their cure.'⁽¹⁾

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

= *his way to a tree and lies down in its shade, and while he is there, he suddenly finds his camel standing before him, so he grabs it by the halter, and mistakenly says in his immense joy, 'O Allah Glorified is He You are my slave and I am your Lord.' He made a mistake because of his excessive joy.*

(1) It is narrated by Al-Ghazali in 'Ihya' 'Ulum Ad-Din (4/52) as a statement of a man from the early generations of Muslims. The wording was as follows, 'No slave disobeys me except that his place upon the earth seeks permission to swallow him up, and the ceiling of sky above him seeks permission to drop portions of the sky upon him. So Allah Glorified is He said to the earth and the sky, 'Keep back from My slave and grant him time, for it was not the two of you who created him. If you had created him, you would have shown mercy to him. For, perhaps, he will turn back to Me and I will forgive him, and perhaps he will be transformed into a righteous man and I will transform (his bad actions) into good actions.'

وَلَقَدْ ءَاتَيْنَا دَاوُدَ مِنَّا فَضْلًا يَجِبَالُ أَوْبَىٰ مَعَهُ وَالطَّيْرُ ۖ وَأَلْنَا لَهُ الْحَدِيدَ ﴿١٠﴾
 أَنِ اعْمَلْ سِيغَتٍ وَقَدِّرْ فِي السَّرْدِ ۖ وَاعْمَلُوا صَالِحًا إِنِّي بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿١١﴾

We graced David with Our favour. We said, ‘You mountains, echo God’s praises together with him, and you birds, too.’ We softened iron for him [10] saying, ‘Make coats of chain mail and measure the links well.’ ‘Do good, all of you, for I see everything you do’[11] (The Quran, *Saba'*: 10-11)

After opening the door of repentance to His servants and giving them hope, even the unbelievers among them and despite the harm they caused to the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* and the false controversy they exerted against the Word of Allah, the True Lord *Glorified is He* remains merciful to them and loving for their welfare; He kindly draws their attention to the enormous wideness of His mercy.

It is as if He *Glorified is He* was saying to them, ‘However your bad actions and sins are too many, it is not so before the Mercy of Allah; do not let those sins prevent you from repenting and coming back to Allah. If you have sinned, there are messengers who incidentally made a mistake despite being prophets. It is as though the True Lord *Glorified is He* were, despite all of these things, still searching for excuses for them.

Therefore, He mentions after that the story of the Prophet Dawud (David) *peace be upon him*: ‘And [thus], indeed, did We grace Dawud with Our favour...’ (*Saba'*: 10). In another verse of the Quran, He *Glorified is He* clarified the matter with David: ‘...And [suddenly] Dawud understood that We had tried him: and so he asked his Sustainer to forgive him his sin, and fell down in prostration, and turned unto Him in repentance.’ (*Sad*: 24)

So, do not be embarrassed to repent and go back to your Lord, for a master of the human beings to whom I gave such-and-such of power and grace, made an error, and asked forgiveness of his Lord; he fell down in prostration and turned to Him in repentance. Thus, Allah wants to soften their hearts so that they can return to their Lord.

And similarly, a small mistake occurred at the hands of Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* because of which our Lord tried and blamed him.

Then, he repented and sought forgiveness. Read the verse: 'But [ere this], indeed, We had tried Solomon by placing upon his throne a [lifeless] body...' (*Sad*: 34); a lifeless body means that Sulaiman could not make any movement: '...and thereupon he turned [towards Us; and] [34] he prayed: "O my Sustainer! Forgive me my sins, and bestow upon me the gift of a kingdom which may not suit anyone after me: verily, Thou alone art a giver of gifts!" [35] (*Sad*: 34-35); Then, Allah accepted his repentance and rewarded him: 'And so We made subservient to him the wind, so that it gently sped at his behest whithersoever he willed, [36] as well as all the rebellious forces [that We made to work for him] – every kind of builder and diver – [37] and others linked together in fetters. [38]' (*Sad*: 34-38)

It is, therefore, said that one time when Sulaiman *peace be upon him* was riding his flying carpet, a trace of pride entered his soul, whereupon the carpet veered to one side. So, he said to it, 'Straighten up, carpet', and the carpet replied, 'We are only commanded to obey you when you obey Allah *Glorified is He*.⁽¹⁾' That is, 'It is by Allah's will and power, not by yours, that we are subjected to you.'

'And [thus], indeed, did We grace Dawud with Our favour...' (*Saba*': 10). Favour is the translation of the Arabic word (*fadl*) which literally means surplus, overabundance, etc. Allah *Glorified is He* gave Dawud *peace be upon him* many blessings not given to many of the other Prophets: Allah made him a

(1) I did not find this Prophetic Hadith in any of the source books I was able to check. But if we were to subject this Hadith to what we find mentioned in the Quran and *Sunna*, we would become certain that it is not sound, and God *Glorified is He* knows best. God: 'And so We made subservient to him the wind, so that it gently sped at his behest...' (*Sad*: 36). Ibn 'Abbas said that this means that it is obedient to him, going wherever he wants it to. (*Ad-Durr Al-Manthur* 7/189) By means of this, it is shown that it is not possible the wind rejected any command of his. As for the pride and haughtiness which possessed Solomon *peace be upon him* at that time, it is refuted by that which Salman ibn 'Amir Ash-Shaybani narrated. He said, 'It has reached me that the Messenger of God *peace and blessing be upon him* said, 'Have you not looked at Solomon and the kingdom which God granted him - he did not raise his gaze once to the sky until he passed away, so great was his humility.' (*This is narrated by both Ibn Abu Shayba and 'Abd ibn Hamid*) Ibn Abu Hatim narrated the like of this Hadith from Ibn 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* who said that the Prophet *peace and blessing be upon him* said: 'Out of humility, Solomon did not raise his gaze to the heavens until he passed away.' (*These Hadiths are all narrated by As-Suyuti in Ad-Durr Al-Manthur* 7/189) God *Glorified is He* is more exalted and knows best.

prophet and revealed to him the Divine System. Allah also bestowed Dawud an additional blessing that was specific to him which is He *Glorified is He* made iron ductile for him; He *Glorified is He* says: ‘...And We made iron malleable to him [and inspired him thus:] “Make full-length coats of mail.”’ (*Saba'*: 10-11) The words of Allah *Glorified is He*, ‘...with our...’ (*Saba'*: 10) indicate that the blessing is not gained by the work of Dawud; rather, it is a grace from Allah. In the Arabic verse, the structure of the preposition and pronoun, *minna* preceding the object *fadl* shows that the capacity to grant that blessing is confined to the Bestower of blessings *Glorified is He*. It is similar to the same structure of the preposition and pronoun that comes in the story of our Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*: ‘...And [thus early] I spread My Own love over thee...’ (*Ta Ha*: 39).

It is as if the True Lord *Glorified is He* were saying to His Prophet, Musa *peace be upon him*, ‘The family of Pharaoh took you, and picked you out of the river at a time when they were killing all the male infants. You came to them in a doubtful manner and yet they loved you and you became a source of delight to them. At that time, you were dark-skinned, big-nosed, and curly-haired; there was nothing about your appearance that would especially attract their attention. But remember that I spread My own love over you and so they came to love you.’

Allah’s bounties and favours cover all people, but the Messengers are granted special blessings and a special form of bounty in the form of the miracles with which Allah provides them. Allah *Glorified is He* explains His favour to the Prophet Dawud *peace be upon him*: ‘...“O you mountains! Sing with him the praise of Allah! And [likewise] you bird!” And We softened all sharpness in him’ (*Saba'*: 10).

‘...“O you mountains!” is a vocative statement; Allah *Glorified is He* is calling to the mountains because they can hear His call and are aware of it: ‘...Sing with him the praise of Allah...’ (*Saba'*: 10), i.e. repeat after him what he says and what he recites from the Psalms and glorification of Allah. This is the proof that he understood the language of the mountains and that they could understand and repeat his words after him. So, the mountains have a form of speech and language which Allah *Glorified is He* made His Prophet, Dawud *peace be upon him* to understand.

We dealt with the topic of the inanimate objects glorifying their Lord when we discussed the Holy verse: '...and there is not a single thing but extols His limitless glory and praise: but you [O men] fail to grasp the manner of their glorifying Him' (*al-Isra'*: 44). We have refuted the statement of those who claim that it was unspoken glorification, not spoken one because Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...but you [O men] fail to grasp the manner of their glorifying Him!...' (*al-Isra'*: 44), and as Allah *Glorified is He* judges that we cannot understand their glorification that indicates that their glorification is in some form of speech.

Those who say that the glorification of mountains is by connotation consider it to be astounding that a mountain might have a language and a means of communication and understanding, but are we saying that the mountains speak to you? No, it speaks with its Lord and Creator, the One Who says: 'How could it be that He who has created [all] should not know [all]? Yea, He alone is unfathomable [in His wisdom], all aware!' (*al-Mulk*: 14) So, what does this matter have to do with you? And why do you deny it?

Reflect upon Allah's words: 'and the thunder extols His limitless glory and praises Him, and [so do] the angels, in awe of Him...' (*ar-Ra'd*: 13). Allah *Glorified is He* mentions the glorification of an inanimate object, the thunder, in conjunction with that of the angels, the highest form of created being. But what is the connotation in connection with the angels' glorification? Why is that amazing when it has been shown that every single thing has a language that becomes it? For we have seen that hoopoe birds have their own language, ants have their own language and so on.

An aspect of the greatness of Dawud lays in the fact that he understood the language of the mountains and was able to hear their glorification, and that their glorification corresponded exactly to his own. Likewise: '...you bird!...' (*Saba'*: 10), i.e. 'O bird, sing with Dawud the praise of Allah, and repeat the glorification after him.'

'...And We made iron malleable for him' (*Saba'*: 10). This is another miracle of the miracles of Dawud *peace be upon him*. If Allah *Glorified is He* mentions several things and then one of them happens in reality exactly as He said, should I not believe Him with respect to all the others?

So, when Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...And We made iron malleable for him' (*Saba'*: 10), we must believe that it is true and believe that, in the hands of Dawud, iron did indeed become like the plasticene clay that children mould and fashion into whatever shapes they desire.⁽¹⁾ Some people think that: '...And We made iron malleable for him,' simply means that Allah *Glorified is He* taught him that fire melts iron; if that was the case, then it would not have been miraculous in any way, and it would have been something that set him apart from other people.

Iron has many special properties and comes in many different types, and the extent of its importance depends to a great extent on how hard it is. It is because of its importance that Allah *Glorified is He* sent it from on high just as He sent down the Books. Therefore, after speaking about Messengers such as Musa and 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon them* and speaking about sending down the Books, Allah *Glorified is He* mentions iron in the chapter of *al-Hadid*: '...and We bestowed [upon you] from on high [the ability to make use of] iron, in which there is awesome power as well as [a source of] benefits for man...' (*al-Hadid*: 25).

'... We bestowed [upon you] from on high' is the translation for the Arab phrase '*anzalna*' (we sent down to you). It is well known that things can only be sent down from somewhere up high; so, the True Lord *Glorified is He* sent down the Books which the Messengers conveyed to guide those who accept guidance and listen to it, and sent down iron to deter the disobedient and drive them back. Thus, there is great force in iron in times of war, and much benefit for people in times of peace.

That is why He *Glorified is He* says after that: '...and [all this was given to you] so that Allah might mark out those who would stand up for Him and His apostles, even though He [Himself] is beyond the reach of human perception. Verily, Allah is powerful, almighty!' (*al-Hadid*: 25) How would they stand up for Allah and His apostles? It is by using iron against His enemies in times of

(1) 'Abd Ar-Razzaq, 'Abad ibn Humayd and Ibn Al-Mundhir all narrated that Qatada said about the Words: '...And We softened all sharpness in him,' (*Saba'* 10) 'After God *Glorified is He* softened iron for him, he used to form it into rings in his hand, manipulating it in his hands in the same way that one manipulates clay, without putting into a fire or striking it with a hammer. (It is narrated by As-Suyuti in *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur* 6/676).

war. Dawud *peace be upon him* was given by Allah *Glorified is He* both the Book for guidance and the iron for war.

Thus, Allah says to him: '[and inspired him thus:] "Make full-length coats of mail..." (Saba': 11), i.e. make broad armours. These are the war garments soldiers put on, especially over the chest where the heart and the two lungs are contained, in preparation for battle to protect themselves from being killed. Allah *Glorified is He* did not say here, 'Make a hoe' or 'Make a plough' since such things are used for cultivating land. On the contrary, Allah *Glorified is He* wants the believers to protect the Divine System and drive back the disobedient.

Before Dawud *peace be upon him* armours used to be made smooth and slippery so that swords would slide off it and be deflected to a less vital part of the body. So, people used to make armours to the size that fits only the chest area. But then Allah *Glorified is He* taught Dawud to make it wider and longer so that it could protect as large an area of the body as possible. Allah says: '[and inspired him thus:] "Make full-length coats of mail..." (Saba': 11).

Allah also taught Dawud to make it in the form of intermeshed iron rings: '...measuring the links with care'...' (Saba': 11), i.e. do perfect the method of making these iron rings interlink with one another so that when the armour is struck by a sword, the sword sticks in one of them and cannot move.

The armour of 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* had only one front part and hand not a back part. When some people asked him why he did not have armour for his back as well, he replied, 'May my mother be bereaved of me if I ever allow an enemy to attack me from behind!'⁽¹⁾

Then, reflect on the fact that Allah *Glorified is He* did not first teach His prophet, Dawud *peace be upon him* production of instruments used for peace, but first taught him manufacturing military equipment and preparing the tools to fight those who break their word to Allah and deviate from His way: Allah taught him to arm himself with all the powers he could muster.

(1) This Hadith is narrated by Ibn Qutayba Ad-Dinwara in his book, "Uyun Al-Akhbar" (1/131), wherein he said, 'The armour of 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* had a front part and no back part. When he was asked about that, he said, 'When my enemy is able to attack me from my back, then that will not save me.'

The words ‘...measuring the links with care...’ (*Saba'*: 11) mean: design and shape them using precise measurements, making sure they are carefully knitted. Scholars said the word '*links*' (*sard*, in Arabic) refers to the rings from which chainmail armour is composed. These rings have holes into which nails are driven to fasten the rings together.

So, the meaning of: ‘...and measuring the links with care...’ is ‘Do not make the holes so large that the nails come loose, nor so small that the nails close the ring and prevent them from linking to one another.’ Others have said that: ‘...measuring the links with care...’ means, ‘Make as many of them as you need’, and it is in this sense that the following story is told:

It is narrated⁽¹⁾ that prophet Dawud *peace be upon him* used to live off the public purse of the believers since he was the one in charge of their affairs. So, Allah *Glorified is He* sent down to the people at that time an angel in the form of a man. Then, people began to ask him, ‘How does Dawud live?’ He replied, ‘He does have many good qualities, but he lives off the public purse.’ When news of these words reached Dawud, he became angry, felt pain on account of them and started to weep. So, he called on his Lord, saying: ‘My Lord, why have You made this issue of mine?’ So, Allah *Glorified is He* taught him how to make suits of armour so that he could make a living from them.⁽²⁾

He used to make a suit of armour for four thousand⁽³⁾, from which he would live until it ran out. Then, he would make another suit of armour and so on. So, when Allah *Glorified is He* commanded him to make armours, He said: ‘...and measuring the links with care...’ (*Saba'*: 11) meaning, ‘Make them according to your needs, and do not go to excess in terms of the number you make’

(1) *The story of Dawud peace be upon him with the shields*

(2) *Al-Hafizh ibn 'Asakir mentioned this story in his biography of Dawud peace be upon him by way of Ishaq ibn Bashir from Abu Ilyas from Wahb ibn Munabbih. Ibn Kathir said in his Tafsir (3/527) after narrating the Hadith, 'Ishaq ibn Bashir is the subject of dispute.'*

(3) *Ibn Shawdhab said this, according to what was narrated by Al-Hakim At-Tirmidhi in Nawadir Al-Usul, and Ibn Abu Hatim said, 'Dawud would make a suit of armour every day and sell it for six thousand dirhams, two thousand of which were for his family and four thousand of which he used to use to feed white bread to the tribe of Israel.' (It is narrated by As-Suyuti in Ad-Durr Al-Manthur 6/676).*

Then, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘...And [thus should you all, O believers,] do righteous deeds: for, verily, I see all that you do!’ (*Saba’*: 11) It is as if the True Lord *Glorified is He* was saying to his Prophet Dawud *peace be upon him* ‘Remember, when you do what is demanded of you, that I see and overlook all that you do.’ This reminder is given to a Prophet who is immune to doing wrong action, so how do you think it is with us?

We notice that whenever a worker is being watched by their employer, they do it well, but when the employer is absent, the worker neglects the work and acts dishonestly towards them; Allah *Glorified is He* warns us about this matter.

This is a brief account of the story of Dawud *peace be upon him* mentioned in this chapter, and there are stories of him in other chapters of the Holy Quran.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَسَلِمْنَ الرِّيحَ غُدُوها شَهْرٌ وَرَوَّاحُها شَهْرٌ وَأَسَلْنَا لَهُ عَيْنَ الْقَاطِرِ وَمِنَ الْجِنَّ مَنْ
يَعْمَلُ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِ وَمَنْ يَزِغْ مِنْهُمْ عَنْ أَمْرِنَا نُذِقْهُ مِنْ عَذَابِ السَّعِيرِ ﴿١٢﴾

And [We subjected] the wind for Solomon. Its outward journey took a month, and its return journey likewise. We made a fountain of molten brass flow for him, and some of the jinn worked under his control with his Lord’s permission. If one of them deviated from Our command, We let him taste the suffering of the blazing flame [12] (The Quran, *Saba’*: 12)

That is, just as Allah gave Dawud a great favour from Him, part of which was that Allah caused the mountains to sing the praise of Allah *Glorified is He* with him and caused iron to be soft for him, Allah also favoured his son Sulaiman *peace be upon him* making the wind subservient to him, obeying his commands.

We previously explained that when the word ‘*reeh*’ (wind) is used in the singular, it indicates that it bears evil and punishment, and when it is used in the plural, it indicates that it bears goodness and mercy. An example is the following verses: ‘And [you have the same message] in [what happened to the tribe of] ‘Ad, when We let loose against them that life-destroying wind [41] which spared nothing of what it came upon, but caused [all of] it to become like

bones dead and decayed. [42]' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 41-42) Another example is: '...[But Hud said:] "Nay, but it is the very thing which you [so contemptuously] sought to hasten – a wind bearing grievous suffering,"' (*al-Ahqaf*: 24).

Regarding the plural form '*Riyah*' (winds), this verse is an example: 'And We let loose the winds to fertilize [plants]...' (*al-Hijr*: 22). To make things clearer: when there is a single wind, it is considered destructive because it comes from one direction. Things remain upright and perfectly balanced because the winds surround them from all sides. Skyscrapers, for example, are supported by air that surrounds them; if air were to be emptied from one particular direction then they would fall down in that direction. That is why a single wind is considered a type of a punishment, while multiple winds are considered a kind of mercy. Do you not see that the hurricanes that bring destruction come from a single direction?

But, did Allah *Glorified is He* make the winds subservient to Sulaiman *peace be upon him* or did He make the wind subservient to him? Scholar said that not all winds were subjected to Sulaiman, but it was one particular wind which Allah *Glorified is He* subjected to obey his instructions. That wind gave Solomon so great might and power that no one could oppose or resist him.

Therefore, Sulaiman was the only Prophet and king against whom no one waged war; indeed, no one dared to challenge his kingship or prophethood. How could they dare to when he possessed a power that no one else had? His sovereignty was a sovereignty of force; if he desired something, he could compel everyone to bow to his will.

As for our Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* his message has come to capture the hearts, not to compel the bodies that contain the hearts. Therefore, Allah points out to him this issue in the verse saying: 'Had We so willed, We could have sent down unto them a message from the skies so that their necks would [be forced to] bow down before it in humility.' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 4)

'...its morning course [covered the distance of] a month's journey, and its evening course, a month's journey...' (*Saba*: 12): 'Morning course' (*ghuduw*) is travelling at the beginning of the day and 'evening course' (*rawah*) is returning at the end of the day.

'...And We caused a fountain of molten copper to flow at his behest...' (*Saba'*: 12), i.e. We melted copper for him in the same way that We made iron soft for his father. This is one of the favours for which Allah *Glorified is He* singled out Sulaiman. You remember the story of the dam which *Dhu Al-Qarnayn* built; when he finished building it, he said: '...Bring me molten copper which I may pour upon it.' (*al-Kahf*: 96); that is 'melted copper' so that no one would be able to drill through the dam.

Then, the True Lord *Glorified is He* mentions another specific characteristic of Sulaiman *peace be upon him*: '...and [even] among the invisible beings there were some that had [been constrained] to labour for him by his Sustainer's leave...' (*Saba'*: 12). The meaning of: '...by his Sustainer's leave...' is that Allah *Glorified is He* made everything that is mentioned here subservient to his Prophet, Solomon; he himself had nothing to do with it.

Therefore, Allah says: '...and whichever of them deviated from Our command...' (*Saba'*: 12), i.e. deviates or turns aside from it, or disobeys the command: '...him would We let taste suffering through a blazing flame' (*Saba'*: 12). So, the command of Sulaiman to the jinn was, in effect, deriving its power from the command of Allah *Glorified is He*; thus, if anyone were to disobey the command of Sulaiman, they would be considered disobeying Allah.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

يَعْمَلُونَ لَهُ مَا يَشَاءُ مِنْ مَحْرِبٍ وَتَمَثِيلٍ وَجِفَانٍ كَالْجَوَابِ وَقُدُورٍ
رَاسِيَتٍ أَعْمَلُوا ءَالَ دَاوُدَ شُكْرًا وَقَلِيلٌ مِّنْ عِبَادِيَ الشَّكُورُ ﴿١٣﴾

**They made him whatever he wanted – palaces, statues,
basins as large as water troughs, fixed cauldrons. We said,
'Work thankfully, family of David, for few of my servants
are truly thankful' [13] (The Quran, *Saba'*: 13)**

Maharib which is translated into 'sanctuaries' is the plural of *mihrab* which designates both a huge, roomy palace and a place which people designate for worship. An example of this latter usage is found in Allah's Words: '...Whenever Zakaryya visited her in the sanctuary, he found her provided with food' (*Al-Imran*: 37).

Tamathil (Statues) is the plural of *timthal* which is sculptures carved out of stone, for example, or fashioned into the form of a human being, an animal, a bird etc. With particular regard to this matter of statues, a question arises: Does Allah *Glorified is He* bestow blessings upon His Prophet Sulaiman by having the jinn construct statues for him despite the fact that statues are known to be the symbol for polytheism, and despite the fact that the Prophets have always destroyed them and forbade people from worshipping them instead of Allah?

Scholars said that those statues were only destroyed when people started to take them as deities and objects of worship. But before that, people did not worship them, but used them as instruments of service⁽¹⁾ and in indication to their humiliation and insignificance.

For example, in the antiquities from ancient times, there are chairs and tables the legs of which are in the form of lions and such like. And even today, there are palaces whose balconies are in the form of a man crouched over carrying a balcony on his back instead of the concrete balconies we build today. So, statues were originally used to indicate something's lowness and insignificance, and then when they started to be worshipped, they were made forbidden and people were commanded to destroy them.

In '...and basins as [large as] great watering-troughs...' (*Saba'*: 13), the word *jifan* (watering troughs) is the plural of *jifna* which is a well-known form of dish: '...as [large as] great watering-troughs...', i.e. like the huge, wide-open basins. This is an allusion to his generosity and the amount of food he used to feed people. '...and cauldrons firmly anchored...' (*Saba'*: 13), i.e. cauldrons that remained in place due to their great size; they could not be lifted or moved from their place due to their massiveness.

(1) As he has mentioned 'service' here, it is necessary to mention what Al-Hakim At-Tirmidhi narrated in *Nawadir Al-Usul* from Ibn 'Abbas Allah be please with him regarding God's words: '...and statues...' (*Saba'* 13). He said, 'Solomon took statues made from copper and said, 'My Lord, breathe the spirit into them so that they can be stronger for their service.' So God breathed the spirit into them and they used to serve him. Isfidiyar was a remnant of them.' (Mentioned by As-Suyuti in *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur* 6/679).

Likewise, we have been told in the biography of the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* that the Companion Abu Mut'im *Allah be pleased with him* said: 'The Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* used to have a dish (a platter for food) with which I would shade myself on scorching hot days in Mecca.' This is an indication of its great breadth and size and of the number of people who used to be fed from it.⁽¹⁾

When King 'Abd Al-'Aziz of the Saudi Royal family built Riyadh, he placed within it cauldrons for food. Each of those cauldrons was big enough for a camel to stand inside it. I recall that the first time I went to Mecca; I entered the Mubarra⁽²⁾ and found huge cauldrons there, so I stood inside one of them and found that it was wide enough for me.

'... [And We said:] "Labour, O David's people, in gratitude [towards Me]..." (Saba': 13); i.e. be thankful to Allah *Glorified is He* for His blessings, and not simply to feed yourselves.'

So, your Lord is teaching you not to labour simply to meet your own personal needs because there are people in your society who are unable to work. Then, you should work as much as you can to fulfil your needs, and then give your surplus to the needy. It is well-known that being grateful for a blessing maintains that blessing to you and makes it last and even increases it, as Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...If you are grateful [to Me], I shall most certainly give you more and more...' (*Ibrahim*: 7).

Or: '... [And We said:] "Labour, O David's people, in gratitude [towards Me]..." (Saba': 13) means 'Be grateful that We have given you the capacity to work so that you can support those who are unable to work. '...and [remember that] few are the truly grateful [even] among My servants!' (Saba': 13): there are very few people who show gratitude in exchange for Allah's blessings.

(1) Among the Hadiths that have been narrated in this regard is that which Abu Dawud narrated in his Sunnan (3/348) in a (Hadith) from 'Abdullah ibn Bisir who said, 'The Prophet used to have a platter called al-gharra' that was carried by four men.' This was also narrated by Abu Sheikh Al-Isbahani ((Hadith) 614) in the edition printed by the Egyptian Lebanese Press.

(2) Mubarra is a charity belonging to the Egyptian Ministry of Religious Endowments that was set up to serve the poor. There were two of them: one of them in Mecca and the other in Medina. There was also a 'sebil' (public fountain) in Mina.

It is narrated⁽¹⁾ that 'Umar *Allah be pleased him* once heard a man say, 'O Allah, make me be of the few.' 'Umar was amazed at the supplication of this man and did not understand what the man meant, so he asked him about it. The man said, 'I heard Allah *Glorified is He* say, '...and [remember that] few are the truly grateful [even] among My servants!', and so I wanted to be one of them.' So, 'Umar said in amazement, 'All people are more knowledgeable than you, O 'Umar!'⁽²⁾

Some people have the ability to pick up meanings immediately and put them to use: an example of that is found in the story⁽³⁾ that is told of a man who was walking in the Watermelon Market in Baghdad. He was fasting on a hot day and passed by a man selling a drink like liquorice juice and heard the juice seller call out, 'May Allah forgive who drinks from me.' So, the first leant towards the latter, and said to him, 'Give me some of your drink', whereupon his companion reminded him that he was fasting. He said, 'By Allah, I had hoped for that seller's invitation!'

Another man was hurrying between Safa and Marwa; at that time there was a street, in the area between Safa and Marwa, lined with shops, with buying and selling and hustle and bustle. That street was later developed and expanded into its present state. On that street, there was a man selling cucumbers (*khiyar* Arabic for cucumbers and the same word is a plural form of the word '*Khaier*' which means good people) and calling out, 'Ten for one riyal, O *khiyar*!' The man who was hurrying heard him, and said in amazement, 'If ten of *khiyar* (good people) cost one riyal, then how much do *Ashrar* (bad people) cost?!'

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

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- (1) *The story of 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab Allah be pleased with him with the man who used to implore God saying ' God make me one of the few'.*
 - (2) *It is narrated by Ibn Abu Shayba, 'Abd ibn Humayd and Ibn Al-Mundhir from Ibrahim At-Taymi. As-Suyuti narrated in Ad-Durr Al-Manthur (6/682), and Al-Qurtubi in his Tafsir (8/5546) without ascribing from where he got it.*
 - (3) *The story of the fasting man in the watermelon market of Baghdad.*

فَلَمَّا قَضَيْنَا عَلَيْهِ الْمَوْتَ مَا دَلَّهُمْ عَلَى مَوْتِهِ إِلَّا دَابَّةُ الْأَرْضِ تَأْكُلُ مِنْسَأَتَهُ فَلَمَّا خَرَّ تَبَيَّنَتِ الْجِنُّ أَنْ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ الْغَيْبَ مَا لَبِثُوا فِي الْعَذَابِ الْمُهِينِ ﴿١٤﴾

Then, when We decreed Solomon's death, nothing showed the jinn he was dead, but a creature of the earth eating at his stick: when he fell down they realized – if they had known what was hidden they would not have continued their demeaning labour [14] (The Quran, *Saba'*: 14)

We said that among the things Allah *Glorified is He* made subservient to Sulaiman *peace be upon him* so as to realise a kingdom for him the like of which would never be granted to anyone after him, was that Allah made the wind subservient to him, and made the jinn subservient to him to make for him whatever he wished of magnificent palaces and statues, etc.

Subjecting the jinn to Sulaiman means that Allah *Glorified is He* had subjected to him the lightest and most hidden of all His creatures; the jinn have a peculiar nature. That is why Allah *Glorified is He* says of Satan: '...Verily, he and his tribe are lying in wait for you where you cannot perceive them!' (*al-A'raf*: 27)

They are also characterized by swiftness in performing actions meaning that they can do things in a very short period of time and carry huge amounts. The proof is that when Sulaiman *peace be upon him* asked for the throne of Bilqis which was in Sheba, he said to those sitting around him: '...Which of you can bring me her throne ere she and her followers come unto me in willing surrender to Allah?' (*an-Naml*: 38) None of the people who were present spoke up because Solomon *peace be upon him* had limited the time for fetching the throne to a degree beyond the capacity of human beings. He only requested the throne after learning that the delegation of Sheba were on route towards him, and wanted someone to bring the throne of Bilqis into his presence before they arrived. Even among the Jinn, no ordinary jinni proposed to undertake this task. Yet an (*ifrit*) from among the Jinn said to Sulaiman: "I shall bring it to thee ere thou rise from thy council-seat..." (*an-Naml*: 39).

The word '*ifrit*' means a jinni who is highly-proficient, skilful and able to do things that other members of his race are not able to do. This proves that there are different types of Jinn, some who are highly skilled (*ifrit*) and some

who are awkward (*labkha*); the same is true for the human beings. Still today, in our native Egyptian dialect, we say, 'So-and-so is an *'ifrit* meaning that he is highly-skilled and is able to do something better than most other people.

But there was someone in the inner council of Sulaiman who was even more skilled than the (*'ifrit*), possessing an even greater level of expertise and swiftness when it came to performing actions; this was the one who was given an amount of particular knowledge: 'Answered he who was illumined by revelation: "[Nay,] as for me – I shall bring it to thee ere the twinkling of thy eye ceases!"...' (*an-Naml*: 40)

If the *'ifrit* was going to fetch the throne of Bilqis before Sulaiman rose from his council-seat, and Sulaiman could well have remained in his session for an hour or even a number of hours, then the one who possessed particular knowledge of the Book promised to bring it: '...ere the twinkling of thy eye ceases!"...' (*an-Naml*: 40); the eye twinkling does not require a lot of time. Indeed, eyes can even twinkle many times within a minute.

Therefore, the True Lord *Glorified is He* illustrates the speed of response of this act: '...And when he saw it truly before him, he exclaimed: "This is [an outcome] of my Sustainer's bounty, to test me as to whether I am grateful or ungrateful! However, he who is grateful [to Allah] is but grateful for his own good; and he who is ungrateful [should know that], verily, my Sustainer is self-sufficient, most generous in giving!"' (*an-Naml*: 40)

The context of the verses does not go into any details about how the throne was brought, nor does it even mention that Solomon commanded that person to bring it. Rather, it says: '...I shall bring it to thee ere the twinkling of thy eye ceases!" And when he saw it truly before him...' (*an-Naml*: 40); the throne was fetched before Sulaiman straight away. It is as though fetching the throne took no time at all, and so the statement also came quickly and directly.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* knows that the Jinn were listening stealthily to the heaven before the Mission of Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him*. But after the Mission of Muhammad had begun, Allah *Glorified is He* prevented them from listening stealthily, saying: '...and anyone who now [or ever] tries to listen will [likewise] find a flame lying in wait for him!' (*al-Jinn*: 9)

This is one of the special characteristics of his Message, for before the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* was sent, most of the secrets of Heaven had been protected whereas after him all of the secrets of Heaven were protected. Before the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* was sent, the Jinn used to ascend to Heaven and listen stealthily, trying to steal a few of the words of the angels. Then they would go and inspire their satanic human friends⁽¹⁾, as Allah, says: ‘...And, verily, the evil impulses [within men’s hearts] whisper unto those who have made them their own that they should involve you in argument...’ (*al-An‘am*: 121).

Then, they would inform humans of what they had heard, and the humans claim that they know the Unseen. Things would happen exactly as they said. So, they were able to trick and mislead people and keep them captivated. That is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* wanted to expose the Jinn for this particular thing they were doing, so He said: ‘Yet [even Sulaiman had to die; but] when We decreed that he should die...’ (*Saba’*: 14), i.e. when Sulaiman passed away. The word ‘decreed’ was used to show that death is an inevitable destiny and there is no escape from it; it is not resultant of illness, old age or anything else. It is just as they say, ‘Dying for no reason is itself a reason.’ In other words, he died because he must die.

Therefore, the True Lord *Glorified is He* addresses the human beings, among whom is our master, the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him*

(1) From Abu Hurayra Allah be please with him who said, ‘The Prophet Muhammad said, ‘When God decreed the entire affair in Heaven, the angels beat their wings in submission to His Words with a noise like a chain striking stones. Then, when the fear entered their hearts, they said to each other, ‘What did your Lord say?’ And [others] replied, ‘He said the truth - He is the Great and Exalted.’ Those from the jinn who were listening stealthily heard these words, these jinni stand upon the shoulders of each other, hear a single word and then pass that on to one beneath them. Then that one would, in his turn, pass it on to another beneath him until it was eventually passed on, on the tongue of a magician or soothsayer. That [stealthy listener] jinni would either be struck down by the fiery meteor before passing it on to a magician, or he would pass it on before it reached him; the magician adds a hundred lies to this word of truth. Then, the people who attended the magician say, ‘did he not say such-and-such to us on that other day?’’ Narrated by Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* (8/380 & 537 with the commentary of Ibn Hajar), by Ibn Majah in his *Sunnan* (1/69) and At-Tirmidhi in an abridged wording (5/362). And At-Tirmidhi said that it was (*hasan sahih*).

with the Words: 'Yet, verily, thou art bound to die, [O Muhammad,] and, verily, they, too, are bound to die' (*az-Zumar*: 30) mentioning this reality first to Muhammad and then to his community. The word *mayyit* 'bound to die' means you are destined to death. So, we and all other living creatures are [*(mayyitun* (the plural of *mayyit*)] since we are all going to die. As for those who have actually died, they are called *mayt* like in the words of the poet: A *mayt* (dead person) is none other than the one who is carried to the grave. Thus, giving us a physical illustration of what death is, scholars say 'In the very moment that your life begins, the arrow bearing your death is fired in your direction. So, your life span is the length of time that arrow takes to reach you. Therefore, despite the fact that we are living, we are all *mayyitun*.'

The statement '...nothing showed them that he was dead...' (*Saba'*: 14) is: 'nothing showed the Jinn...' The third person pronoun in 'showed them' goes back to those who were referred to in the initial context of Allah's words: '...and [even] among the invisible beings there were some that had [been constrained] to labour for him by his Sustainer's leaved...' (*Saba'*: 12).

Relating the story of our Sulaiman *peace be upon him* it is said that he used to worship Allah and show Him gratitude as much as he can for blessings and kingship. Despite the enormous grace Allah granted to Sulaiman, he still used to go through the entire week and even month eating nothing but *khushkar*. *Khushkar* is the bran which is known to be the lowest component of grain. It is the food of servants and the poor. As for the masters and the rich, they only eat high-quality flour, the 'class A'.

Strangely enough, modern science has shown the benefits of eating bran that the poor eat. It is even made into a pill and prescribed as a remedy and treatment for certain illnesses. Even those people who live in luxury and spend their whole lives eating the finest grade of flour and lunching on croissants, doughnuts etc., when they approach the end of their lives, their doctors come to them and forbid them to eat all their delicacies and find no other remedy for them but the bran that had never once in their lifetimes passed their lips. It is as if this were a necessary way of balancing things up between the rich and poor. The researches that have shown us the importance of bran also draws our attention to Allah's words: 'and grain

growing tall on its stalks, and sweet-smelling plants.' (*ar-Rahman*: 12) and allows us to understand them better.

Similarly, Sulaiman *peace be upon him* used to worship Allah standing upright; he would not ever take up a restful position. He used to be very hard on himself to show his gratitude to Allah *Glorified is He* and would stand up in worship until he grew tired. Then, he would stand on one foot and left the other up to relieve it and do vice versa, and then when he grew very tired, he would lean on a staff to help continue to remain upright.

When Allah *Glorified is He* decreed death for him he was standing in that position and none of the Jinn were aware that he was dead. So, they continued to do their work in front of him and expend effort on his account because of their great fear of him⁽¹⁾.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* wanted to use the death of Sulaiman *peace be upon him* as a means of settling a matter that concerned both jinn and men, namely the claim of the jinn to know the Unseen. Allah wanted to expose them and show their total lack of ability to know the Unseen, since it is only Allah *Glorified is He* who has knowledge of the Unseen.

Sulaiman died standing up and leaning on his staff, and remained in that condition until Allah *Glorified is He* subjected his staff to the gnawing of an earthworm, as Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...nothing showed them that he was dead except an earthworm that gnawed away his staff...' (*Saba*: 14).

Some have understood the earth that is referred to in the Words: *dabbat al-ard* (earthworm) refer to the earth that is the opposite of the heavens, but really the meaning here is the worm (*dabbat*) that gnaws (*taqrid*), like when we say, 'The rat gnawed such-and-such.' The declension of this verb is: *qarada*, *yaqridu*, *qardan*, like *daraba*, *yadribu*, *darban*. This creature that is referred to here is the worm that attacks and eats wood.

(1) *Abad ibn Humayd narrated from Qatada: 'The Jinn used to tell certain people that they knew things of the Unseen, and that they knew what was going to happen tomorrow. So they were tested by means of the death of Solomon peace be upon him; he died and remained standing, leaning on his staff, for a full year, and for that entire year, they were totally unaware that he died and in their ignorance continued to serve him and work for him unceasingly. (Narrated by As-Suyuti in Ad-Durr Al-Manthur 6/684)*

This woodworm continued to eat away at the staff until it upset the balance of Sulaiman and he fell to the ground: ‘...And when he fell to the ground, those invisible beings [subservient to him] saw clearly that; had they but understood the reality which was beyond the reach of their perception, they would not have continued [to toil] in the shameful suffering [of servitude]’ (*Saba'*: 14), i.e. they would not remain in their state of servility. As for the word *kharra* ‘fell to the ground’, it means to fall down in a disordered fashion, like in Allah’s words: ‘...so that the roof fell in upon them from above...’ (*an-Nahl*: 26).

'Khurur' (noun of the verb *kharra*) is the falling down in a disorderly fashion. It was only when that happened that the Jinn knew that Sulaiman *peace be upon him*, was dead, just like men, and knew that they did not know the Unseen.

For, if they had known the Unseen, they would have discovered the fact that he was dead before that, and would not have remained for that entire time in toil, hardship and suffering⁽¹⁾. That was the moment in which the truth about them was laid bare, their lies were exposed and their claims to know the Unseen were shown to be false.

They ‘... would not have continued [to toil] in the shameful suffering [of servitude].’ (*Saba'*: 14) That is Jinn can be worn out by work, and are subject to the same feelings of tiredness as all other living creatures.

The Arabic word for 'staff' is *minsat* which derives from the verb *nasa'a* meaning ‘to delay.’ *minsat* is so-called because people used to drive away insects and other harmful creatures with them.

Musa *peace be upon him* said about his staff when his Lord asked him: “Now, what is this in thy right hand, O Musa?” [17] He answered: “It is my staff; I lean on it; and with it I beat down leaves for my sheep; and [many] other uses have I for it.” [18] (*Ta Ha*: 17-18) Musa spoke at such great length to Allah *Glorified is He* because Allah *Glorified is He* had intimated to him that he should speak at length by saying: ‘Now, what is this in thy right hand, O

(1) *It is narrated by Sa'id ibn Mansur, 'Abad Ibn Humayd, Ibn Al-Mundhir and Ibn Abu Hatim that Ibn 'Abbas Allah be pleased with him said, 'Solomon remained leaning on his staff for a year after he died, and then fell down immediately after the year ended. So people took a staff like his staff and got a worm like his worm, and set the worm on the staff, and the worm ate the staff in a year.'* (*Ad-Durr Al-Manthur* 6/683)

Musa?' (*Ta Ha*: 17), and not saying instead, for instance, 'What is in your hand?' Then, who can help themselves speaking at length with their Lord when He addresses them? However, Musa *peace be upon him* still corrected himself, and said in summary: '...and [many] other uses have I for it.' (*Ta Ha*: 18)

From Allah's words: '...they would not have continued [to toil] in the shameful suffering [of servitude]' (*Saba*: 14), it is understood that the work they were doing was difficult and a source of humiliation for them. That is because Jinn think that they are better than mankind and that they are the higher form of species, as is proven by the words of their forefather at a previous time: '...“I am better than he: Thou hast created me out of fire, whereas him Thou hast created out of clay.”' (*al-A'raf*: 12)

A source of humiliation and suffering for them was the fact that they were subjected to a human being, and knew that they were but still had to obey him. So, even if the work they did for Sulaiman was not exhausting in a physical sense, still it was exhausting in a psychological sense. Why not, since they were subjugated by someone beneath them, in their viewpoint.

One may ask, 'How could someone who is serving and living in close proximity to a prophet ever be in suffering?' we would reply, 'This particular complaint was uttered by the Jinn, and from it we understand that all of the Jinn without exception were placed under the authority of Sulaiman *peace be upon him*. But the truth is that the Jinn were so-called because they are hidden and we cannot see their movement and actions. Those of the Jinn who were subjugated were the devils, as Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'as well as all the jinn [that We made to work for him] – every kind of builder and diver –' (*Sad*: 37). He also says: 'And among the jinn [which We made subservient to him] there were some that dived for him [into the sea] and performed other works, besides' (*al-Anbiya*: 82). These groups have undergone the humiliating punishment, while the believer among the jinn was not subjected to the commands of Sulaiman *peace be upon him*.

The word *kharra*, meaning fell, indicates that a person's dignity lies in his soul and spirit which is the divine Allah *Glorified is He* placed within his body. Here he is Sulaiman, a great Prophet of Allah, a man who enjoyed a high station with his Lord, and yet it is said of him: '...And when he fell to the

ground...' (*Saba'*: 14), as if he were but some inanimate object falling to the ground, That is because when the soul leaves the body, the body becomes something almost inanimate, like a staff or stone.

We said previously that the moment the soul is snatched from the body, the first thing it forgets is its name no matter how great it was. They call it 'a body', and then when it is placed in the bier, it takes the name of 'bier'.

Glory be to Allah! This lump of matter no longer has any attribute worth mentioning. Rather, its family and loved one's rush to get rid of it and bury it as fast as they can. If it were to have remained in their possession, none of them would have been able to bear it because of the changes it undergoes and the smell that emanates from it and hurts those who were once closest to it.

Then, the True Lord *Glorified is He* tells us about the land of Sheba and its people, saying:

لَقَدْ كَانَ لِسَبَإٍ فِي مَسْكَنِهِمْ آيَةٌ جَنَّتَانِ عَنْ يَمِينٍ وَشِمَالٍ كُلُوا
مِنْ رَزَقِ رَبِّكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لَهُ ۖ بَلَدَةٌ طَيِّبَةٌ وَرَبُّ غَفُورٌ

There was a sign for the people of Sheba, too, in their dwelling place: two gardens, one on the right, one on the left: 'Eat from what your Lord has provided for you and give Him thanks, for your land is good, and your Lord most forgiving' [15] (The Quran, *Saba'*: 15)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* takes us from the story of Sulaiman *peace be upon him* to the story of the people of Sheba. What is the connection between the two of them? Reflecting on the chapters and verses of the Quran, we will find that they are linked and in perfect harmony. The correlation here is that Sulaiman had one of the most striking stories in terms of the elements and doctrines of belief, namely his story with Bilqis, the queen of Sheba. Then, there is a relationship between the two of them, and so this leap from one story to the next is fitting.

The story⁽¹⁾ of Sulaiman with the hoopoe bird and Bilqis is a famous one, and within it, there are many great indications and proofs relating to belief

(1) *The story of the seeress with Sheba*

and relating to the fact that animals have knowledge of belief and knowledge of Allah's secrets in His creation.

Sheba was the name of a man called 'Amr ibn 'Amir, who was given the nickname of Maziqiba'. His father was called *Ma' as-Sama'* (Water of Heaven), Karra ibn Nusayk ⁽¹⁾ *Allah be pleased with him* asked the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* about Sheba, and he replied, {'Such-and-such...}. He had ten sons: Azad, Kinda, Madhhaj, Ash'ariyyun, Anmar, Ghassan, 'Amila, Lakhm, Judham and Khath'am. ⁽²⁾

Each one of these men formed a large tribe, six of which moved to Yemen and four of which went to the Levant. Those who went to Yemen lived in bountiful welfare. It is narrated that when Bilqis saw the rainwater flowing into the valleys and being absorbed into the ground so that they could not derive any benefit from it, she thought of building a dam between two mountains to hold in the rainwater. Then, she placed a number of fountainheads very much like the Barrages at the entrance of the Nile delta. These could be opened up when water was needed. Therefore, there was growth in Yemen and the amount of resources increased so that eventually it is called the 'Fertile Yemen' or 'Fortunate Yemen'.

But one day, a fortuneteller or a wise woman said to Sheba, 'The dam will fall apart, and its waters will drown Yemen so leave the country.' So, Sheba did indeed leave and they moved to the Hijaz and the Levant: the Ghassanites went to the Levant, the Mundhirites went to Iraq, the Anmarites went to Medina and the Azadites went to Amman in Jordan.

(1) *The correct version of the name is Farwa ibn Musayk Al-Muradi Allah be pleased with him and he was ranked among the Companions. He is considered to be one of the people of Kufa, although he was originally from Yemen. His patronym was Abu Sabra. He came in a delegation to the Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessing be upon him) who made him governor over Murad, Madhhaj and Zubayd. His arrival [in Medina] occurred in the ninth or tenth year AH. 'Umar Allah be please with him put him in command of collecting the zakat of Madhhaj. Then he moved to Kufa where he became one of its most eminent people. (A summary taken from Al-Isaba fi Tamyiz As-Sahaba of Ibn Hajar Al-'Asqalani, biography number 6975. And in his account is mentioned the question he asked the Messenger of Muhammad about Sheba.)*

(2) *It is narrated by At-Tirmidhi in his Sunnan (3222), and Abu Dawud in his Sunnan in an abridged form (9388) in Kitab Al-Huruf wa Al-Qira'at as part of a (Hadith) from Farwa ibn Musayk Allah be please with him.*

The name Sheba, after originally being used as the name of a man, moved beyond that to be used as the name for a tribe and then finally as the name for the place in which they lived. 'Indeed, in [the luxuriant beauty of] their homeland, the people of Sheba...' (*Saba'*: 15); that is the place where they lived. A place where a person lives is called *sakan* or *bayt* or *manzil*. Each of these words has its own particular meaning. *Sakan* is a place where a person lives and relaxes from work effort and the activities of life. Humans only live in places in which they find safety and all of the necessary facilities of life.

Therefore, when Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* left his wife and son near the Sacred House, he called on his Lord, saying: 'O our Sustainer! Behold, I have settled some of my offspring in a valley in which there is no arable land, close to Thy sanctified Temple' (*Ibrahim*: 37). That place was totally barren; there was no vegetation, water or any of the other vital components of life to be found there except for air. The meaning of: '...I have settled...' (*Ibrahim*: 37), is 'I have made this a homeland for them.'

As for *manzil*, it is a place where you camp down from time to time and then move on; it is not a place where you take up permanent residency. It is like those public rest houses that are there in case of emergency and which people spend no more than a few days in the entire year.

An example of this is the Prophetic Hadith regarding part of the battle of Badr when the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* reached Badr, the great Companion, Al-Hubab ibn Al-Mundhir⁽¹⁾ *Allah be pleased with him* said to him, 'O, Messenger of Allah, is this a place in which Allah has commanded you to camp down, or is it one that is based on opinion and battle tactics?' He replied, 'It is one that has been chosen based on opinion and battle tactics.' So Al-Hubab said, 'Then, I do not think that this is a good place to set up camp. Rather, get the people up and keep moving until we get to the nearest watering hole of the people; it is there that we should alight. Then we can sabotage all the wells behind it and build a basin above it which

(1) *He is Al-Hubab ibn Al-Mundhir ibn Al-Jumuh Al-Ansari Al-Khazraji Allah be pleased with him. He was present at the battle of Badr, and had the patronym of Abu 'Umar. Ibn Sa'd said, 'He died during the Caliphate of 'Umar Allah be pleased with him when he had passed the age of fifty.'* (*Al-'Isaba of Ibn Hajar, biography number 1547*)

we can fill with water. Then, when we fight the enemy, we will be able to drink and they will not be able to drink.' So, the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* said, 'I will command as you have suggested.'⁽¹⁾

So, *sakan* is a place of permanent residence where people settle, while *manzil* is a resting-place at which you may stop and set up camp or leave behind.

As for *bayt*, the etymology of the word suggests spending the night. People only sleep restfully in a place in which they feel safe with respect to themselves and to their belongings. Therefore, those who are frightened or very hungry find themselves unable to sleep.

Another place in which the word '*sakan*' is used is in Allah's words to the sons of *Isra'il*: 'And after that We said unto the children of Israel: "Dwell now securely on earth – but [remember that] when the promise of the Last Day shall come to pass, We will bring you forth as [parts of] a motley crowd!"' (*al-Isra'*: 104).

One of the Orientalists took hold of this verse and said that it was a proof that the entire earth had been made permissible to the Jews, but how could that be when they are on the earth? When you want to say something of that sort, you always specify a place, for example, 'Make Cairo your dwelling' or 'Make Tanta your dwelling'. But as for: '..."Dwell now securely on earth..." (*al-Isra'*: 104), it has quite a different meaning. It means they are dispersed throughout the earth into different places, as in Allah's words: 'And We dispersed them as [separate] communities all over the earth...' (*al-A'raf*: 168).

In other words, they do not have any particular homeland but rather will be spread out throughout the land so that no one will be able to strike at them or annihilate them. They will remain in that state of dispersal until the Command of Allah *Glorified is He* comes and gathers them all into one place, at which point it will be come easy to bring an end to them.

As for the word, '...evidence...' (*Saba'*: 15), it is the translation of the Arabic word *Ayah* which means a sign, a miracle, a lesson, proof or example; for instance, we may say, 'So-and-so is an example of generosity' or 'So-and-so is

(1) *Ibn Hisham narrated it in As-Sira An-Nabawiyya (2/259 & 260), and ascribed it to Ibn Ishaq from some men from the Banu Salama.*

a sign of good manners'... etc. That is to say that someone or something is unique and remarkable. The True Lord *Glorified is He* tells us of three different types of (evidences):

The first type is the universal or cosmic evidence such as in His Words: 'Now among His signs are the night and the day, as well as the sun and the moon...' (*Fussilat*: 37) and His Words: 'For among His signs is this: thou see the earth lying desolate – and lo! When We send down water upon it, it stirs and swells [with life]...' (*Fussilat*: 39).

The second type of evidences or signs is miracles and things which go against the norms of this world such as those Allah gives to His Messengers to support them and prove they are speaking truthfully with respect to what they convey from Allah *Glorified is He*; for example: '[And now] put thy hand into thy bosom: it will come forth [shining] white, without blemish...' (*al-Qasas*: 32).

And thirdly, the word 'evidence or sign' is used to refer to the verses of the Book that carry within them the divine rulings of Allah in the Noble Quran. All of these, whether they are cosmic signs or miracles or verses of the Quran, are all wonders. Just as these wonders are clear and apparent in the universal signs and miracles, they are also apparent in the verses of the Wise Book. The Quran is a wonder in terms of the way it organises the life of the human beings; this is proven by the fact that the unbelievers will be forced to adopt its rulings and obey its laws, not because they are a religion, but because they are the necessary rules of life.

The example we gave to show this previously was that of the laws of divorce: despite their continuous criticism and attack against these rules, and, ignorantly and unfairly, accusing the religion of Allah of being harsh, still we find them taking refuge in it. They find no solution to their problems except for divorce and so they come back to the rulings of Allah *Glorified is He* despite the fact that they do not believe in them. This is the ultimate victory for the religion of Allah; the fact that unbelievers come back to it. That is the victory of truth and the victory of proof.

We also previously mentioned that one of the orientlists once asked us the following question when we were in San Francisco: 'the Quran says: 'He it is who has sent forth His Apostle with [the task of] spreading guidance and

the religion of truth, to the end that He make it prevail over all [false] religion, however hateful this may be to those who ascribe divinity to aught but Allah.' (*as-Saff*: 9), and yet after fourteen centuries, Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, etc. still exist in the world. [How is that?]' This man's words indicate a lack of understanding of the meaning of the verses; the meaning of: '...that He makes it prevail over all [false] religion...' (*as-Saff*: 9) is not that all people are going to become believers, as the very verse ends with the words: '...however hateful this may be to those who ascribe divinity to aught but Allah.' (*as-Saff*: 9)

So, Islam's victory over them will be by its evidence and its superiority to their laws; since problems will crop up in their lives for which they find no solution except in the Law of Allah *Glorified is He*. That is the victory to which the verse refers.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* makes it clear to us exactly what the evidence was that Sheba had in their dwellings, saying: '...two [vast expanses of] gardens, to the right and to the left ...' (*Saba*: 15). Since Allah *Glorified is He* describes these two gardens as being evidence, there must be something wonderful about them and they must be different in some way from gardens as we know them.

Scholars have spoken about the wonders of these two gardens; they said that these two gardens contained no scorpion, snake, fly, flea...etc. If someone visited one of these gardens with a louse on their body, that louse would die as soon as they stepped into them.⁽¹⁾ These were wonders of these gardens.

One notes here that the word 'evidence' is in the singular even though it refers to many wonders. This is because the Arabic word *Ayah* (evidence, sign, verse, symbol, and example) can also refer to the plural, such as in Allah's Words about 'Isa *peace be upon him*: 'And [as We exalted Musa, so, too,] We

(1) *Ibn Abi Hatim narrated from Ibn Zayd that he said about God's words: 'Indeed, in [the luxuriant s ever seen in their city. Riders would come with lice and vermin infesting their clothes. But as soon as they look upon the houses of the people of Sheba, those vermin fell down dead. And if any man were to enter the two gardens carrying a basket on his head, when he got out that basket would be full of all sorts of fruit without him having taken any of them with his hand.'* (Narrated by As-Suyuti in *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur* 6/687)

made the son of Maryam and his mother a symbol...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 50). Allah *Glorified is He* does not say here 'two symbols'. That is because, as scholars say, the two of them shared one marvellous event: *'Isa peace be upon him* was born without any male parent, and Maryam *peace be upon her* bore him without having a male partner. So, the two miracles are but a single one.

As for the Words: '...two [vast expanses of] gardens, to the right and to the left...' (*Saba'*: 15), it is possible that every one of them had two gardens, one to the right and one to the left, with his house in the middle; and it is possible that the two gardens were for the entire people of Sheba, meaning that there were gardens all connected to each other to the right and gardens all connected to each other to the left, indistinguishable from one another and not separated by walls or fences.⁽¹⁾ And that indicates that security was the norm amongst them. We have witnessed the like of this in America where fields and crops stretch out, closely connected to one other, separated by no more than a piece of wire.

As for Allah's words: "'eat of what your Lord has provided for you, and render thanks unto Him'" (*Saba'*: 15), how can we understand the Words: '..."Eat of what your Lord has provided for you"' (*Saba'*: 15) when all people eat from what Allah *the Exalted* provides them? People, they say, generally eat from what Allah *the Exalted* provides them through secondary causes, but in this case, Allah provides for them directly without any secondary causes. And that is why Allah *the Exalted* says elsewhere: "'Partake of the good things which We have provided for you as sustenance..." (*Ta Ha*: 81).

Not all provision is good to eat, except for here: "'eat of what your Lord has provided for you'" (*Saba'*: 15): i.e. all of it is good and all of it is sweet. The fruits in these two gardens are never ruined - they are never afflicted by rot as other fruits are. And that is why Allah *the Exalted* says in another verse: '..."a land most goodly and a Lord much-forgiving!"' (*Saba'*: 15)

(1) *A number of opinions have been narrated with regard to these two gardens, among which are the following: 1) That the gardens were between two mountains in Yemen. This was what Qatada said. 2) One of the gardens was to the right of the valley and the other was to its left. This was what Sufyan said. 3) He does not mean two gardens, but rather, they are a metaphor for wealth and good fortune. This was what Al-Qushayri said. Al-Qurtubi narrated it in his Tafsir (8/5553) and said, 'i.e. their land was full of gardens, trees and fruits whose shadows covered the people.'*

It is well-known that the amount of work necessary to maintain a garden is minimal, which is why we often see farmers who struggle to plough their crops and pay their workers' wages, turn instead to fruitful orchards and gardens. And that is mainly because they cost less and do not require a great deal of supervision at those times in which they bear their fruit.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says elsewhere: 'Have you ever considered the seed which you cast upon the soil? [63] Is it you who cause it to grow – or are We the cause of its growth? [64]' (*al-Waqi'a*: 63-64), establishing the fact that they do work and sow the fields. But, as for the matter at hand - the two gardens about which we speak - they were a gift from Allah *the Exalted* with no secondary causes, requiring no work from them. Allah *the Exalted* is the cultivator, and He was the One Who chose for them a gentle climate, no subject to heat or cold. There was no weariness nor fear, nor any need to abstain from any of Allah's blessings since they were all plentiful.

So, there was no work that they had to do in their gardens to produce what they enjoyed from them – rather, their only work was to thank the Bestower of blessings so that He *the Exalted* could then increase the good things He had bestowed on them. Showing thanks for a blessing is part of the wisdom of a slave towards his master, which is what Allah *the Exalted* says about Luqman *peace be upon him*: 'And, indeed, We granted this wisdom unto Luqman...' (*Luqman*: 12). What is this wisdom to which He *the Exalted* refers? Be '...grateful unto Allah...' (*Luqman*: 12) because being grateful for blessings increases them.

As for Allah's words: 'a land most goodly' (*Saba'*: 15), they mean that the land gives forth good things without anything loathsome therein. And that is because there are things that initially give you good in which you take pleasure, but later exhaust and spoil things for you.

But, as for this land, all that is in it is good which you will eat with pleasure and good cheer. And that is because it is provision that has come from Allah *the Exalted* directly without any input from His slaves. For whenever His slaves have a hand in Allah's gift, troubles, and disturbances always appear in the blessings that come. And that is exactly what we are suffering from today because of the interventions we have made in the lifecycles of our crops by

spraying them with chemical fertilisers and insecticides - those chemicals have ruined our lives and brought us more harm than good. Indeed, today, we have traced the cause of all the diseases we know back to our meddling with the gifts that Allah *the Exalted* gave us. If we had left the earth alone and allowed it to be irrigated naturally by the sky just as it was in the beginning, we would have had a taste of unspoilt goodness. So it is absolutely imperative that we act well towards Allah *the Exalted* with respect to His gifts.

And that is why you find that so many people of wealth, culture, knowledge, and philosophy love to escape from the tumult and din of the big cities and from their polluted atmosphere and water, and get out into the countryside. They are fleeing from the harmful effects of modern civilisation into the open country where shepherds live and where nature is as Allah *the Exalted* created it, where creation is healthy and unspoilt by the meddling of human beings.

You will remember that in the past we used to combat the worms that ate our cotton naturally, removing them with our own hands. Then, the advancements made by science led to the chemical insecticide DDT being developed to combat these worms. But this poisonous substance killed off everything in the fields, killed the fish in the canals and water ditches, killed the white egret, a close friend to agriculture, polluted the water and crops...etc. The only thing that developed a resistance to it was the cotton worm! It became, as we say, immune to DDT.

As for Sheba, it was: 'a land most goodly' (*Saba'*: 15): everything in it was good - its water, air and soil, never having being once touched by any sort of pollution. And if the land itself was good, then how good do you think the things on it are?

In the verse, there are two requests: '...“eat of what your Lord has provided for you, and render thanks unto Him...”' (*Saba'*: 15) as well as the warning: 'Beware of being fooled by the blessings, thinking that they belong to you and forgetting the One Who bestowed them upon you. Beware of being like the one about whom Allah *the Exalted* says: 'Nay, verily, man becomes grossly overweening [6] whenever he believes himself to be self-sufficient [7]' (*al-'Alaq*: 6-7).

Beware of thinking that you are deep-rooted in this matter and always remember that the Bestower is Allah *the Exalted* and that where you are and

what you have is part of Allah's gift to you. And then you must thank Him because it is by means of gratitude that blessings are bound to you.

In another place, the True Lord *Glorified is He* talks about being grateful for blessings, saying: '...and [remember that] few are the truly grateful [even] among My servants!'" (*Saba*': 13) May Allah *the Exalted* be praised that He did not say instead: 'and few are the thankful among My servants', using the word *shakir* instead of the instead of *shakur* which, as you know, is either the intensive form of the adjective from the verb *shakara*, 'to thank or be grateful', or is the one who gives thanks for the blessing and then thanks Allah *the Exalted* for inspiring him to give thanks for the blessing. So it is as if he offers thanks twice.

Then there is the fact that the blessing to Sheba was not confined to this world alone, but rather extended to the Hereafter as well. In this world, they have: '...a land most goodly...' (*Saba*': 15), and in the Hereafter they have: '...and a Lord much-forgiving!' (*Saba*': 15). In other words, Allah *the Exalted* will disregard any mistakes or slip-ups that you make.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* makes clear what the result will be and how they will react, saying:

فَأَعْرَضُوا فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ سَيْلَ الْعَرِمِ وَبَدَّلْنَاهُمْ بِجَنَّتَيْهِمْ جَنَّتَيْنِ ذَوَاتِ أُكُلٍ خَمْطٍ وَأَثَلٍ
وَشَيْءٍ مِّن سِدْرٍ قَلِيلٍ ﴿١٦﴾ ذَلِكَ جَزَيْنَاهُمْ بِمَا كَفَرُوا وَهَلْ نُجْزِي إِلَّا الْكَافِرَ ﴿١٧﴾

**But they paid no heed, so We let loose on them a flood from
the dam and replaced their two gardens with others that
yielded bitter fruit, tamarisk bushes, and a few lute-trees [16]
In this way We punished them for their ingratitude – would
We punish anyone but the ungrateful? [17]
(The Quran, *Saba*': 16 - 17)**

When Allah *the Exalted* says: 'But they turned away...' (*Saba*': 16), He means that they turned away from what they were commanded, that being: '...“Eat of what your Lord has provided for you, and render thanks unto Him...”' (*Saba*': 15). They stopped eating from what Allah *the Exalted* had provided them and instead ate only from what their own efforts and skills brought them, or so

they claimed. This was their first failure. Then they failed to thank Allah *the Exalted* for those blessings because the blessings had brought them luxury and opulence and so they forgot to give thanks for them.

There is a difference between the two verbs *tarafa* and *atrafa*: we use *tarafa* when we want to say that a person lives a life of luxury and comfort. But, as for *atrafa*, we only use it when a person has been deceived and deluded by the blessings that have come his way. And that is why Allah *the Exalted* says: 'But when [this has been done, and] it is Our will to destroy a community, We convey Our last warning to those of its people who have lost themselves entirely in the pursuit of pleasures; and [if] they [continue to] act sinfully...' (*al-Isra'*: 16).

There is no harm in you living in luxury - your troubles only start when those blessings come to dominate your life and deceive you. The first way you go to excess with respect to blessings is attributing them to yourself, saying, 'I earned them by my own efforts and cleverness', like the one who said: '...This [wealth] has been given to me only by virtue of the knowledge that is in me!...' (*al-Qasas*: 78) And then you forget the Bestower of the blessing and neglect to thank Him for it.

And in another place in the Quran, the True Lord *Glorified is He* summarises this matter for us, saying: 'And Allah propounds [to you] a parable: [Imagine] a town which was [once] secure and at ease, with its sustenance coming to it abundantly from all quarters, and which thereupon blasphemously refused to show gratitude for Allah's blessings: and therefore Allah caused it to taste the all-embracing misery of hunger and fear in result of all [the evil] that its people had so persistently wrought.' (*an-Nahl*: 112)

And He *the Exalted* says about the people of Prophet Noah *peace be upon him*: '[Know] then, that if they [who have heard Our call] keep firmly to the [right] path, We shall certainly shower them with blessings abundant' (*al-Jinn*: 16).

So, the fact that blessings are preserved by recognising them and giving thanks for them can all be attributed to the Bestower of blessings. Indeed, even when it comes to human beings, we say, 'So-and-so remembers good turns with gratitude' and so we give him increase and are not stingy towards him with other good turns. So how do you think it is with the True Lord *Glorified is He*?

The word *i'rad* implies something greater than mere negligence and forgetfulness, for *i'rad* is to turn away from the one to whom you are speaking and show him your side. It is just like when you say to someone whose speech does not please you, 'Show me the side of your shoulders.'

So, *i'rad* is deliberately leaving something with complete indifference. As for heedlessness, forgetfulness, mistakenness or when asleep, all of those are things for which we will be pardoned, for Allah *the Exalted* in His mercy does not take us to task for them since He only judges us according to what we do when we are aware and awake and what we do deliberately.

Read if you will Allah's words: 'But as for him who shall turn away from remembering Me – his shall be a life of narrow scope; and on the day of Resurrection We shall raise him up blind.' (*Ta Ha*: 124) Why? Because turning away suggests that one is paying little attention to the one giving the commands, and so the punishment is greater, as opposed to when you do pay attention to the one giving the commands, but later turn your concern to yourself for some other reason.

Allah *the Exalted* also says about *i'rad*: 'And, too, when We bestow Our blessings upon man, he tends to turn aside and keep aloof [from remembering Us]...' (*Fussilat*: 51). And then the recompense will come according to the degree to which one turns away, as the True Lord *Glorified is He* makes clear in His Words: '...But as for all who lay up treasures of gold and silver and do not spend them for the sake of Allah – give them the tidings of grievous suffering [in the life to come]: [34] on the day when that [hoarded wealth] shall be heated in the fire of hell and their foreheads and their sides and their backs branded therewith, [those sinners shall be told:] "These are the treasures which you have laid up for yourselves! Taste, then, [the evil of] your hoarded treasures [35]"' (*at-Tawba*: 34-35).

Just as we say, 'You have raised the one who will later kill you', so too will those who hoard wealth enjoy it for a short time in this transient world, and then they will reap the consequences of that on the day of Rising - their foreheads, sides and backs will be branded by flames and the pain will be so bad that they will wish that those treasures had been less so that they would have been branded in less places.

If you reflect on the order of these words: foreheads then sides then backs, you will find that, that is the same order in which the parts of the body of a person of wealth are turned aside from a needy person who asks him for money in this world. For the first thing he does when he sees him is to turn his face aside, then he shows him his side and finally he turns his back on him. So the recompense is just like the act which merited it, and has all the same details.

What was the result of this turning aside of theirs? Allah *the Exalted* says: '... and so We let loose upon them a flood that overwhelmed the dams...' (*Saba'*: 16), i.e. after the dam of 'Arim collapsed, its waters flooded and drowned them. It is an amazing thing that Allah *the Exalted* made every living thing out of water, but when He *the Exalted* wants, He *the Exalted* can use it as a means to destroy your people. It was by means of water that Allah *the Exalted* destroyed the people of Nuh (Noah), and by means of it that He *the Exalted* destroyed Pharaoh and his army. And that is a proof of the absoluteness of Allah's Power, since He *the Exalted* directs a thing towards life and it brings life and directs it towards death and it brings death.

When they wanted to find somewhere to settle after the terror of the flood of the dam of 'Arim, they chose to settle in places in which there was no water. And then, when they wanted water, they would fetch it from nearby wells. It was as if water caused them to develop a complex.

This ancient case has echoes in a modern story⁽¹⁾ of which we were a part: when we were in the Azhar, we used to wear *kaftans* and *kakula* robes. One of our colleagues had very limited means and only possessed a single *kakula* robe, which he wore continuously until it became worn and torn, and it became a habit of his to stretch out his hand from time to time to the place where it was torn in an attempt to conceal it. Then Allah *the Exalted* provided for him by means of a brother of his finding work and buying a new *kakula* robe for him, which he started to wear. But his hand would still stretch out to the same spot, and he would still try to cover the tear that no longer existed in the new robe, so one of his colleagues asked him what was up with him, and he replied, 'The old one still haunts me.'

(1) The story of the Azhar student with the old beverage

Sayl is water that flows on the surface of the ground: after the ground has absorbed as much of the water as it can, the overflow flows from there to another place. The True Lord *Glorified is He* is teaching us that before we search for sources of water, we should search for drainage areas so that it does not drown us. Read Allah's words: 'And the word was spoken: "O earth, swallow up your waters! And, O sky, cease [your rain]!"...' (*Hud*: 44)

The first command was to the earth to swallow up and absorb the water, and then the second was to the sky to hold back its waters. And that is why we say, when the ground has had its fill of water, that it has '*unninat*, meaning that it has become filled to the brim with underground water. If that ground is agricultural, then no crops emerge from it, and if that ground is urban, then the water damages the buildings, overflows into the streets, destroys the pipes...etc. Those who work the earth know well the importance of good drainage.

The '*Arim* to which the 'flood of '*Arim*' is ascribed has many different meanings, for an '*arim* is either the stone upon which the dams were built or the rat which breached the dam⁽¹⁾ and created a gap through which the water passed. The water then caused that gap to widen until it became like a spring.

We have seen the role that water had to play in destroying the Bar Lev Line, when Allah *the Exalted* inspired one of our engineers with the thought of using a water pump that was strong enough to eliminate the earthen barrier that was the main obstacle in the way of our gaining control over that defensive line and destroying it. And, in truth, that particular idea astonished the entire world.

The word '*arim* is in the plural: its singular is '*arima*. It is just like *labin* and *labina*, although *labin* are clay-oven bricks while '*arim* are stone bricks.

Then He says: '...and changed their two [expanses of luxuriant] gardens into a couple of gardens...' (*Saba*': 16), one of the characteristics of which was that they yielded: '...bitter fruit...' (*Saba*': 16). In other words, Allah *the Exalted* changed the two gardens that were described earlier into two other gardens.

(1) *This is what Az-Zajjaj and Ibn Al-A'rabi said. Mujahid and Ibn-Najih said, "Arim is the red water that Allah the Exalted sent against the dam and which split it and destroyed it." It is also narrated from Ibn-'Abbas may Allah be pleased with him that, "Arim is fierce rain." (Tafsir of Al-Qurtubi 8/5554)*

But these latter two gardens produced: '...bitter fruit...' (*Saba'*: 16), i.e. bitter-tasting fruit from which one naturally recoils; and the trees of these latter two gardens were: '...tamarisks, and some few [wild] lote-trees.' (*Saba'*: 16).

The *ithl* is the tamarisk tree, a tree of little benefit that produces no fruit whatsoever; and the *sidr* is the well-known thorny lute tree, another tree of little benefit. So could such a place be called a garden? They say the True Lord *Glorified is He* only called it a garden out of irony? And how could that not be so, for there would be no trees such as these in the Garden? And even when it came to their punishment, we note that the True Lord *Glorified is He* was merciful towards them, for He *the Exalted* did not make the garden empty.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* confirms that that which befell them was not something unjust, but rather was a just recompense for what they had done, saying: '...thus...' (*Saba'*: 17), i.e. by means of those things that we have just mentioned: the bitter fruit, tamarisks and lute-trees: '...We requited them...' (*Saba'*: 17), i.e. as recompense: '...for their having denied the truth...' (*Saba'*: 17): here *kufir* refers to ingratitude for blessings. The ingratitude of these people for the blessings that Allah *the Exalted* had bestowed on them lay in the fact that they thought that it was their own hard work and effort that had brought them those blessings. They showed their ingratitude by not turning towards the Bestower, not thanking Him and not obeying Him when He commanded them: '...“Eat of what your Lord has provided for you...”' (*Saba'*: 15), and when He *the Exalted* commanded them: '...and render thanks unto Him...' (*Saba'*: 15).

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* declares Himself above that by means of the rhetorical question: '...But do We ever requite [thus] any but the utterly ingrate?' (*Saba'*: 17), making use of the emphatic adjectival form *kafur* and not the active participle form *kafir*. And that is a sign of Allah's mercy to His slaves since He *the Exalted* only recompenses the *kafur* those who persist in their ingratitude and are constantly ungrateful.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَجَعَلْنَا بَيْنَهُمُ الْوَادِيَّ الَّتِي بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا فُرُجًا ظَاهِرًا
وَقَدَرْنَا فِيهَا السَّيْرَ سِيرُوا فِيهَا لَيَالِيَ وَأَيَّامًا آمِنِينَ ﴿١٨﴾

Also, We had placed, between them and the towns We had blessed, other towns within sight of one another to which they could travel easily – ‘Travel safely in this land by night and by day’[18] (The Quran, *Saba*: 18)

This is another blessing that Allah *the Exalted* bestowed on the people of Sheba, for: ‘Now [before their downfall,] We had placed between them...’ (*Saba*: 18) means between the people of Sheba: ‘...and the cities which We had blessed...’ (*Saba*: 18), meaning the cities of the Levant which Allah *the Exalted* refers to in the story of the Night Journey when He *the Exalted* says: ‘Limitless in His glory is He who transported His servant by night from the Inviolable House of Worship [at Makka/Mecca] to the Remote House of Worship [at Jerusalem] – the environs of which We had blessed – so that We might show him some of Our symbols: for, verily, He alone is All-Hearing, All-Seeing.’ (*al-Isra*: 1)

Qura is the plural of the word *qarya* which is the name of a place in which the dwellings are humble and in which one can only find those things that are absolutely necessary for survival. If you were to stop off at such places, you would be offered *qira* which are food and drink.

We know that the people of Yemen were a people who used to use to engage in trade between Yemen and the Levant, so Allah *the Exalted* placed on their trading routes: ‘...[many] towns within sight of one another...’ (*Saba*: 18), i.e. closely connected to one another, resting-places along the way like (*The Rest House*). And the reason for that was because of the great distance between Yemen and the Levant when they made their winter journey and summer journey. And so the True Lord *Glorified is He* wanted to make those journeys easier for them and allow them to cross that distance without hardship.

And ‘...thus We had made travelling easy...’ (*Saba*: 18), i.e. We made their journey divided into parts of short distances, with the towns conspicuous and close by to them on their journeys so that when they passed them by they could see them without difficulty from the route upon which they were

travelling. These towns and villages were distributed at regular intervals along the route so that every time they travelled a distance along the way, they found another town waiting there for them.

And that meant that they would be safe, there would be nothing to make them fearful, and that they would have no need to carry provisions with them. And that is because the towns they passed by on the way spared them the need of carrying any supplies, for they found within them everything that they needed, and that also meant that they would need to take a large number of pack animals with them.

As-Sayr means travelling in the morning, but the word is commonly used for travelling in the morning and in the evening. Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* sets them at ease with respect to this matter, saying: ‘...“Travel safely in this [land], by night or by day!”’ (*Saba'*: 18) So they would travel in the early morning to a place where they would rest in the early afternoon, and then they would travel to the early evening to a place where they would spend the night. In other words, they had daytime resting stations and nighttime resting stations. Their journeys took place in an atmosphere of total safety and security, guaranteed to them by the True Lord *Glorified is He* - there was nothing to cause them fear or alarm, neither wild animals nor people.

When we compare what Allah *the Exalted* says here: ‘...safely...’ (*Saba'*: 18) with what He says about Quraysh: ‘who has given them food against hunger, and made them safe from danger’ (*Quraysh*: 4), we find that their security is ensured by them being given food and that they are given safety from fear and danger, whereas here Allah *the Exalted* simply says: ‘...safely...’ (*Saba'*: 18) and makes no mention of fear or danger. The reason for that is because the phrase: ‘...safely...’ (*Saba'*: 18) means ‘in total safety’ and includes both security from hunger and safety from danger. And that is known by the fact that: ‘...safely...’ (*Saba'*: 18) has nothing attached to it.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

فَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا بَعْدَ بَيْنَ أَسْفَارِنَا وَظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ فَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَحَادِيثَ
وَمَزَقْنَاهُمْ كُلَّ مُمَزَّقٍ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُورٍ ﴿١٩﴾

But [still] they complained, ‘Our Lord has made the distance between our staging posts so long!’ They wronged themselves and, in the end, We made their fate a byword, and scattered them in countless fragments. There truly are signs in this for every patient, thankful person [19] (The Quran, *Saba*: 19)

Reflect on this quarrelsomeness and wanton disregard of the blessings of Allah *the Exalted*! They were not pleased at the fact that Allah *the Exalted* had placed the towns so close together and so they asked: ‘...“Long has our Lord made the distance between our journey-stages!”...’ (*Saba*: 19), i.e. ‘Put these towns further apart from one another by placing great deserts between them so that no one can reach them but the rich and capable, those who possess strong pack animals capable of bearing heavy loads.’⁽¹⁾

So, their point of view of the matter was an economic point of view based entirely upon greed and covetousness - they wanted to deny the poor and incapable from making the trade journeys with them. At the time the towns were so close together and the resting-places so frequent along the way that as soon as a traveller left the outskirts of one town, he could see the next one in the distance, and that made it easy for the poor to make the journey on the back of weak animals. For the riding animals that people had depended upon their financial means: some had horses, some had camels, and some had donkeys.

The closeness of the towns to one another encouraged the poor to make the trip to the Levant, and that is why these people asked Allah *the Exalted* to

(1) *This is like the statement of the tribe of Israel when they showed wanton disregard for the blessing Allah the Exalted bestowed on them by sending down to them manna and quails without them having to expend any effort to get them. They said: ‘...we cannot endure but one kind of food; pray, then, to your Lord that He bring forth for us aught of what grows from the earth – of its herbs, its cucumbers, its garlic, its lentils, its onions.’ Said [Moses]: “Would you take a lesser thing in exchange for what is [so much] better?...” (al-Baqara: 61). Their punishment for that was that: ‘...ignominy and humiliation overshadowed them, and they earned the burden of Allah’s condemnation: all this because they persisted in denying the truth of Allah’s messages and in slaying the Prophets against all right: all this because they rebelled [against Allah], and persisted in transgressing the bounds of what is right.’ (al-Baqara: 61)*

make the distance between those towns longer. It was a request motivated solely by selfishness and greed, and that is why Allah *the Exalted* says straight after that: '...for they had sinned against themselves...' (*Saba'*: 19). Yes, they had sinned against themselves because they had denied themselves the rest with which Allah *the Exalted* had provided them; they had sinned against themselves because they had sought to monopolise that trade and prevent others, especially the poor, from going out with them. Or may be they had sinned against themselves because they had shown themselves up as having imperfect belief, for a person's belief is not complete until he wants for his brother what he wants for himself and these people wanted to keep all the blessings to themselves and prevent others from accessing them.

But how could that greater distance that they requested on their trading routes come about? We know from the science of engineering that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line and that the straighter the road, the easier it is to travel along and the less time and effort one takes in making one's journeys. The only way to make the distance longer is either by destroying some of those towns so that the distance between the remaining ones is longer, or by making the path windy and crooked or causing to go around in circles.

The result of this hubris and greed was: '...And in the end We caused them to become [one of those] tales [of things long past], and scattered them in countless fragments...' (*Saba'*: 19), i.e. a subject of people's conversation or a tale told by them. Just as when a criminal is captured by the police and they make an example of him so that what happened to him becomes a cautionary tale for others, in the same way Allah *the Exalted* made an example of the people of Sheba until what happened to them became the proverbial tale. Indeed, they say in an Arabic proverb used to indicate separation and splitting up, 'They split up like the hands of Sheba' meaning that they split up after having been together just as the people of Sheba split up.

As for: '...and scattered them in countless fragments...' (*Saba'*: 19), it means that they were scattered and split in every way possible - no matter how small the parts, they were split from each other. '...Herein, behold, there are messages indeed...' (*Saba'*: 19) meaning that there are lessons in it that any rational person can make use of in his own life.

For '...all who are wholly patient in adversity and deeply grateful [to Allah]' (*Saba'*: 19): both *sabbar* and *shakur* are intensive adjectival forms. *Sabbar* is the intensive adjectival form deriving from *sabr* (patience), and that is because these people suppressed the poor, treated them unjustly and wanted to prevent them being able to access any blessing, and kept all the good things to themselves. And they did that time and again. And that is why Allah *the Exalted* does not use the active participle form *sabir* and say, 'for all those who are patient in adversity.' Rather, he uses the intensive form because the amount of abuse they were forced to bear required them to possess a great deal of patience.

We said previously that if an unjust oppressor were to know what Allah *the Exalted* holds in store for the oppressed, he would only act unjustly towards him begrudgingly. It is enough for someone who is oppressed that Allah *the Exalted* is going to be on his side on the Day of Rising.

It is a sign of the stupidity of unjust oppressors that when they wake up to their oppression and their enthusiasm and nervousness die down, they want to make expiation for them oppressing other people, so they direct their energies to good and build mosques or schools...etc. thinking that they will get the reward for them. But the reality is that all of the reward for them will go to those whom they oppressed and whose property and money they appropriated. And that is because Allah *the Exalted* says: '...and none can take count as We do!' (*al-Anbiya'*: 47)

Allah *the Exalted* also says *shakur* which means greatly thankful to Allah *the Exalted* that he has given him the capacity to be patient and endure. And that is why they say, 'You were not patient - rather, it is We who made you patient.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَقَدْ صَدَقَ عَلَيْهِمْ إِلَٰهٌ ظَنُّهُ فَاتَّبَعُوهُ إِلَّا فَرِيقًا مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢٠﴾

**Satan was proved right in his opinion of them, for they
all followed him – except for a group of believers [20]
(The Quran, *Saba'*: 20)**

The particle *laqad* contains a double emphasis: the first emphasis is achieved by means of *la* and the second by means of *qad*. '...Satan (Iblis) did prove...'

(*Saba'*: 20), i.e. he was sure and certain: '...that his opinion of them...' (*Saba'*: 20), i.e. of the people of Sheba and other similar types of people who followed their ways: '... had been right...' (*Saba'*: 20). But what was Satan's opinion? His opinion was that the appetites of men would enable him to lead them astray. We all know his story, when Allah *the Exalted* commanded him to prostrate to Adam *peace be upon him*. But he refused, saying by way of threat: '...Now that You have thwarted me, I shall most certainly lie in ambush for them all along Your straight way,' (*al-A'raf*: 16), and saying: '...Then [I swear] by Your very might: I shall most certainly beguile them all into grievous error.' (*Sad*: 82) But he had not completely lost all shame and so he added: '[all] save such of them as are truly Your servants!' (*al-Hijr*: 40)

So the opinion of Satan (Iblis) is that he said, 'I led your forefather astray and gained power over him when I did so, for he ate from the tree despite the fact that he was the first and strongest member of the human race, and despite the fact that Allah *the Exalted* Himself entrusted him and only entrusted him with one single thing. For Allah *the Exalted* gave him the permission to eat all the fruit of the Garden except that of one single tree. But despite that, I still gained power over him. So, I will also be able to gain power over his offspring, for they are not as strong as he was, they were not entrusted with their affair directly by Allah *the Exalted* and they have been entrusted with many things. So the same power which enabled me to gain control over their forefather will also enable me to gain power over them.'

This opinion of Satan is not knowledge of the Unseen, but rather is an analogy that he has drawn on the offspring of Adam *peace be upon him* based upon his experiences with their forefather. If Adam *peace be upon him* were the first man created, directly by the hand of Allah *the Exalted* the one to whom He *the Exalted* made the angels prostrate, the one that He *the Exalted* entrusted directly and the one who was only entrusted with doing one thing, but despite that I still gained power over him, then I will have even more power over his offspring. Satan (Iblis) did not arrive at this analogy by means of some miracle or a close friendship with Allah *the Exalted* and that is why it is called an 'opinion'.

And then, when Satan actually did gain power over [some of] the offspring of Adam *peace be upon him* and lead them astray, he said, 'My words came to

pass exactly as I said they would', for they really did follow him: 'Now, indeed, Satan (Iblis) did prove that his opinion of them had been right: for [when he called them,] they followed him...' (*Saba'*: 20). Then comes the exception to that: '...all but some of the believers [among them].' (*Saba'*: 20) This exception corresponds exactly to the first exception: '[all] save such of them as are truly Your servants!' (*al-Hijr*: 40)

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَمَا كَانَ لَهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ سُلْطَانٍ إِلَّا لِنَعْلَمَ مَنْ يُّؤْمِنُ بِالْآخِرَةِ
 مِمَّنْ هُوَ مِنْهَا فِي شَكٍّ وَرَبُّكَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَفِيظٌ ﴿٢١﴾

**Even though he had no authority over them. But [We aim]
 to distinguish those who believe in the life to come from
 those who doubt it: [Prophet], your Lord observes
 everything [21] (The Quran, *Saba'*: 21)**

If Satan leads mankind astray, do they then have an excuse for them being astray? And is Satan the only who is in the wrong? The True Lord *Glorified is He* tells us here about him and about them in the context of the story of Sheba: 'And yet, he had no power at all over them: ...' (*Saba'*: 21). Satan takes this expression and uses it to prove his case on the day of Rising: when people say to him on that day, 'You are the reason for us being astray and in a state of misguidance', he will reply: '...Yet I had no power at all over you: I but called you – and you responded unto me. Hence, blame not me, but blame yourselves...' (*Ibrahim*: 22) meaning, 'do not blame me and do not wrong me. I only gave you a signal. I did not have any power over you - I did not use my strength to force you to do it, nor did I compel you to obey me, and nor did I have any strong evidence with which I convinced you.' The difference between being forced to do something and being convinced to do it by strong evidence is that when you are forced you do it unwillingly, but when you are convinced you do what is requested of you gladly and willingly.

Our Lord warns us of Satan and his whispers and insinuations, and we know that we will not be forced to anything except by Allah *the Exalted* especially with regard to this prescription, about which Allah *the Exalted* says:

‘Hence, if it should happen that a prompting from Satan (Iblis) stirs you up [to blind anger], seek refuge with Allah...’ (*Fussilat*: 36).

Simply by reminding him of Allah *the Exalted* he draws back, retreats and runs away. He has power over you when you are alone, but as soon as you take refuge in your Lord, he becomes frightened and runs away. And that is because he has no power and no ploys when Allah *the Exalted* is mentioned and remembered. And that is why one of the Gnostics said, ‘Say this word with strength and it will be as if you can see him and throw him to the ground.’

So what should you do if he comes to you when you are reciting Quran? They say that you should stop reciting and say in a loud voice, in a tone different to that with which you have been reciting, ‘I seek refuge with Allah *the Exalted* from the accursed Shaytan.’ We have tried to get this matter across to youthful minds by putting it in the following way, ‘If a wealthy man were to spend the night on the balcony and witness a burglar trying to break into his house, and get up from where he was and say, ‘Ahem!’ what would the burglar do? He would run away! Then, if the burglar were to tell himself that it might have only been a coincidence and come back the next night, and the owner of the house were to have noticed him again and again said, ‘Ahem!’, then this time the burglar would flee and never come back, since he would know that the owner of the house was vigilant and could not be taken unaware.’

And the same is true with the expression, ‘I seek refuge with Allah *the Exalted* from the accursed Shaytan’ - it frightens Shaytan and drives him away. And then, if he comes back another time and another time, every time you become aware of his whispering and insinuations, say, ‘I seek refuge with Allah *the Exalted* from the accursed Shaytan.’ And then he will know that you are on to him and that there is no way that he can get to you.

When Shaytan was arguing with his Lord, he knew exactly how to get at mankind, and said: ‘... I shall most certainly lie in ambush for them all along Your straight way’ (*al-A'raf*: 16). And it is exactly as we have mentioned, for he does not, for example, lie in wait for you in a bar, but rather in the mosque. He knows that there you will be engaged in worship, and his fondest wish is to spoil your worship and make it come to naught. Do you not see how he reminds you in the prayer of all the tasks you have forgotten to do in the

course of your day? So it is incumbent for the believer to attach great value to the time he spends standing before Allah *the Exalted* and not let anything distract him while he is in the presence of his Lord.

It is the prayer that is the straight path upon which Shaytan lies in ambush for you, and that is why our *fiqh* scholars *may Allah have mercy on them* and be pleased with them, have taught us that we must infuriate Shaytan.

So, if he whispers to us in the prayer so that we lose track of whether we have prayed two or three rak'as, we consider it as if we have only prayed two rak'as, building upon the lesser of the two. And we must do the same when it comes to *wudu'* (ablution) and the like, in order to infuriate him and cause him to despair of us.

The phenomenon of forgetfulness in the prayer is in reality a healthy sign of belief. So, do not make yourself ill on account of it, but rather be strong in your belief, take heart in your battle against this enemy and say to him, 'I will not give you the opportunity to wreck my meeting with my Lord.' If you say this and shout out the shout of belief, you will burn him up. And if he returns then you return also, safe in the knowledge that the ploys of Shaytan are weak indeed, for Allah *the Exalted* says: '...verily, Satan's guile is weak indeed!' (*an-Nisa'*: 76) He has no power over you so long as you are with Allah *the Exalted* and so long as you remember and mention Him, for you have the vigilance of faith and the vigilance of belief.

We previously related the story⁽¹⁾ of Imam Abu-Hanifa *may Allah be pleased with him* when a man came to him to ask a legal opinion and said, 'Imam, I hid some money in a place in the desert and marked the spot with a stone. But a flood came and washed it away so that I can no longer find the place.' The Imam laughed and said to the man, drawing on all of his expertise, experience, and ability to formulate legal opinions, 'My boy, there is no science that deals with such matters, but I will suggest a stratagem you could employ. After you have prayed '*Isha*', go and do *wudu'* again with the intention of Allah *the Exalted* guiding you to that which you lost. And then pray two rak'as and tell me what

(1) The story of the man who asked Abu-Hanifa *may Allah be pleased with him* about money he has buried in the desert and lost it

happens.' So the man did what the Imam had advised him to do. And when he was in the course of the prayer, Shaytan came to him to ruin his prayer and said to him, 'Your money is in such-and-such a place.' So, the man went out and found his money. Then he went back to the Imam and told him what had happened, so the Imam said, 'By Allah *the Exalted* I knew that Shaytan would not leave you to complete your night in the company of your Lord!'

So, have trust in the phrase, 'I seek refuge with Allah *the Exalted* from the accursed Shaytan' and say it with strength and conviction.

Would Allah *the Exalted* make a statement that was then shown to be false the reality of somebody's life who believed in him?! Try it out for yourself and you will see.

As for Allah's words, '... [for if We allow him to tempt man,] it is only to the end that We might make a clear distinction between those who [truly] believe in the life to come and those who are in doubt thereof...' (*Saba'*: 21). If Satan (Iblis) has no power over mankind and they are but following his suggestions, then that means that their belief is not firmly rooted and that they have forgotten one of the rulings of Allah *the Exalted*. And that is because Allah *the Exalted* warned them about him and described to them how they could overcome him, and yet they did not do it.

Satan was only allowed to mislead them: '...that We might make a clear distinction between those who [truly] believe in the life to come and those who are in doubt thereof...' (*Saba'*: 21), i.e. knowledge by it happening. It could not mean anything else since the True Lord *Glorified is He* knew what they were going to do in pre-time. But they must actually physically do the act before it can become a proof against them. It is like a teacher who sees all the signs of failure in a student and warns him about that. Then, when he goes into the exam and fails, he goes and blames the teacher who predicted that he would fail, so the teacher says back to him, 'did I hold back your hand or prevent you from answering the questions? No, I simply judged you according to what I saw in you before you went in.'

It is still possible, however, for that student to cheat in the exam and succeed despite what his teacher said, and that is because the knowledge of

the teacher is imperfect, unlike the knowledge of Allah *the Exalted* which is perfect. So, knowledge of its happening is necessary for there to be proof.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: '...for your Lord watches over all things.' (*Saba'*: 21): *hafizh* is the intensive adjectival form from *hifzh* - Allah *the Exalted* guards over and preserves treasure, provision, knowledge and everything else. It is as Allah *the Exalted* says: 'For no single thing exists that does not have its source with Us; and nought do We bestow from on high unless it be in accordance with a measure well-defined.' (*al-Hijr*: 21) And for as long as Allah *the Exalted* is the Preserver, no one is able to transgress against this matter.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

قُلْ أَدْعُوا الَّذِينَ زَعَمْتُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ لَا يَمْلِكُونَ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ فِي
السَّمَوَاتِ وَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا لَهُمْ فِيهِمَا مِنْ شِرْكٍَ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْهُمْ مِنْ ظَهِيرٍ ﴿٢٢﴾

Say, 'Pray to your so-called gods besides God: they do not control even the weight of a speck of dust in heaven or earth, nor do they have any share in them, nor are any of them any help to God [22] (The Quran, *Saba'*: 22)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* moves on to a general matter, and that is the matter of those people who worship other than Allah *the Exalted* argues with them in order to show them the unsoundness of their path and the futility of worshipping other than Allah *the Exalted*. These people responded by saying: '...We worship them for no other reason than that they bring us nearer to Allah...' (*az-Zumar*: 3).

The first thing we say is, 'What is worship?' Worship is what happens when the worshipper obeys the commands and prohibitions of the one who is being worshipped. So, when unbelievers worship the sun or the moon or idols or the like, what is it that those 'gods' have commanded them to do? And from what have they prohibited them? And what rewards have these 'gods' set in store for those who worship them? And what punishments have they set in store for those who reject them?

No, the truth is that you are lying when you say, 'We worship them'. And if you were really worshipping them because they bring you closer to Allah

the Exalted then why do you not worship Allah *the Exalted* directly instead? How can you worship gods that have no path and do nothing for those who worship them or anything against those who reject them?

These created beings (idols made of stone) that they worship instead of Allah *the Exalted* are created by Allah *the Exalted* are subject to His Will and all glorify Him. They are innocent of this *shirk* and idolatry and do not approve of it. Indeed, they are more worshipful of Allah *the Exalted* than they are, and that is why the rocks spoke on the tongue of this poet⁽¹⁾, saying,

They worship us, but we are more worshipful of Allah
than those who stand in prayer in the time before dawn.

They took our silence as a proof against us,
but we have become for them fuel for the Fire.

In their ignorance, they have committed a crime

Just like they did against 'Isa and his disciples

The one who exceeds the bounds will have his recompense,

While the one against whom bounds have been exceeded will
be saved by the mercy of the All-Forgiving.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* argues this matter with them, saying, 'Say: "Call upon those [beings] whom you imagine [to be endowed with divine powers] beside Allah...' (*Saba'*: 22): Call upon these alleged Allahs of yours! But they did not call upon them because they knew that their supposed Allahs would never respond. And that is why Allah *the Exalted* completes it for them and tells them what the result would be, if you were to call upon those Allahs, '...they have not an atom's weight of power either in the heavens or on earth...' (*Saba'*: 22).

So, on what basis do you worship them when they do not possess anything, have never done anything good for you and have never offered you any service? '...nor have they...in [governing] either' (*Saba'*: 22), i.e. the heavens and earth, '...any share...' (*Saba'*: 22), i.e. any share alongside Allah *the Exalted* they do not have any part to play in the process of creation. '...nor does He

(1) Sheikh Ash-Sha'rawi himself, from a poem he wrote on the *Hijra* of the Prophet *peace be upon him*

[choose to] have any helper from among them.' (*Saba'*: 22), i.e. they did not help Allah *the Exalted* when it came to create the heavens and the earth. A (*zhahir*) is a strong helper. Another example of its usage is found in Allah's Words: '...and all the [other] angels will come to his aid.' (*at-Tahrim*: 4)

Zhahir comes from the word *zhahr* meaning 'back'. The back is the strongest part of the body when it comes to lifting and pushing, so a *zhahir* is one who uses all the strength at his disposal to help you.

There are many things one can use to argue against those who call on 'gods' other than Allah *the Exalted*. And the first of those is that the True Lord *Glorified is He* created man and made him His vicegerent upon the earth. And before creating man, He *the Exalted* created all of the necessary ingredients by means of which he could sustain his life. Then He left him to enjoy those blessings and did not charge him with doing anything until he reached the age of puberty and maturity. And man reaches maturity when he becomes capable of begetting another like himself.

We previously exemplified that by means of fruit: fruit does not become ripe nor taste sweet to human beings until its seeds reach full maturity so that, were they to be planted in the ground, they would grow into a plant bearing fruits exactly like it. And that is one aspect of Allah's kindness to us, for if fruits were to taste sweet before their seeds had matured, then we would have eaten all the fruit in one go and that species would have come to an end and would no longer be available to anyone after that.

But the Creator wants there to be, for the great number of the descendants of man, an even greater number and variety of descendants of good things, for they represent a resource that safeguards the needs of the human race. For example, one melon seed produces a tree bearing any numbers of fruits, in each of which are one hundred seeds. And that is because we plant some of them and take delight in the nuts of many of them.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* made a covenant with us at an atomic level when mankind were all still in the loins of Adam *peace be upon him* making them bear witness against themselves before any of them developed appetites going against the way of Allah *the Exalted* and saying: "...Am I not your Lord?" – to which they answer: "Yea, indeed, we do bear witness thereto!"

[Of this We remind you,] lest you say on the day of Resurrection, “Verily, we were unaware of this” [172] or lest you say, “Verily, it was but our forefathers who, in times gone by, began to ascribe divinity to other beings beside Allah; and we were but their late offspring... [173]” (*al-A'raf*: 172-173).

This pledge is a natural part of every human psyche. Indeed, the only reason religions come about is in an attempt to shake the dust of heedlessness and the dust of appetite from this natural human state. And that is why no Messenger came to establish a religion but rather to simply remind people of this ancient covenant: ‘And so, [O Prophet,] exhort them; your task is only to exhort’ (*al-Ghashiya*: 21).

And that is why whenever we, human beings, are beset by problems or find our means constricted or find ourselves in situations from which we can see no escape, this natural part of us brings us back to that hidden strength that will save us. So, you might see someone calling out for help, saying, (*Ya huwah*), meaning, ‘O He!’ ‘He’ is a pronoun that indicates absence, and is a stronger way of notifying than using the proper noun. Why is that? Because when you say it, you are not directing your attention except to one whom you cannot see, that being Allah *the Exalted*.

And that is why He *the Exalted* says: ‘Say: “He is the One Allah”’ (*al-Ikhlās*: 1), and does not say, ‘Say: “Allah is One.”’ When you say ‘O He’, the only one who comes to your mind is Allah *the Exalted* especially in times of hardship. When your means are tightly constrained, nobody comes to your aid except for your Lord, as He Himself says: ‘...all those [powers] that you are wont to invoke forsake you, [and nothing remains for you] save Him...’ (*al-Isrā'*: 67). In times of hardship and constraint, human beings do not lie or deceive themselves. For instance, you even see unbelievers exclaiming when things are hard, ‘O Lord!’ - Their nature brings them back to Allah *the Exalted* the True Lord *Glorified is He*.

But if natural belief has such power, then what thing in a human being has the ability to blot it out? They reply that what blots it out is a person’s desire when they move in a direction contrary to the way of Allah *the Exalted*. For the Way of Allah *the Exalted* aims to refine a person’s desires and impulses and sharp edges. And that is not considered to be suppression of those instincts, since if it was, then why did He create them?

However, there must be a reason for these appetites. Take the sexual impulse, for instance - it was given to us to ensure the preservation of the species, not to violate other people's honour. Anger is another impulse that has a role to play, for the True Lord permits you to become angry when you are provoked. And that is why they say, 'anyone who when he is provoked does not become angry is a donkey.'

But, despite that, our Lord still commands us to be forbearing, for He *the Exalted* says: '...and never let hatred of anyone lead you into the sin of deviating from justice...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 8), i.e. do not let your anger cause you to go beyond the limits of what is reasonable and just. Do not let it make you do something unjust. So the True Lord *Glorified is He* does not suppress those feelings within you, but rather limits them so that we do not do something excessive because of them.

There is a story⁽¹⁾ of 'Umar *may Allah be pleased with him* that highlights this principle for us perfectly. It is narrated that when 'Umar *may Allah be pleased with him* saw the man who had killed his brother Zayd ibn Al-Khattab on the battlefield, he turned aside from him. And when he was reminded that that was the man who had killed his brother, he said, 'And what should I do to him when Allah *the Exalted* has guided him to Islam?' It was as if Islam had cooled down the fire for vengeance that burned within him. And Islam, as we all know, erases all that comes before.⁽²⁾

And, similarly, Islam wipes away anger. So, when 'Umar *may Allah be pleased with him* saw his brother's killer, he said to him, 'Turn your face away from me - I do not have any love for you.' He said that because of the anger that remained within him, so the man said, 'Does your lack of love for me get in the way of any of my rights?' 'Umar *may Allah be pleased with him* replied,

(1) The story of 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab *may Allah be pleased with him* with the killer of his brother Zayd ibn Al-Khattab

(2) From 'Amr Ibn Al-'As *may Allah be pleased with him* that when he came to enter into Islam, he said, 'Messenger of Allah, I pledge allegiance to you on the basis that you forgive all my sins, those in the past, including ones I no longer remember, and those in the future.' the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him replied, 'Amr, Pledge allegiance, for Islam wipes out everything that comes before, and the hijra wipes out all that comes before.' So 'Amr *may Allah be pleased with him* said, 'I have pledged allegiance.' Then he went away. It is narrated by Ahmad in his Musnad (4/199, 204 & 205).

‘No,’ so the man said, ‘The only ones who cry on account of love are women⁽¹⁾!’ meaning that it ‘does not concern me whether you love me or hate me. The only thing that is important is that my rights are guaranteed.’

Similarly, curiosity is an impulse that Allah *the Exalted* gave to human beings in order to help them discover the secrets of His creation - He *the Exalted* did not give it so that people should spy on others or expose their innermost secrets.

So, Islam has not come to suppress man’s impulses or bring an end to them, but rather to refine them, keep them within the bounds of what is reasonable and just and cause them to be used for the task for which they were created.

And that is why we say that, in some situations and circumstances, Islam gathers two opposite things within the heart of a believer, like when Allah *the Exalted* says: ‘Muhammad is Allah’s Apostle; and those who are [truly] with him are firm and unyielding towards all deniers of the truth, [yet] full of mercy towards one another...’ (*al-Fath*: 29). And may Allah *the Exalted* have mercy on ‘Ali, when he said⁽²⁾:

If I am in need of forbearance, then certainly
 there are occasions when I am more in need of impetuosity.
 I have a horse of forbearance that is bridled by forbearance,
 And I have a horse of impetuosity that is saddled by impetuosity.
 Whoever desires me to set them straight, I will set them straight,
 And whoever desires me to make them crooked, I will make them crooked.

Severity is required and has its place, and abasement is required and has its place - it is position granted you by faith that makes you. The only reason

(1) *A number of narrations have come down of a similar meaning, in one of which ‘Umar may Allah be pleased with him said to Tulayha Al-Asadi, ‘You killed Ukasha ibn-Muhsin. There is no love for you in my heart.’ So Tulayha said, ‘Close companionship is a thing of beauty, Commander of the Faithful. And people even keep close company with one another when they hate each other.’ (‘Uyun Al-Akhbar of Ibn-Qutayba 3/9). Ibn-Qutayba also narrated that one of the caliphs said to a man, ‘I hate you.’ So the man replied, ‘Commander of the Faithful, it is only women who feel anxiety because of an absence of love. Rather, [what is important], is fairness and justice.’*

(2) *Ibn-Qutayba Ad-Dinuri narrated these verses in his book, ‘Uyun Al-Akhbar (1/289), but he ascribed them to Muhammad ibn-Wuhayb and not to ‘Ali.*

Allah *the Exalted* gave us the Way was to straighten out our life's affairs. So when Allah *the Exalted* charges you to do something that clashes with one of your appetites, do not say, 'The law clashes with my impulses!', but rather view it in a more generous matter and add, 'and it also clashes with the impulses of others for my sake.' So, for example, when the Law tells you not to steal and you are but a single person, it also tells the millions not to steal from you.

When a person's unimpaired nature and natural religiosity clash with his lower appetites, he searches for a religious solution that satisfies his appetites and gratifies his impulses. He wants to be religious, but in that very moment, he desires that his appetites remain unfettered. So what does he do? He resorts to worshipping gods that have no Way and do not make him responsible for anything. And that is what led to people worshipping other than Allah *the Exalted*. Set aside those who worship trees and rocks, and reflect instead on those who, for example, worship angels. Have they ever commanded them to do anything or forbidden them from doing anything?

That is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'Say: "Call upon those [beings] whom you imagine [to be endowed with divine powers] beside Allah..."' (*Saba'*: 22).

If we were to use our intellects to examine the matter of partner gods, their falseness would swiftly become apparent, for if Allah 'God' were to have had partners - or if there were other gods alongside him - then, where are they? Do they know that Allah has taken sole possession of Godhood? Did they know He bears witness to that Himself and openly declares that it is His alone? If they do know that, then why do they leave Him to His monopoly of Godhood? And if they do not know that, then they are heedless gods. In both cases, they are not worthy of Godhood.

And that is why the touches upon this matter in a beautiful way, saying: 'Say: "If there were – as some people assert – [other] deities side by side with Him, surely [even] they would have to strive to find a way unto Him who is enthroned on His almightiness"' (*al-Isra'*: 42) meaning, 'If it were really the case that there are gods other than Allah, then they would go to him and argue with Him, asking Him why He took sole possession of Godhood without them, or they would go to Him to seek His protection and get closer to Him.'

The highest thing that idolaters worship is the angels, as if worshipping them became similar to worshipping Allah. But Allah says about the angels: ‘...Nay, [those whom they regard as Allah’s “offspring” are but His] honoured servants: [26] they speak not until He has spoken unto them, and [whenever they act,] they act at His behest. [27]’ (*al-Anbiya*: 26-27)

He refutes the reasoning of those who worship them, saying: ‘Those [saintly beings] whom they invoke are themselves striving to obtain their Lord’s favour – [even] those among them who are closest [to Him] – hoping for His grace and dreading His chastisement’ (*al-Isra*: 57).

These angels whom you worship instead of Allah are also striving to get close to Him and gain access to Him. Indeed, the closest ones among them seek to gain access to Him and get closer to Him still. And if the closest ones desire access and closeness to Him, then how is it for those who are merely close? Or those who are far away or the furthest?

So, you are stupid to worship the angels. And do you think that there is any creation like the angels that would approve of you worshipping them instead of Allah, or would be prepared to approach Him to intercede on your behalf? Thinking that is the very heart of foolishness.

For the True Lord has put in place certain conditions for intercession. He says: ‘On that Day, intercession shall be of no avail [to any] save him in whose case the Most Gracious will have granted leave therefore, and whose word [of faith] He will have accepted’ (*Ta Ha*: 109).

Then, the True Lord says:

وَلَا تَنْفَعُ الشَّفَعَةُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا لِمَنْ أَذِنَ لَهُ. حَتَّىٰ إِذَا فُزِعَ عَنْ قُلُوبِهِمْ قَالُوا مَاذَا قَالَ رَبُّكُمْ قَالُوا الْحَقُّ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْكَبِيرُ ﴿٢٣﴾

Intercession will not work with Him, except by those to whom He gives permission.’ They will be asked, after the terror is lifted from their hearts [on the Day of Judgement], ‘What did your Lord speak?’ and they will answer, ‘The Truth. He is the Most High, the Most Great’ [23] (The Quran, *Saba*: 23)

The people of knowledge say, ‘A condition of intercession with respect to the one on whose behalf intercession is made is to be one of those who

acknowledge the Oneness of Allah; and a condition of intercession with respect to the intercessor is to be given the permission to intercede, as is stipulated by Allah when He says: ‘...Who is there that could intercede with Him, unless it be by His leave?’ (*al-Baqara*: 255) So the intercessor cannot simply stand up and make intercession - he must first wait for him to be granted permission to do so. And it is then that the one on whose behalf intercession is to be given starts to feel perturbed, afraid, and anxious. “Will the intercessor be granted permission”, he asks himself, “or will his intercession be rejected?”

And that is why He says here: ‘...so much so that when the terror [of the Last Hour] is lifted from their hearts...’ (*Saba*: 23) meaning, ‘when terror is removed from their hearts.’ The doubling up [of the middle letter] in the verb (*fuzzi* ‘a) gives us the meaning of removing the action (i.e. terror) implicit within the verb. It is very much as when we say *marradahu* meaning, ‘he removed his illness’, or *qashshara al-burtuqal*, meaning, ‘He removed the skin from the orange’... etc.

They ‘...[who have been resurrected] will ask [one another], “What has your Lord decreed [for you]?” – [to which] the others will answer, “Whatever is true and deserved...”’ (*Saba*: 23), i.e. ‘He speaks the truth and gives permission of intercession to those with whom He is content.’ Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘And, before Him, intercession can be of no avail...’ (*Saba*: 23), and does not say, ‘intercession will not be accepted’ because the goal of an intercessor is to benefit the one on whose behalf he has interceded. If the intercessor had gone to intercede, and the one whose intercession he sought to say to him, ‘I am not pleased that you intercede on behalf of that one’, that would mean the intercession was of no benefit, not that it was not accepted, for there is a difference between there being an intercession and that intercession being of benefit.

In the chapter of *al-Baqara*, there are two verses that have the same opening but different endings. The first of those two verses is: ‘and remain conscious of [the coming of] a Day when no human being shall in the least avail another, nor shall intercession be accepted from any of them, nor ransom taken from them, and none shall be succoured.’ (*al-Baqara*: 48) And the second verse is: ‘and remain conscious of [the coming of] a Day when no human being shall in the least avail another, nor shall ransom be accepted from any

of them, nor shall intercession be of any use to them, and none shall be succoured' (*al-Baqara*: 123)

These two verses are one of those places which the orientalist came to and thought that they have found a flaw in the Words of Allah- the meaning is the same and even the same words are used, but in the first verse, the Words: '...nor shall intercession be accepted from any of them...' come first, while in the second, the Words: '...nor shall ransom be accepted from any of them...'. And in the first, He says instead: '...nor ransom taken from them....'

This objection of theirs arises from their lack of understanding for the words of Allah, for the two verses are speaking about two different categories when it comes to intercession. The first verse is speaking about the one doing the intercession, while the second is speaking about the one on whose behalf intercession is being done. The intercessor has his place before God, and the one for whom intercession is being made has a place before Him as well. And the reason for that is because the intercessor was only brought forth because the one for whom he intercedes was unable to bring an end to the matter himself. So, in the first verse, the pronoun refers back to the intercessor, while in the second verse, it refers back to the one for whom intercession is being made. How is that?

The meaning here is, 'no interceding person will avail any person for whom intercession is made.' The interceding person is the one whose intercession is accepted, while the person for whom intercession is made is the one for whom intercession is of use. So, the first verse singles out the intercessor, since he goes to intercede and his intercession is not accepted. So he offers to pay the ransom and act as guarantor for the one on whose behalf intercession is being made, but that too is not accepted from him.

As for the second verse, it refers to the one on whose behalf intercession is made, since he offers to pay what he has first, and because that ransom is not accepted, he searches for someone to intercede for him.

Intercession is called *shafa'a* because even *shaf'* is the opposite of *watr* (odd). And the person who asks for intercession is one. Then, when the intercessor is joined with him, they become two. In other words, they are *shaf'*.

Then the True Lord says at the conclusion of the verse: ‘...for He alone is exalted, great!’” (*Saba’*: 23): Exalted above being asked about any of His deeds. And Great in the sense that He is greater than the intercessor and greater than the one on whose behalf intercession is made. So the True Lord says the truth and speaks it, and that means that He is always on the side of what is right. So He does not care how exalted the status of the intercessor is, or how lowly the status of the one on whose behalf intercession is made, for He is the Exalted, the Great.

After that the True Lord goes back to discussing the matter in a rational way, saying:

قُلْ مَنْ يَرْزُقُكُمْ مِّنَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ قُلِ اللَّهُ وَإِنَّا
أَوَّلِيَاكُمْ لَعَلَىٰ هُدًى أَوْ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٢٤﴾

Say [Prophet], ‘Who gives you sustenance from the heavens and earth?’ Say, ‘God does,’ and ‘[One party of us] must be rightly guided and the other clearly astray’ [24] (The Quran, *Saba’*: 24)

That is to say, ‘Say to them, O Muhammad, “Who provides you with sustenance from the heavens and the earth?”’ But if Muhammad was the one to ask the question, then who is it who provides the response? Naturally, the people to whom it was addressed would not answer. And that is why Allah provides the answer, saying, ‘...Say: “It is Allah...” That is the reality with which they cannot argue. And even if they were to acknowledge that, God would then ask them, ‘Why then do you not believe in Allah although He is the One Who provides for you?’

Is it fitting for you to reject Him when he is the Provider, and believe in other gods who can neither benefit nor harm you? Their acknowledgement of this reality forces the proof upon them and establishes the evidence against them of how stupid their thinking really is. It is as if the True Lord wanted to get them out of this predicament and so He answered instead of them.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* asks them this question because the answer will only ever be in accordance with what He wants. It is just like if you were

to buy a suit for someone and then in some situation or other he were to deny the favour you had bestowed upon him, so you would say to him, 'Who is it who bought this for you?' And you would not ask that question unless you were confident that the answer would be in your favour and that he would be incapable of denial. And if he were to deny it, then you would say to him, 'Come with me to the merchant from whom I bought it so we can see who bought it!' Thus, you have the ability to establish evidence against him if he denies it.

As for Allah's words: '...And, behold, either we [who believe in Him] or you [who deny His oneness] are on the right path, or have clearly gone astray!' (*Saba'*: 24), Guidance *huda* means indicating what is good and showing people the way to it, while misguidance *dalal* means straying from what is good and not showing people the way to it. These words are found in Allah's words: 'And has He not found you lost on your way, and guided you?' (*ad-Duha*: 7)

Huda and *dalal* are examples of things that are opposites in Islam, and opposites never meet. So, there must be one who is on the right path and another who is astray.

A lot of people do not understand the difference between a *naqid* and a *didd*: a *didd* opposes something without negating it, so you might say, for example, 'Is such-and-such a thing red or green?' and be told that it is neither green nor red, but rather white. So, although two *didds* never meet, they can both be removed at the same time so that neither of them is there but rather, something else. But as for two *naqids*, if one of them is taken away, the other one must be there, just as is the case here with *huda* and *dalal*.

The meaning of: '...And, behold, either we [who believe in Him] or you [who deny His oneness] are on the right path, or have clearly gone astray!'" (*Saba'*: 24) is that if one of us is on the right path, then the other must be astray - there is no third category. So, what is being spoken about here is the path of good represented by the side of belief, and the path of evil represented by the side of disbelief. So the Messenger of Allah says to them, 'You and we are on opposite sides - we say there is no god but Allah 'God' and call to good, while you reject Allah and call to evil. But despite that, I do not pass judgement on myself that I am guided or against you that you are astray. Rather, I say that

you and I are opposite sides of the same coin - if one of us is guided, the other one must be astray.'

By Allah, have you ever seen an argument more finely presented than this one? The Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* did not pass judgement on himself or the believers with him that they were guided despite guidance clearly being on their side, nor did he pass judgement on the unbelievers that they were misguided despite misguidance clearly being on their side. The likeness of that is if two men were both to swear that a particular item belonged to them in the presence of a blind man, would that blind man say to one of them, 'You are a liar', and to the other, 'You are truthful'? No, rather, he would say, 'One of you is truthful and the other is a liar.' This is a preliminary judgement that does not obligate anyone.

But, when you look into the matter deeper, it becomes clear to you which ones are guided and which ones are astray: '... And, behold, either we [who believe in Him] or you [who deny His oneness] are on the right path, or have clearly gone astray!'" (*Saba'*: 24). In the phrase: '...are on the right path...' the preposition 'on' (*'ala*) gives the meaning of being above or over, so it is as if guidance is not over you but you are over guidance and on top of it. It is as if it were a riding animal which takes you to the good that you seek and to the straight path. As soon as you read the word '*ala*', you know that there is a high place and another place that is beneath it.

Reflect, for example, on Allah's words: '...Now, behold, your Lord is The Owner of forgiveness to men despite all their evildoing...' (*ar-Ra'd*: 6). Here, forgiveness is above evildoing, for evildoing necessitates that you be punished, but then forgiveness comes along, rises over it and wipes away its traces. Some of the scholars of *Tafsir* (interpretation of the Quran) think that '*ala*' is being used here to express the meaning of, i.e. 'with the evildoing' ⁽¹⁾ they commit'.

(1) *Jamal Ad-Din ibn Hisham Al-Ansari mentioned in his book Mughni Al-Labib (1/126) that the particle ('ala) can be used to express the meaning of accompanying, just like (ma'a), like in: '...and spends his substance – however much he himself may cherish it...' (al-Baqara: 177) and '...Now, behold, thy Lord is full of forgiveness unto men despite all their evildoing...' (ar-Ra'd: 6).*

But the meaning of with does not work here because it places forgiveness at the same level as evildoing and makes them equal. If that were the case, then how could forgiveness ever overcome evildoing? So, forgiveness must be above evildoing, not with it.

And the same is true in Allah's words: 'All praise is due to Allah, who has bestowed upon me, in my old age, Ismail (Ishmael) and Ishaq (Isaac)' (*Ibrahim*: 39): Here He *Glorified is He* uses the word '*ala*' in the phrase: '...in my old age...' because old age was the thing that was preventing him from begetting a child. So, the True Lord broke this fundamental law for him and gave him *Ismail* and *Ishaq* *peace be upon them* overcoming his old age⁽¹⁾. We say, 'Old age is the single most powerful occurrence to which a human being is exposed, and that is why Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah), said: '...and I have become utterly infirm through old age?' (*Maryam*: 8)

The word '*utu*' means might and strength, while old age is weakness, emaciation and the lack of ability to do even the simplest of things no matter how much one tries to combat it with vitamins and good nutrition. There is nothing that is stronger than it or can prevent it, and that is why in this age when a body becomes riddled with diseases, the only reason for that is old age. Indeed, when a person reaches the age of seventy or eighty, he complains of aches and pains in every part of his body. And that is why they call those aches 'the diseases of old age', mainly because there is no cause for them other than old age.

So, when we use '*ala*' in the phrase: '...are on the right path...' (*Saba*': 24), we mean that guidance is going to be the riding animal which will carry you to paradise and Bliss. But when He talks of misguidance, He says: '...or in clear error' (*Saba*': 24) using the preposition *fi* (in). So it is as if darkness surrounds the misguided person and he stumbles around in it, not knowing where he is going.

As for the word *mubin*, it means clear and apparent

(1) *Ibn 'Abbas* said, 'Abraham was ninety-nine years old when his son Ishmael was born, and one hundred and twelve when Isaac was born (*Tafsir of Al-Qurtubi* 5/3713). So there were thirteen years between Ishmael and Isaac.

قُلْ لَا تُسْأَلُونَ عَمَّا أَجْرَمْنَا وَلَا نُسْأَلُ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾

**Say, 'You will not be questioned about our sins,
nor will we be questioned about what you do' [25]**

(The Quran, *Saba*: 25)

This is another fine point and a further progression in the argument against the unbelievers, for it indicates the extent of the Prophet's desire to remove the rancour from the hearts of the unbelievers. Reflect on: '...Neither shall you be called to account for whatever we may have become guilty...' (*Saba*: 25): The Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* places guiltiness on his side, and does not this time make the two sides equal to each other as he did there when he said: '...And, behold, either we [who believe in Him] or you [who deny His oneness]...' (*Saba*: 24). Rather, he describes his own actions as wrongdoing while at the same time says about the unbelievers: '...nor shall we be called to account for whatever you are doing.' without describing their actions as wrongdoing.

And there is another fine point to be found in the verse, which is that the verb *ajramna*, (we did wrong), appears in the past tense, indicating that the wrongdoing had actually happened, while the verb *ta'malun* (you are doing), appears in the present tense, indicating that they had not yet done it. That is another fine point and a further progression in the argument. It is also a means to gaining the friendship of one's opponent so that perhaps they might return to the right, and Allah will then rejoice with their repentance and the fact they have come back to Him.

There is no way that the style of debating found in these two verses could have come from anyone except for a debater with a strong proof, as if saying, 'Suppose that you are right, and we are wrong', why? Because you are sure that you are right and that after investigation, the truth will be at your side.

But despite that, how could the True Lord *Glorified is He* command His Prophet to ascribe wrongdoing to himself? Because, they say, what is meant by 'wrong' depend on who is being addressed. It is as they say, 'The good actions of the right-acting are the wrong actions of those brought nearer to Allah.'

Then the verses end with a summary of this entire matter when Allah says:

قُلْ يَجْمَعُ بَيْنَنَا رَبُّنَا ثُمَّ يَفْتَحُ بَيْنَنَا بِالْحَقِّ وَهُوَ الْفَتَّاحُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٢٦﴾

**Say, 'Our Lord will gather us together, then He will judge justly between us; He alone is the All Knowing Judge' [26]
(The Quran, *Saba'*: 26)**

The meaning of this is, 'We will not spend long in presenting to you our arguments and proofs because our words are backed by the truth while you are simply playing around with falsehood. So, the heart of the matter is that Allah will judge between you and us in His divine court: 'Say: "Our Lord will bring us all together...', i.e. on the Day of Rising: '...and then He will lay open the truth between us, in justice...', i.e. then He *Glorified is He* will judge between us. Even today, in some countries, they refer to the judge as *al-fattah*, 'The opener': "...for He alone is the One Who opens all truth, the All Knowing!"' i.e. He is the One Who, when He passes judgement, has full knowledge of everything and overlooks nothing.

A judgment is known as an opening because it makes an opening between two things and sets up a gap between them. It is as if the two of them were tightly bound together, with truth mixed up with falsehood. And then as if there was a battle between them, so the ruling came in order to break apart that network. The breaking apart of this network is the opening we referred to, and no one can open a way between truth and falsehood except for Allah *Glorified Is He*.

قُلْ أَرُونِي الَّذِينَ أَلْحَقْتُمْ بِهِ شُرَكَاءَ ۚ كَلَّا بَلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٢٧﴾

**Say, 'Show me those you joined to Him as partners.
No indeed! He alone is God, the Almighty, the All Wise' [27]
(The Quran, *Saba'*: 27)**

The True Lord commands His Prophet to say to them, 'Show me those whom you have associated with Allah.' But he *peace be upon him* had actually seen them, for he had seen the idols that they worshipped instead of Allah so what was the point of him saying, '..."Point out to me..."? Because when he made this request of them, he knew that they would be too embarrassed to

point them out to him, and would not dare to do that since they knew that they were dumb stones, unable to harm or benefit anyone.

As for the meaning of: '...those [beings] that you have joined with Him [in your minds] as partners [in His divinity]', *ilhaq* is bringing something new and attaching it to something already established. So it is as if the Godhood of Allah *Glorified is He* is the true established Godhood, while their new gods are something unexpected and inauthentic. Belief is something that is primal, natural, and firmly established in the human psyche, but as for those gods, they are innovated, inauthentic, and false. And that is why He negates them with the Words: '...Nay - nay...'

Then he turns aside from what He had previously been saying in order to affirm that godhood is God's alone, saying: '...but He [alone] is God *the Almighty the Wise!*' The word *bal* (but gives the sense of turning aside from what came before, and affirms the ruling that comes after - that the True Lord is Allah.

In another part of the Quran, the True Lord argues with them, saying: 'Had there been in heaven or on earth any deities other than God, both [those realms] would surely have fallen into ruin!' (*al-Anbiya*: 22) We know from studying grammar that the Arabic word *illa* is a particle of exception that excludes what comes after it from the ruling governing what comes before, and that the thing that is excluded after it is in the *mansub* case, (it has *Fatha*, a grammatical mark in Arabic, at the end). So, for example, we would say, 'The students were present except for Muhammad', with Muhammad in the *mansub* case.

If we were to apply this principle to this verse, the meaning would be, 'If there were gods apart from Allah, then they would be ruined, but if Allah is one of those gods, then they would not be ruined.' This is the sense of the verse if *illa* were to be taken as a particle of exception that excludes what comes after it. But the reality is that this *illa* is not a particle of exception, but rather, it is a noun that has the same meaning of *ghayr*⁽¹⁾, (other than). And the proof of that is the fact that the word that comes after it, the Majestic Name 'Allah', is in the *marfu* ' case (has *Dammah*, also a grammatical mark, at

(1) Given that (*illa*) is being used with the meaning of (*ghayr*), the noun after it (Allah), has the same syntax it would have if it were after (*ghayr*), and so it is in the (*marfu* ' case.

the end), and not in the *mansub* case which is what it would be in if *illa* really were a particle of exception. So the meaning is, 'If there were gods other than Allah, they would be ruined.

As for the Words: '...but He is Allah...' (*Saba'*: 27), Allah *Glorified is He* again uses here the absent pronoun, *huwa* (He). And it is well known that an absent pronoun is never used unless there is a previously mentioned word to which it goes back. So, for example, 'Ali came to see me, so I honoured him.' This principle is true except in the case of Allah, for here with Him the pronoun precedes the word to which it refers back: '...but He is Allah...'. Why is that? We say it is because *huwa* is a pronoun that refers in this case only to Him, namely the Existent *the Most High*.

Then the True Lord says:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا كَافَّةً لِلنَّاسِ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا
وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾

**We have sent you [Prophet] only to bring good news
and warning to all people, but most of them do not
understand [28] (The Quran, *Saba'*: 28)**

The meaning of: '...We have not sent you...' is, 'We have not made you a Messenger': '...except to mankind at large...'. The Arabic word *kaaffah* (at large) makes the station of the Seal of the Messengers clear, for before our Prophet Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah, was sent, a Messenger was always sent to a particular people, like when God says: 'and [will make him] an apostle unto the Children of Israel. "I have come unto you with a message from your Lord..." (*Al-Imran*: 49).

That is because mankind became numerous as Allah says: '...and out of the two spread abroad a multitude of men and women...' (*an-Nisa'*: 1), they scattered all over the earth, some remaining here and some going there. And at that time the world was still primitive and in its infancy, and there were no developments for these diverse communities to meet with one another. So, communities lived in isolation from one another without any communication between them. Each area had its own maladies: some people were cheating in

measuring, while others were worshipping idols...etc. So a Messenger came to a particular people to treat their malady, a malady that had no connection whatsoever with that of other peoples.

As for Prophet Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah, he was the seal of Messengers and was sent to all mankind because Allah had eternal knowledge of the fact that after his era, all the people of the planet would be close and those groups that were previously dispersed and isolated from one another would come into contact. And here we are today, living in a world that is like one village. We hear of events that take place in the farthest lands of this planet, and even see them as they are taking place. And as long as all the communities and continents of the world are connected like this, they will share the same maladies. And that is why one single Messenger came to treat all these maladies in all these societies. That is the meaning of: 'Now [as for you, O Muhammad,] We have not sent you but for mankind at large...' (*Saba'*: 28).

When we say he is the Seal of the Messengers; that means he is the one for whom others bear witness and not the one who bears witness for others. For Allah has taken the covenant from the Messengers that when Muhammad came they would bear witness for him. And indeed, they all did bear witness for him. But as for Him *peace be upon him* he did not bear witness for anyone, since no Messengers came after him.

The people of knowledge say that the word *kaaffah* means, 'for all people'. And, indeed, Allah says elsewhere: 'Say [O Muhammad]: "O mankind! Verily, I am an apostle of God to all of you..."' (*al-A'raf*: 158). This means that there is no more confining, neither in terms of time nor place. And when we reflect on the word *kaaffah*, we find that it has a correlation to the language we speak today, for it has become an established part of the everyday speech of the common people. For example, when a tailor stitches a garment, first he uses his scissors on the cloth, cutting it along the warp and the woof. But when they cut the cloth, the threads at the edges of the cloth are left frayed and unravelled. So they gather these thread ends together and fold them over so the edges of the cloth are facing the inward. This process is called *kafkafah* (hemming). Similarly, the word *kaaffah* means gathering the people who are scattered throughout time and space together so that no race, community, or individual is excluded.

In the countryside, there is a plant that grows on the banks of the canals the name of which is *najil*; it is different from the well-known grass. This *najil* does not rise up above the surface of the earth, and its roots and branches interlock with one another in such a way that they prevent the banks from collapsing, and stop debris from falling into the canals and blocking them. So, this *najil* performs a task, namely holding the banks and preventing them from collapsing. In other words, it holds *kaffa* a particular type of thing back from straying from its task, just as our prophet holds the people back from straying away from their task.

The word *kaaffah* derives from the verb *kaffa*, 'to hold back', and then the *ta* of femininity is added for emphasis, just like with '*allam* and '*allamah*. And that is why our Lord says about Himself: '...knows fully all the things that are beyond the reach of human perception ('*Allam*)' (*at-Tawba*: 78). If you were to ask, 'Why did he not say '*allamah*?' then we would say, 'the knowledge of God is not susceptible to increase or decrease.'

So: 'Now [as for you, O Muhammad,] We have not sent you otherwise than to mankind at large...' (*Saba'*: 28) means, 'We have not sent you except to hold them back and stop them from doing all those evils that corrupt the earth. That is the task of the path that the Messenger of Allah *peace be upon him* brought, which is why Allah says: 'hence, do not spread corruption on earth after it has been so well ordered...' (*al-A'raf*: 56). So, the word *kaffa* is either a description for the people meaning 'everyone', or a description for the Messenger of Allah, meaning 'one who holds people back from evil', with the *ta* of femininity being added for emphasis.

As for: '...to be a herald of glad tidings (*bashir*) and a warner (*nadheer*)...' (*Saba'*: 28), the word *bashir* is derived from *bisharah* which means giving someone the news of something good the time of which has not come yet. And its opposite is *nidharah* which means giving someone the news of something bad the time of which has not come yet. The distinction of *bisharah* is that it informs you of good that is coming your way, so you can put the means for it to come about into place, move towards it and work hard for it to happen. And all the time you are in a state of longing for it. And it is similar with *nidharah*, it warns you of a coming danger so that you can avoid its causes and drive it away.

A good example of that is a teacher: he gives his hard-working student the good news that he will have success and superior performance, and warns his negligent student of failure and inferior performance. Why does he do that? Because he wants the hard-working student to further increase his efforts, and the lazy negligent one to leave behind his laziness and negligence so that he can be superior as well.

As for Allah's words: '...but most people do not know [this],' (*Saba'*: 28), they mean that they do not know that you are the final Messenger, or that you are the Messenger who came to hold back evil from the entire human race and put them right. And if the majority of people do not know, that means that there are only a few who do know. And that few who know are the source for all the good in existence, which is why no matter how great people's intransigence and disbelief, and no matter how far from the path they stray, there must always be a small group from among them who cling to the truth, strive for it and call others to it. This group is there in every time and every place, even if they are only a few. And that is why our master, the Messenger of Allah, says, 'Good is with me and will be within my community until the Day of Rising'.⁽¹⁾

So, this group must remain among us as an example and cells for the propagation of good, so that good remains within the human race no matter how dark the world around them becomes.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَى هَذَا الْوَعْدُ إِن كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾
قُلْ لَكُمْ مِيعَادٌ يَوْمٍ لَا تَسْتَعِجُونَ عَنْهُ سَاعَةً وَلَا تَسْقِدُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

And they say, 'If what you say is true, when will this promise be fulfilled?' [29] Say, 'You have an appointment for a Day which you cannot put off nor bring forward, even by a single moment' [30] (The Quran, *Saba'*: 29 - 30)

Anyone who reflects on the Book of God will find that the True Lord did not divide the Quran up into separate chapters, one for prayer, one for *zakat*, one for

(1) *Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani* said, 'I do not know it, but its meaning is sound.' *Al-Qari* mentioned it in *Al-Asrar Al-Marfu'a* (457), as did *As-Suyuti* in *Ad-Durar Al-Muntathira* (20), and *Al-Ajluni* in *Kashf Al-khafa* (1/476).

usury...etc., but rather, He mixed up these rulings in amazing arrangements and stirring combinations, moving from one style to another so that the reader never gets bored and never abandons it.

The Quran is not a Book of Law in which one finds a separate section for each crime, but rather deals with crime in a unique way, first mentioning the crime, then showing how repugnant it is and clarifying its effects so that when it assigns a punishment to it, you find the punishment to be perfectly natural and easy to accept because you can see that the perpetrator deserves it.

Allah *Glorified is He* says, relating what the unbelievers say: "and so they ask, 'When is this promise [of resurrection and judgment] to be fulfilled?'" (*Saba'*: 29) A promise only ever refers to something good, whereas a threat only ever refers to something bad, so it is strange that the unbelievers call Judgement Day a promise. They should have said, 'When is this threat?' Perhaps Allah has twisted their tongues so that they instead spoke the truth, for it is indeed a true promise from Allah, even though with respect to them it is a threat.

There are many things contained within Allah's promise; it ends with the resurrection and reckoning, and then with Paradise or Hellfire. But is Allah's promise only fulfilled in the Hereafter? No, rather, a part of it can be seen in this world. If that were not the case and Allah were to leave them untouched till the Hereafter, then their corruption would intensify, and unbelievers would cause a huge decay without anyone being there to prevent them.

And this is why, out of His Wisdom, Allah has chosen to realise some of His promise to them in advance so that it can be seen in this world, like when He says: '[Yet] the hosts [of those who deny the truth] shall be routed, and they shall turn their backs [in flight]!' (*al-Qamar*: 45) And, indeed, the day of Badr came and Allah has defeated them. Some of them were killed and others were taken prisoners. And just as the initial promises were shown to be true, in the same way the promises that follow them will also be shown to be true in the Hereafter.

And that is why the True Lord addresses His Prophet, saying: '...And whether We show you [in this world] something of what We hold in store for those [deniers of the truth], or whether We cause you to die [ere that retribution takes place – know that, in the end], it is unto Us that they will be brought back.' (*Ghafir*: 77)

Those for whom Allah's promise is not realised in this world and who do not see it here with their own eyes will see it in the Hereafter, as there are unbelievers who died before Badr, and did not witness any of the victories or conquests of the Muslims and were not subjected to any of the punishments of this world.

As for the Words: '..."When is this promise [of resurrection and judgment] to be fulfilled?... ' (*Saba*: 29) They mean that they thought the punishment to be a long time in coming. Then Allah commands His Prophet to reply to them: 'Say: "There has been appointed for neither you a Day which you can delay nor advance by a single moment."' (*Saba*: 30). It is the day of your victory over them, like at the battle of Badr when God gave them a taste of humiliation, abasement, and death, and brought their tyranny to an end, or it is the Day of Rising.

The One Who has made this promise to you is also the One Who is able to fulfil it, and there is no power that can prevent Him from fulfilling His promise or even delay it for a single instant. He is the One Who knows that none of the Signs of existence can deviate from what He wills.

We previously made it clear that when human beings promise something, they do not possess the means to fulfil their promises, and that is why our Lord teaches us to be wary of that, saying: 'And never say about anything, "Behold, I shall do this tomorrow," [23] without [adding], "if God so wills."... [24]' (*al-Kahf*: 23-24)

That is because Allah loves His slaves to be truthful, and so when he attaches his action to the Will of Allah, he relieves himself from lying or breaking a promise when he finds himself unable to fulfil that promise, for none of the elements for making it come about is in his hands. So, instead, leave the matter to the One Who does possess all those elements. That is why we call a promise made by people, 'a promise', and a promise made by God is 'the true promise', i.e. that which will never be broken.

As for the Words: '...which you can neither delay nor advance by a single moment'" (*Saba*: 30), they mean that it is a precise appointment. It is as if the True Lord wants mankind to receive all of the gifts that He has

given them, and for those gifts to remain in their consciousness at all times and not be forgotten.

The word 'day' appears in this verse in the indefinite and is obscure, but in this case, obscurity is the very essence of clarity, just as we explained previously. For example, when Allah leaves a human being's death unspecified, that person constantly thinks of it, awaits its coming in every moment, and expects it at every breath and every instant without linking it to illness or anything else. For dying without a cause is itself a cause.

Then the True Lord says:

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَنْ نُؤْمِنَ بِهَذَا الْقُرْآنِ وَلَا بِالَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَلَوْ تَرَى
إِذِ الظَّالِمُونَ مَوْقُوفُونَ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ يَرْجِعُ بَعْضُهُمْ إِلَى بَعْضٍ الْقَوْلِ
يَقُولُ الَّذِينَ اسْتَضَعِفُوا لِلَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا لَوْلَا أَنْتُمْ لَكُنَّا مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٣١﴾

The disbelievers say, 'We will believe neither this Quran nor the Scriptures that came before it.' If only you could see [Prophet] how the wrongdoers will be made to stand before their Lord, hurling reproaches at one another. Those who were oppressed will say to the oppressors, 'If it were not for you, we would have been believers' [31] (The Quran, *Saba'*: 31)

Their statement: '...We shall never believe in this Quran...' indicates their hesitancy, for in another part of the Quran, God relates them as saying: '...Why was not this Quran bestowed from on high on some great man of the two cities?' (*az-Zukhruf*: 31) This means that the Quran is incontrovertible and incontestable. The only thing they could find to contest was the one to whom the Quran was revealed. Another example of their stupidity may be found in their words: '...If we were to follow the guidance to which you invite us. We would be torn away from our very soil!' (*al-Qasas*: 57), since here they admit that he brought guidance with him. And another example is their words: '...Do not spend anything on those who are with Allah's Apostle...' (*al-Munafiqun*: 7).

The reality is that falsehood hesitates and stutters, stumbling from one position to another, with its confused thought, not flowing in a coherent fashion. And,

indeed, that blind groping reveals the falsehood upon which they are. We have said before that a skilled investigator is the one who can reach the truth by arguing with the accused person in such a way that he causes him to unknowingly implicate himself. That is because the one who is telling the truth tells you about what happened in a particular way, and no matter how many different ways you repeat the question, he will give you the same answer. But as for someone who is lying, he will not tell you what actually happened, but will instead lie and make up a story in which one will inevitably find contradictions and inconsistencies. It is like that liar who said to people, 'I returned from *'Bandar'* on the festival night, it was lit up by the moon in the afternoon!'

In ancient times, the Arabs used to say, 'If you are a liar, then remember what you say.' In other words, remember what you said before. And that is necessary because you are not basing your words on what actually happened.

As for the Words: '...and neither in whatever there still remains of earlier revelations...' (*Saba'*: 31), they refer to all the books that were revealed prior to the Quran, like the Torah and the Gospel.

After them saying these words, the True Lord wants to respond to them in a way that is terrifying, so He says: '...But if you could only see...' (*Saba'*: 31), i.e. O Muhammad: '... [How it will be on Judgment Day,] when these evildoers shall be made to stand before their Lord...' (*Saba'*: 31), i.e. when they are standing before Allah, waiting for the judgement and the reckoning

You know that *law (if)* is a conditional particle that needs an answering clause. But that answering clause is elided from the verse for a purpose, in order to make it all the more horrible and terrifying. The implication here is, 'If you could see how it will be when these evildoers are made to stand before their Lord, you would see something awesome.' This stylistic device makes a person's thoughts fly in every direction, imagining all the sorts of punishment and humiliation that the unbelievers will be subjected to while they are standing there before Allah. Eliding the answering clause here is more expressive and eloquent than mentioning it.

In the past, we used to see tyrants, oppressors and those parasites who hang around in cafés the entire day, being served by other people who took care of all their needs because they feared the wickedness they might inflict upon

them. But as soon as they fall foul of the law and are taken by the police - and you well know what the police do to criminals - those self-same people rejoice and make fun of them, saying, 'If you could see what happened to so-and-so,' meaning, 'Something serious happened to him that is incompatible with the tyrannical way he used to treat people, and blunts his claws.'

So, the answering clause was elided so that we can understand as referring to something very frightening. For if it had been mentioned, it could only have come in one form.

And it is for this reason that the orientalist object to the Words Allah uses to describe the *zaqqum* tree when He says: 'Its fruit [as repulsive] as Satan's heads' (*as-Saffat*: 65), saying 'We have neither seen the *zaqqum* tree nor the heads of Satan, so how can the Quran compare one thing that is unknown to another unknown thing?'

Yes, a simile should compare something which is unknown to another thing which is known, or something hidden with something apparent. But these people are trying to hunt out mistakes and look for ways to criticise the Book of Allah, and that is something impossible, for all of their objections to the Book of Allah stem from their lack of understanding of the verses, their lack of familiarity with the language of the Quran and rhetorical devices of the Arabs, and them not having a basic grasp of Arabic. This particular style of simile was used by one of the ancient Arabs⁽¹⁾ when he said:

Will he kill me when my sword is my bedfellow?

And the points of my spears are like the fangs of hellish ghouls.⁽²⁾

(1) He is Imru'u Al-Qays ibn Hajr ibn Al-Harith Al-Kindi. He was a pre-Islamic poet, and indeed was the most famous of all the Arab poets and was Yemeni in origin. He was born in Najd in the year 130 BH. His father was the king of the tribes of Asad and Ghatafan. And he started composing poetry when he was just a boy. Then, when he grew up into a young man, he began to muck around and associate with the Arab vagabonds, so his father banished him to Hadramawt when he was about twenty years old. Then he made his way around the various tribes of the Arabs after Al-Mundhir, the king of Iraq, had requested his presence. Until, finally, the emperor of the Byzantines gave him a principedom in Palestine, so he travelled there. Then, when he was at Ankara, boils appeared on his skin. And he remained there until he died in the year 80 AH when he was 50 years old. (Al-Mawsu'a Ash-shi'riyya - Al-mujma' Ath-Thaqafi CD -2003).

(2) The meter of this verse is (*tawil*). Ibn Salam Al-Jamahi mentioned it in (Tabaqat fuhul Ash-shu'ara'), and Yaqut Al-Hamwa mentioned it in (Mu'jam Al-Udaba').

In this way, an ancient Arab saw the points of spears being like the fangs of ghouls, but has anyone ever seen a ghoul? So, the Quran is Arabic, and it addresses the Arabs with stylistic devices that they themselves use. And it is enough for you to see how loathsome this image is that you try to form in your own mind the picture of a ghoul or a Satan. If you do that, it will cause your thoughts to fly down one terrifying path or another. And the proof of that is that were we to ask all the caricature artists in the world to draw a picture of Satan, each one of them would make a drawing according to his imagination. So there would be many pictures, all of them different from one another because none of them had ever actually seen Satan, but rather only imagined what he would look like.

Imagine if the Quran were to have defined what the *zaqqum* tree looked like and said, 'It looks like such-and-such or such-and-such', would that simile have given you an image more horrific than that given by Satan's heads? In this way, the True Lord illustrates this meaning.

Then the verse goes on to describe the situation in which those evildoers stand before Allah, not only will they stand in humiliation and abasement, but rather, they stand: '...hurling reproaches back and forth at one another!...' (*Saba'*: 31) They argue and dispute with one another, hurling the blame backwards and forwards between them. The Arabic verb *yarji'u* here indicates that one person says something and another throws his words back at him and rejects them. In the Quran, there are many places in which this exchange between those who follow and those who are followed is described, and this is one example of that.

'...Those [of them] who had been weak [on earth]...' i.e. the weak and those who blindly imitate: "...will say unto those who had gloried in their arrogance..." i.e. the masters and the great men whom others follow: '..."Had it not been for you, we would certainly have been believers!"' (*Saba'*: 31) It is enough of an indication of the immensity of the resurrection that the weak can stand in front of the strong and confront and answer back to them, despite the fact that both of them are hopeless losers. And that is because that weakness was in this world, as was the arrogance and subjugation. But as for now, in the arena where the Reckoning takes place, all are equal. Here, the

weak say to their masters: ‘...“Had it not been for you, we would certainly have been believers!”’ (*Saba'*: 31)

And as long as the affair is one of exchange, with each party answering back to the other, the ones who were arrogant must respond and give their answer to those who had been weak.

Then the True Lord says:

قَالَ الَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا لِلَّذِينَ اسْتَضَعِفُوا أَنَحْنُ صَدَدْنَاكُمْ
عَنِ الْهُدَىٰ بَعْدَ إِذْ جَاءَكُمْ بِلَ كُنْتُمْ تُجْرِمِينَ

The oppressors will say to them, ‘Was it we who prevented you from following right guidance after it had reached you? No! You yourselves were sinners’ [32] (The Quran, *Saba'*: 32)

Those who were arrogant respond, saying: ‘...“why – did we keep you [forcibly] from following the right path after it had become obvious to you? Nay, it was but you [yourselves] who were guilty!”’ i.e. ‘We did not prevent you from following guidance, and we did not come between you and belief.’ ‘...Nay, it was but you [yourselves] who were guilty!”’ It was because of your own natures, you find it easy to follow our way, since our worship entailed no responsibility on your part, for you did not have to fast, pray or pay *zakat*. If you were but to have reflected and made use of your intellects, you would not have followed us!

And that is the exact same logic employed by Satan (Iblis) when he argues with his followers on the Day of Rising, and says to them: ‘...Yet I had no power at all over you: I but called you – and you responded unto me. Hence, blame not me, but blame yourselves. It is not for me to respond to your cries, nor for you to respond to mine...’ (*Ibrahim*: 22). So the meaning of Satan’s words is, ‘I am unable to take away your cry for help, and you are unable to take away my cry for help.’ So the matter is ended - nothing will save or be of benefit to anyone except for the good actions they have performed. Then those who had been weak respond, again answering back to those who had been arrogant, saying:

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ اسْتَضَعُّوْا لِلَّذِيْنَ اسْتَكْبَرُوْا بَلْ مَكْرُ الْاَيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ اِذْ تَأْمُرُوْنَ اَنْ
 نَّكْفُرَ بِاللّٰهِ وَنَجْعَلَ لَهُ اَنْدَادًا وَّاسْرِوْا النَّدَامَةَ لَمَّا رَاَوْا الْعَذَابَ وَجَعَلْنَا الْاَغْلَلَ
 فِيْ اَعْنَاقِ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا هَلْ يُجْزَوْنَ اِلَّا مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾

The oppressed will say to them, ‘No, it was your scheming, night and day, ordering us to disbelieve in God and set up rivals to Him.’ When they see the punishment, they will fall silent with regret, and We shall put iron collars on the disbelievers’ necks. Why should they be rewarded for anything other than what they have done? [33]
(The Quran, *Saba’*: 33)

This is a continuation of their exchange and dialogue, with both parties throwing the responsibility for their predicament on the other. So when those who had been arrogant accused them of being guilty, and of having followed them because of their desire for an easy religion that demanded no responsibility from them and placed no limits on their appetites, those who had been weak replied: ‘...“Nay, [what kept us away was your] devising of false arguments, night and day...’ i.e. the plots that took shape in the night and the plots that took shape in the day, since you spent your days and nights harassing us and whispering into our ears until we followed you.

‘...when you persuaded us to blaspheme against God and to claim that there are powers that could rival Him!’ i.e. partner gods, ‘...And when they see the suffering [that awaits them], they will [all] be unable to express [the full depth of] their remorse...’ (*Saba’*: 33). So remorse takes hold of them, but despite that they do not voice it out loud nor show it is there, in order to ensure that others do not gloat over their predicament. And there is a difference between a person feeling regret and him being forced through circumstance to announce his regret.

Then the True Lord says: ‘...for We shall have put *aghlal* (shackles) around the necks of those who had been bent on denying the truth: [and] will this be aught but a [just] requital for what they were doing?’ (*Saba’*: 33) *Aghlal* are chains or shackles. As for the words: ‘... [And] will this be aught but a [just] requital for what they were doing?’ they are a warning to those

believers who hear these words and this recompense, saying to them, 'Beware of letting compassion for the circumstances in which these people find themselves in the Hereafter take hold of you, but instead look at the crimes they did in this world. For then you will see that Allah is just and does not wrong anyone. Rather, it is people who wrong themselves.'

An example of that is found in what Allah says in the verses: 'Behold, those who have abandoned themselves to sin are wont to laugh at such as have attained to faith' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 29) till He says, 'Are these deniers of the truth being [thus] requited for [aught but] what they were wont to do?' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 36)

That is because when the time of a crime is finished and its effects have died away, people tend to forget how abominable the crime was, and only remember how abominable the punishment for it is. Or the hearts of those who never witnessed the crime soften towards the criminal. And that is why the True Lord reminds us of His being just, and reminds us that the recompense corresponds to the crime. So, do not let compassion for the criminals take hold of you, and do not feel sorry for them on account of the humiliating and lowly position in which you find them. Rather, place their punishment alongside their crime when they denied the Messengers.

Then the True Lord says:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِي قَرْيَةٍ مِّنْ نَّذِيرٍ إِلَّا قَالَ مُتْرَفُوهَا
إِنَّا بِمَا أُرْسِلْتُمْ بِهِ كَافِرُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾

**Never have We sent a warner to a community
without those among them who were corrupted by
wealth saying, 'We do not believe in the message
you have been sent with [34] (The Quran, *Saba'*: 34)**

One thing we note in this aya is that it mentions *nadheer* (warning) but does not mention *bashir* (giving good news). Why is that? Because it is talking about a city in which corruption had become so prevalent that the only avenue left open for it was that of warning. For its people had rejected the Messengers and treated their call with enmity and contempt. Good news is part of the general call, but here the verse is speaking about a specific call to these rejecters.

As for the words (*fi qaryah*), literally 'to a village', they mean 'to the people of that village', with 'village' being a place noun. Allah *Glorified is He* uses a place noun even though He is referring to the inhabitants of that place because the place, as an inanimate object, glorifies Allah. And so it feels joy when it is occupied by believers glorifying Allah, and feels sad and depressed when it is occupied by unbelievers. And that is why the ancient Arabs used to say, 'So-and-so is rejected by the place', meaning that the place dislikes him. And that is why, when they said to a wise man, 'Do you know that so-and-so sold his land?' he replied, 'Rather, his land sold him.'

As for the words: '... those of its people who had lost themselves entirely in the pursuit of pleasures would declare...' it means that they have been captivated and overpowered by comforts. So the True Lord does not stop his slaves from enjoying blessings, but warns them against letting those blessings take control over them.

Allah may grant a slave a life of ease and comfort in order to lead him on - He may shower him with blessings until those blessings gain mastery over him. Reflect, for example, on God's words: 'Then, when they had forgotten all that they had been told to take to heart, We threw open upon them...' (*al-An'am*: 44): He did not say 'for them', as his opening is not in their best interests despite the fact that it looks like a blessing: '...the gates of all [good] things, until – even as they were rejoicing in what they had been granted...' (*al-An'am*: 44) after having become accustomed to those blessings, '...We suddenly took them to task: and lo! They were broken in spirit' (*al-An'am*: 44). That is why it is not right for you to use the preposition '*alyaka* (on you) when asking Allah to 'unlock or unfold' things for your brother. Instead you should use *laka* (for you). So, say, *fatah Allah laka* and not *fatah Allah 'alayka* (May Allah unfold/unlock things for you), Look at Allah telling us that No one can withhold the blessing Allah opens up for people, nor can anyone but Him release whatever He withholds. (*Fatir*: 2)

We were told a story about a great politician who had an opponent. One day, the people around them were surprised when this politician decided to promote his adversary to an important post. 'How could he promote his opponent?' they asked. So, he replied, 'I am raising him up to a high place so

that when he falls from it, his fall will be all the more painful.' We said previously, 'If you want to throw down your enemy, then do not throw him from a very low place!'

An example of how Allah leads people on by granting them ease and comfort comes in the verse where He tells us that when He decides to destroy a town, He commands those corrupted by wealth to reform, but they persist in their disobedience. So, Allah's sentence is passed, and He destroys them utterly. (*al-Isra'*: 16)

Some people misunderstand this verse thinking that these people were disobedient because Allah commanded them to be so. But Allah never commands people to act sinfully or immorally. He only commands people to obedience and worship, as He Himself tells us that all He ordered people to do was to worship Him alone. (*al-Bayyina*: 5), and He ordered them to enjoin justice and do good. (*an-Nahl*: 90) The above verse means, 'We commanded those who have lost themselves in the pursuit of pleasures to do what Allah commands, but there was not a single one of them who did anything but act sinfully and deviate from it.' So, acting sinfully was not because of Allah's Command, but because it was their choice!

When the True Lord *Glorified is He* presents the matter of living a life of comfort and being lost in the pursuit of pleasures, He says: 'I bestowed upon my slaves those blessings that they enjoyed, and the only thing I wanted from them in return was that they receive those blessings with gratitude and thanks, and pass on those blessings to those who had not been granted them, in order to create a society with the proper levels of social solidarity and cohesion, to end the spite and resentment the poor might harbour for the rich.

When the poor see the rich benefiting from those blessings and enjoying them, while denying the poor, they become envious towards the rich and wish that their blessings be taken away. But if the rich gave them some part of those blessings, they will love them and ask Allah to grant them more. This is with regard to the poor.

As for the rich, the True Lord *Glorified is He* knows that in general, it is in the nature of human beings to desire benefit and good for oneself. That is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* deals with them according to the logic of benefit;

He recompenses them when they spend on others and rewards them for doing good. So, He says to them that one good act will be rewarded tenfold. So, if you lower your gaze from things which are forbidden to you in this world, He will reward you with the wide-eyed maidens of paradise...etc.

That is why they say, 'Being religious is the thing which is of the highest benefit to you. Every time you put the needs of the poor ahead of yours, giving him whatever you find in your pocket, you can expect many times that in return from Allah.' So, even in your transactions with Allah, you desire benefit for yourself.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* gives to the rich and those with high determination, those who toil, who work hard and bring wealth into being. He gives them their due, respecting their sweat and effort and even their self-interest. So, when He asks them, He only asks them for a portion of their wealth, not all of it. He tells us that the life of this world is only a game, a pastime, but if we believe and are mindful of Him, He will recompense us. Allah does not ask us to give up all our possessions; otherwise we would be grudging if He were to ask us and press us for them, and this would bring out the bad side of us. (*Muhammad*: 36-37)

He employs the same logic to instil in us a love of spending upon others, telling us that though now we are called upon to give a little] for the sake of Allah, and some of us are grudging, but whoever is grudging is doing so only towards himself because Allah is the source of wealth and we are the needy ones. Then Allah warns us that He will substitute other people for us if we turn away, and these people will not be (or do) like us. (*Muhammad*: 38)

So, it is this spending freely on others that removes resentment from the hearts of the rich, just as it removes it from the hearts of the poor. It creates a more even distribution of belief and wealth throughout the society, since those who possess wealth praise Allah for His blessings and are not miserly with it towards the poor. While those who are poor will praise Allah for putting His blessings in the hands of those who are generous with it towards them. This is how balance is instilled in the society.

Let us now go back to the words of Allah that we were in the process of discussing: 'Never have We sent a warner to a community without those among them who were corrupted by wealth saying, "We do not believe in the

message you have been sent with." (Saba': 34). Why is it that they rejected what the Messengers brought?

The True Lord *Glorified is He* wants for His slaves not to place the strong ahead of the weak, the rich ahead of the poor, and the learned ahead of the ignorant. He wants the good to encompass everyone so that anyone who possesses a good quality passes it on to others.

The people mentioned here in this verse, chose disbelief, and were content with it because the blessings they were granted gained mastery over them and they lost themselves in the pursuit of pleasures. So, they tended towards haughtiness and iniquity until they became totally obsessed with it. Then, when Islam came to set right their conduct, they opposed it and tried to wipe it out and destroy its call because they got accustomed to leadership and oppressing others and did not want any of that to be taken away from them. If it were not like that - if the world were balanced and upright - then there would have been no need for Messengers. So, Messengers were sent when corruption became rife and completely permeated a society.

We said before that Allah created a faith-immunity in human beings, stemming from their innate nature, but the desires and customs of wrongdoers overruled that nature. So, they needed reminders to revert back to the original nature with which Allah created them. That is why Allah says to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that his task is only to warn them. (*al-Ghashiya*: 21) That is, he will not come up with something new.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* makes it clear that when it comes to good and evil, people are of three types: Allah tells us that He gave the Scripture as a heritage to His chosen servants: some of them wronged their own souls, some stayed between the right and wrong, and some, by Allah's leave, were foremost in good deeds.... (*Fatir*: 32)

Those who wrong themselves are those who commit wrong actions and do not reproach themselves, those who feel no regret and never repent. They wrong themselves because they deny themselves reward and everlasting bliss. Those who stay between right and wrong are those who alternate between the right and wrong actions: when they do something wrong, they remember, reproach

themselves and repent, and then do something good to wipe away the wrong. These latter people are the ones who have confessed their wrongdoing, who have done some righteous deeds and some bad ones. Allah says that He may well accept their repentance, for He is most forgiving and merciful. (*at-Tawba*: 102)

When Allah says that He gave the Scripture as a heritage to His chosen servants (*Fatir*: 32), this stands for the community of Muhammad, since the word 'heritage' implies that the inheritance is passed on from an earlier generation to a later generation. So, the community of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* are the heirs of all the previous Messengers with respect to all the good things they commanded. They took on the responsibility of deterring evil in all its forms, and by doing so became heirs to all the messages. That is because they command the good and forbid the wrong. Allah says that they are the best community singled out for people: they enjoin what is right, forbid what is wrong, and believe in Allah. (*Al- 'Imran*: 110) Allah also tells us that He made the believers into a just community so that they may bear witness to the truth before others and so that the Messenger may bear witness to it before them. (*al-Baqara*: 143)

So, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* bears witness that he conveyed it to you, and you bear witness that you conveyed it to others after him. Allah entrusted Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with the task of making laws for you, and entrusted you with the task of holding on to his program after him. That is why the messages came to an end with Prophet Muhammad because his community took on the task of passing the message. This is all the more proof that they are indeed a community in which good will remain until the coming of the Final Hour.

As for the Words: '...We do not believe in the message you have been sent with.' (*Saba*': 34), we ask with what were the Messengers sent? They were sent with the doctrine of monotheism - that there is no Deity but Allah. They were sent with a transmission from Allah; with miracles, and with rulings and programs that govern the movements of life. The disbelievers denied all of this because they wanted to keep living in comfort, to persist along the path of oppression and to monopolise whatever they wanted.

But their words: '...the message you have been sent with...' (*Saba'*: 34) indicate their stupidity, for they could have said instead, 'what you brought' or 'what you claim', but they did not. Rather, they said, 'the message you have been sent with', thereby admitting that they are talking to a messenger. This is the word of truth that Allah put on their tongues, just as He also put it on their tongues when they enticed the people not to spend anything on those who are with 'Allah's Apostle'. (*al-Munafiqun*: 7) They also said something similar when the revelation stopped coming to prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* for a while, they said {'The Lord of Muhammad abandoned him.'} ⁽¹⁾

So, they admitted that prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was receiving a message, and since a messenger is always lower in rank than the one he is getting the message from, then the message was not from Muhammad. Allah told Muhammad to tell them that if Allah had so willed, Muhammad would not have recited the Quran to them, nor would Allah have made it known to him. For Muhammad lived a whole lifetime among his people before the Quran came to him; if only they used their reason! (*Yunus*: 16)

But what is the reason for their rejection and disbelief?

وَقَالُوا نَحْنُ أَكْثَرُ أَمْوَالًا وَأَوْلَدًا وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُعَذَّبِينَ ﴿٣٥﴾

They would say, 'We have greater wealth and more children than you, and we shall not be punished' [35] (The Quran, *Saba'*: 35)

We have said that Islam came to create balance in the society, and bring about a level of social, economic, and religious justice. So, the logic of those who rejected it was that they thought they had no need for any such balance, since they already had wealth, children, and all the pleasures of life. 'They would say...' (*Saba'*: 35), i.e. this is their justification: '...We have greater wealth and more children than you...' (*Saba'*: 35). Indeed, their self-indulgence led them to go even further and say, '...and we shall not be punished.'" (*Saba'*: 35).

(1) It is narrated that Jundub ibn 'Abdullah Al-Bajli said, 'Jibril *peace be upon him* was slow in bringing the revelation to prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, so the idolaters said, 'Muhammad has been abandoned by his Lord.' It is narrated by Ibn Kathir in his *Tafsir* (4/522).

Why? Because, they say, 'Allah would not give them such bliss in this life, and then withhold it from them in the Hereafter.'

But we say to them, 'You are deluded, for there is a difference between the gifts of Divine Power and the gifts of Lordship. Allah gives you the gifts of Lordship which is given to everyone; believers and disbelievers, to the obedient and the disobedient. But the gift of Divine Power is 'responsibility'. Allah grants you in this life His gifts of Lordship, and punishes you in the Hereafter using His Divine Power.

This justification of theirs: '...We have greater wealth and more children than you...' (*Saba'*: 35) is a proof against them, not a proof for them, since where do those good things they have come from? Also, having a large amount of money should inspire you to do all sorts of good, and having numerous children should encourage you to make of them a good flock to follow you on the path of truth. So, the fact that you still reject faith after being granted these blessings proves that you have used them in falsehood, wrongdoing, and oppression.

There is a close similarity between their words: '...and we shall not be punished.'" (*Saba'*: 35) and the words of the owner of the garden when he said that he did not think his garden will ever perish, or that the Last Hour will ever come, and that even if he were to be taken back to his Lord, he would certainly find something even better there. (*al-Kahf*: 36) This is insolent arrogance and ungratefulness for the blessings of Allah. There is no family tie or kinship between Allah and any of His creation so they would be given the pleasures of this life and the hereafter without any effort to make themselves worthy of it. Such people have been misled by their wealth and mislead by their offspring. That is why Allah tells the believers to be careful, for even from among their spouses and children they will have some enemies... (*at-Taghabun*: 14). Praise be to Allah that He used the word *min* meaning 'from among'. This means that other spouses and children will still be good.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

قُلْ إِنَّ رَبِّي يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾

**Say [Prophet], ‘My Lord gives in abundance to
whoever He will and sparingly to whoever He
will, though most people do not understand [36]
(The Quran, *Saba'*: 36)**

In other words, ‘Say in response to their deluded comments about their wealth and children’: “...My Lord gives in abundance to whomever He will and sparingly to whomever He will...” (*Saba'*: 36): *yabsutu* means abundance, and (*yaqdiru*) means in moderation for whomsoever He wills through His wisdom. Provision is one of the necessary manifestations of the Lordship attribute that brought mankind into existence, and so it was necessary to also guarantee man the ingredients for maintaining life. But the Provider does not give everyone exactly the same amount or type of provision, since He wants societies to be co-operative and share benefit. If every person were to have enough to suffice him, then no one would have any need of anyone else, and there would be no social cohesion in the society as a whole.

We previously made it clear that the society network hinges on the basis of need rather than the basis of bestowing favours. If we were to suppose that each and every one of us were to have graduated from university or obtained a doctorate, then who would sweep the streets? Who would polish people’s shoes? If we were to do these things out of favour, then none of us would take it upon himself to do them.

We also said that if a self-important man go home once and found a bad odour, he would ask about it. If he is told that it is because the pipes are acting up, there is no doubt that he would not rest until that problem had been resolved. Indeed, he might get into his car and go himself to get a plumber to rid him of the problem. In such cases, we say that the plumber is of more benefit than the self-important man because Allah has given the plumber skills and capabilities not within the capacity of the self-important man. This plumber would not endure such a job unless there was a need for it, otherwise, he would not accept to do it.

That is why the poet⁽¹⁾ spoke well when he said:

People belong to people, whether from the desert or the city,

Some, even if they do not realise it, are but servants to others.⁽²⁾

So, mankind exchange services since the True Lord *Glorified is He* has not created one people to serve and one people to be served. Rather, you serve people on some things and are served by them in others. Hence, every one of us is both a servant and is served. Every human being must know that, whatever his circumstances, nothing is guaranteed to last in this life and that his leadership is not something which is his by right. If he enjoys a high rank, then he must value that rank and work hard to maintain his post. If he sees someone lower than him, he must not look down upon him, but instead should value the role he has to play in serving him, and realise that one day he might need that man to do something for him that he himself cannot do.

That is why Allah tells us that He bestowed more abundantly on some than on others. (*an-Nahl*: 71) Many people think that *rizq* means wealth, but *rizq* is a general word that refers to everything that is beneficial to human beings. The True Lord *Glorified is He* has favoured some over others in some things. So, each person is favoured in some things and less favoured in others; you are favoured in those things for which you have been granted a talent, and less favoured in those things for which you have not been granted a talent. That is what creates solidarity in a society and enables its citizens to integrate and stand together on the basis of need rather than on the basis of granting favours.

Reflect on Allah's words telling us that when He tries man through honour and blessings, man would say that his Lord honoured him. (*al-Fajr*: 15), and he would thank Him. Allah has multiplied the good that you have because

(1) The poet is Abu Al-'Ala' Al-Ma'arri, who was Ahmad ibn 'Abdullah ibn Sulaiman At-Tanukhi, a poet and philosopher. He was born in the year 363 AH and died in the year 449 AH in Ma'arra An-Nu'man at the age of 86. He became blind in his fourth year and started composing poetry when he was 11 years old. He used to forbid people from harming animals and did not eat any meat for 25 years. His most famous book was 'Risalat Al-Ghufran'. (Al-Mawsu'a Ash-shi'riyya - Al-majma' Ath-Thaqafi Cd - 2003).

(2) The wording of this verse that is found in Al-Mawsu'a Ash-shi'riyya reads as follows: People belong to people, whether from civilisation or the countryside, Some belong to others even if they do realise they are servants. The meter of this poem is (Al-Basit).

you have attributed the act of generosity to your Lord. But when Allah tries man through the restriction of his provision, he says that his Lord humiliated him. (*al-Fajr*: 16) But Allah negates both assumptions assertively. (*al-Fajr*: 17) It means, 'You are lying when you say this because plenty of provision is not a proof of you being honoured, just as lack of it is not a sign of you being humiliated.' Otherwise, how could plenty of provision be a proof of being honoured, if those who have been given that provision do not use it to give generously to orphans or the poor and instead consume their inheritances greedily; loving wealth with all their passion? (*al-Fajr*: 18-20)

So, human beings must be courteous with Allah with respect to what He does, for Allah knows how to give provision, and He wants to make people into good examples for others. That is why Allah will cause the rich man who lies about his wealth to be exposed to the poor man for the liar he is. He will see the punishment of Allah overcoming him so that he may know that Allah possesses the Divine Power and is Self-sustaining and that wrongdoers cannot get away from punishment in this life before the Hereafter. It is with this message that Allah addresses Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* when He tells him to be patient, for Allah's promise is sure: whether He will show him part of what He has promised them in this life or whether He will take the prophet's soul back to Him first, it is to Allah that they will be brought back. (*Ghafir*: 77)

We also need to know that provision is not dependent on skill, expertise, or knowledge. Surely, there are people who work hard to get their provision and sow their crops, but when the time comes to harvest them, those crops could get destroyed. It is as if the True Lord *Glorified is He* were saying to us, 'Beware of attributing Divine Power to the means and forgetting the Divine Power of the Causer of means.'

A person's provision is assigned to them even when it is being carried by others. For example, when an embryo is in its mother's womb, its nourishment comes from its mother's blood. Even though that blood is carried by the mother, it is not part of her provision because that blood goes down into her womb to nourish the baby. But when she is not pregnant it is expelled from her body through the process of menstruation and she gets no benefit from it. Why? Because it is not part of her provision! That helps us to understand

when Allah says that it is Him who shall provide sustenance for the children as well as the parents. (*al-Isra'*: 31)

That is why they said, 'Your provision is not all of what you have, but it is all of the things from which you derive benefit.' Something may be owned by you and in your possession so you think it is yours, but then you may lose it or it may be stolen or destroyed. Or, it might be even more extreme than that, for you may have food which you eat and which is transformed by your body into the blood that runs in your veins, only for that blood to be spilt from a cut, wound, or surgical operation. So, that blood is not part of your provision.

A believer should always be at ease when it comes to the process of getting provision: he should know that it is through Allah's attribute of being the Sustainer that believers and disbelievers alike are provided for. He should know that a person's provision is assigned to him as if his name is written on it so that no one else will ever be able to take it, no matter what. So, when you are granted more provision, then thank Allah.

If you are tested with decreased provision, then know that it is on account of Allah's Wisdom, and remember Allah's words when He says that there is not a thing whose storehouses are not with Him, and He sends it down only according to a well-defined measure. (*al-Hijr*: 21)

Our verse ends with: '...but most men do not understand (Allah's ways).' (*Saba'*: 36), i.e. Most people do not understand Allah's Wisdom when it comes to giving some more provision than to others. In other words, it is only the few who do understand, so we ask Allah to make us from among those few!

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَمَا أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُكُمْ بِالَّتِي تُقَرِّبُكُمْ عِنْدَنَا زُلْفَىٰ إِلَّا مَنْ ءَامَنَ وَعَمِلَ
صَالِحًا فَأُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ جَزَاءُ الضَّعْفِ بِمَا عَمِلُوا وَهُمْ فِي الْغُرُفَاتِ ءَامِنُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾

**Neither wealth nor children will bring you nearer to Us,
but those who believe and do good deeds will have multiple
rewards for what they have done, and will live safely in the
lofty dwellings of Paradise [37] (The Quran, *Saba'*: 37)**

These words are directed towards the disbelievers, those who use their wealth and children to err. But neither that sort of wealth nor those children

will ever, in themselves, be the means for them coming close to Allah. But if one uses them in the Way of Allah and sincerely for Him, they become one of the greatest means for coming closer to Him. This is because, wealth may be spent for good, and children may be brought up properly so that they become good role models for their communities. That is why Allah excludes this exception saying: '...but those who believe and do good deeds...' (*Saba'*: 37). Next, Allah opens the door for His blessing when wealth and children are used to do good acts saying: '...will have multiple rewards for what they have done...' (*Saba'*: 37).

So, wealth and children are not necessarily a blessing, since there are some forms of wealth that will drag a person towards destruction and cause him to be hurled in the hellfire, and some types of children whom you think will be an honour for their families' names, but instead they turn out to be a disgrace to them.

We have seen many of those who are so keen on the power they get from family ties, but in truth Allah wants to humiliate them by means of that with which they have become enamoured. A man may betroth his son to the daughter of an important or wealthy person, or a man of office, and he feels pride on account of the family connection he has made. But can he guarantee that he will be happy with that girl? Or that he will never disagree with her? That is why so many times the tide turns around, and that family connection become a source of shame instead of pride: Allah humbles him by means of something he thought would be a source of honour and pride.

As for Allah's words: '...will have multiple rewards for what they have done' (*Saba'*: 37), it is only good actions which receive a recompense that is multiplied. On the other hand, bad actions are not multiplied, but rather requited with their like. That is an example of Allah's mercy towards us.

You will note here that Allah says '...multiple...' (*Saba'*: 37) and does not say 'multiples'. It is because 'multiple' is a generic noun that can refer to both a little and a lot. An example of this type of linguistic construct is found in Allah's words where He swears by the declining day, that man is deep in loss, except for those who believe, do good deeds, urge one another to the truth, and urge one another to steadfastness. (*al-'Asr*: 1-3) Here Allah excludes *Al-ladhina* which denotes the plural of *insan* (man) since *insan* is a generic noun.

'Multiple' here, could mean either the multiplication of the act of charity or the multiplication of the reward. One of the meanings of *di'f*, 'multiple', is that when you weigh what you originally gave, you would find it weak and light in comparison to the recompense that you received in exchange.

Multiplication is not the limit of Allah's bounty. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said in one of his Hadith, {A good action will be multiplied from ten to seven hundred times.}⁽¹⁾

So, Allah gives whomsoever He wills multiple rewards according to the intention that person had when he did the act of charity: one person gives, thinking that it is from his own wealth and efforts; while another gives believing that he is simply passing over what belongs to Allah - he knows that his wealth is Allah's wealth and that the one who gives is Allah.

A great illustration of giving is found in the story of Fatima *Allah be pleased with her*. {It is narrated that when prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* went in to see her, he found her polishing a *dirham* of hers, so he asked her about that. She replied, 'I am doing that because I have made the intention to give it away as charity, and I know that it will pass through Allah's hands before it reaches the hands of the poor.'}

Some people would give out charity, and as soon as it passes through their hands, they cease to think of it, their hearts are no longer attached to it and they no longer look out for what will come to them because of it. Others would lend money, their hearts remain attached to it and they do not forget it, so every time they remember it they would long to get it back, but they wait patiently; these get the reward for both the loan and for their patience and steadfastness.

That is why orientalists objected noisily about the recompense one gets for giving charity and that which he gets for giving a loan, claiming that the verse and the Hadith contradict each other with respect to this matter. In a

(1) *It is narrated by Imam Muslim in his Sahih (Kitab As-Siyam - chapter on the excellence of fasting, (Hadith) number 164), as well as by Ibn Majah in his Sunnan (1638) and Ahmad in his Musnad (2/443 & 516) in a (Hadith) from Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him that the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him said, 'Every action of the human being is multiplied: one good action will be multiplied ten times to seven hundred times to how ever many times Allah wishes to multiply it.'*

Hadith, prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* says, {‘It is written on the gate to Paradise that a good action is rewarded tenfold, while a loan is rewarded with eighteen-fold.’}⁽¹⁾ As for the verse, it says: ‘Who will give Allah a good loan, which He will increase for him many times over?...’ (*al-Baqara*: 245) (They say), if you combine these two, then a loan should be multiplied twenty times, not eighteen times.

Praise be to Allah that He has unlocked for us what was previously locked: we say to them that if a man were, for example, to give a *dinar* away as charity, that Allah would recompense him ten times that amount. But would that original *dinar* that he spent return to him? No it would not, because that *dinar* went in exchange for the ten he got back. So, in reality, he got nine-fold, and when those nine are doubled they become eighteen.


Now let us return to the verse in hand: ‘...but those who believe and do good deeds...’ (*Saba'*: 37): There are many places throughout the Book of Allah where He combines faith and doing right deeds - why is that? Because they are two wings without which no action can ever be properly accomplished: good deeds without faith are empty and worthless like the acts of charity of the disbelievers - they get a reward for them in this life in the form of fame, honour, and the immortalisation of their names, but no portion of the reward of the Hereafter. Similarly, there is no value in faith if it does not translate into good deeds.

The verse says: ‘...but those who...’ (*Saba'*: 37), i.e. those who have faith and do good deeds: ‘...will have multiple rewards for what they have done, and will live safely in the lofty dwellings of paradise.’ (*Saba'*: 37) *Ghurufat* is the plural of *ghurfa*, which is the penthouse that is specifically set as a private den. That is why, even today, we find that in villas, the ground floor is used for dining and receiving guests. But when it comes to rest and quality time, this would be in the upper floor which is set as a private den.

(1) From Abu Umama Sada ibn ‘Ajalan Allah be pleased with him that prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘A man will enter Paradise and see written upon its gate: An act of charity will be multiplied ten times, while a loan will be multiplied eighteen times.’ Narrated by At-Tabarani and Al-Bayhaqi, both of whom narrated it by way of ‘Utba ibn Hamid (At-Tarhib wa At-Tarhib of Al-Mundhari 2/34)

Every human being has private quarters, even when he is inside his own home and surrounded by his own children. Because when a man is in his bedroom, he has the freedom to wear whatever he wants or even to be nude, but if he wants to go out to the living room, he must get himself ready and put on the appropriate attire. If he wants to go out into the street, he must again get himself ready and put on the suitable attire. The same is true if he was going to the club or other places where people get together - each place has its dress code and way of behaving.

When it comes to privacy, we all see how parents today put their sons and daughters into separate rooms, and if they do not have the space for that, they would keep one bed for the son and another for the daughter. That is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* preserves His slave's status and privacy to be totally safe and undisturbed: 'and will live safely in the lofty dwellings of Paradise' (*Saba*': 37).


 وَالَّذِينَ يَسْعَوْنَ فِي آيَاتِنَا مُعْجِزِينَ أُولَٰئِكَ فِي الْعَذَابِ مُحْضَرُونَ

**Whereas those who work against Our messages,
seeking to undermine them, will be summoned to
punishment [38] (The Quran, *Saba*': 38)**

We say that when someone strives *sa'a* against another in the presence of the Sultan, it means that he strives to slander or defame him. The people referred to in this verse strive against the verses of Allah and speak badly about them in order to turn people away and distract them from listening to them.

As for the Word: '*mu'ajizin*' (*Saba*': 38), its singular is *mu'ajiz*. *Mu'ajaza* is in the morphological form *mufa'ala* which is used when one person does an action to another. So, *mu'ajaza* is a form of battle, but beware of thinking that it is a battle between the believers and disbelievers, or between the Messengers and those who deny them. No, it is a higher battle since those who engage in this *mu'ajaza* are those who seek to neutralize the signs of Allah. But no matter how much they plot, they will never render Allah incapable and will never escape from Him. Allah says to Prophet Muhammad, if he could only see their terror on Judgment Day! There will be no escape for them when they are seized from a nearby place. (*Saba*': 51)

Allah says: they ‘...will be summoned to punishment...’ (*Saba'*: 38). The meaning of *muhdarun* is that they will be brought forth against their will. It is the passive participle from the verb *ahdara*, so they are tied up and dragged there like someone who has been arrested. Another word derived from this verb is *muhdir* who is the one who fetches the accused regardless of his will.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

قُلْ إِنَّ رَبِّي يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَقْدِرُ لَهُ وَمَا
 أَنْفَقْتُمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ فَهُوَ يُخْلِفُهُ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الرَّازِقِينَ ﴿٣٩﴾

Say, ‘My Lord gives in abundance to whichever of His servants He will, and sparingly to whichever He will; He will replace whatever you give in alms; He is the best of providers’ [39] (The Quran, *Saba'*: 39)

We say that *yabsutu* means expanding provision and *yaqdiru* means making things tight - these meanings were explained just a few verses ago. But here, Allah adds a new twist, for He says immediately afterwards: ‘...He will replace whatever you give in alms; He is the best of providers.’” (*Saba'*: 39) It is as if the True Lord *Glorified is He* is directing our attention to the fact that mankind in its entirety is created by Him, and they are all His slaves. He is capable of giving to everyone and providing for everyone abundantly, but instead of doing that, He wants people to love one another and be responsible for one another, so he gives abundant provision to some and scant provision to others. Then he gives those who have been granted abundant provision an indication of the reward they will get by spending generously on others so that they might spend on those to whom He has granted scant provision.

This verse gives us a summarised account of the economy of the entire world. An economy is essentially the balance of expenses and income; where expenses are concerned with things we expend of and income is concerned with things we receive. So, in any given place, there must be a group that gives and another that takes: there must be rich and there must be poor. That is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* did not make that abundance of wealth freely available to all, nor did He make everyone experience the pangs of poverty. Instead, He made it an exchange of giving and taking.

Afterwards He tells us: 'Say, 'My Lord gives in abundance to whichever of His servants He will, and sparingly to whichever He will...' (*Saba'*: 39), He qualifies it with His Words: '...He will replace whatever you give in alms; He is the best of providers.'" (*Saba'*: 39) So, the True Lord *Glorified is He* takes into account the principle of self-interest, and the love that the rich have for money. That is why He puts their hearts at rest with respect to their wealth and He guarantees to replace it.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* gives abundant provision to the rich, those who love money, but says to them, 'If you have a debt that is owed by a poor person, and this person transfers his debt to a richer person who is capable of paying off that debt (in this case Allah), then accept the deal because you cannot guarantee that the poor person will pay what he owes. So, if your money is with Allah then He will surely pay.' Thus, Allah reassures the rich that their wealth will never decrease on account of them spending it on others because their debt has been transferred over to Allah and He has undertaken to pay it back. That is what prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was teaching us when he said, {'The Son of Adam says, "My wealth, my wealth." But do you get anything (of benefit) from your wealth except for that which you ate and finished, or that which you clothed yourself with and wore it out, or that which you gave as charity and have spent?'}⁽¹⁾ {When prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was given a sheep as a gift, 'A'isha Allah *be pleased with her*, gave it away as charity, leaving only its shoulder for prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* since she knew that he loved the shoulder. When prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came back, he asked her, 'What did you do with the sheep?' She replied, 'All of it is gone except for its shoulder.' So, he said, 'actually, all of it remains except for its shoulder.'}⁽²⁾

(1) It is narrated by Ahmad in his *Musnad* (4/ 24 & 26); Muslim in his *Sahih* (2958) in *Kitab Az-Zuhd*; and At-Tirmidhi in his *Sunnan* (2342). The wording of the (Hadith) in Muslim is, 'The son of Adam says, 'My wealth! My wealth', so Allah says, 'Is there any of your wealth you truly possess, son of Adam, except for that which you have eaten so it is consumed, dressed up in so it becomes worn out, and given away as charity so it remains for you in perpetuity.'

(2) It is narrated by Ahmad in his *Musnad* (6/50); and At-Tirmidhi in his *Sunnan* (2470) in a (Hadith) from 'A'isha Allah *be pleased with her*. At-Tirmidhi said that it was a (Sahih Hadith). The wording of Ahmad is that 'A'isha said to prophet Muhammad, 'Messenger of Allah, nothing remains except for its shoulder.' He replied, 'Actually, all of it remains except for its shoulder.'

Why? Because it is a wealth that has been transferred into the custody of Allah and He has promised to replace it. How do you think it will be when that repayment is coming from the Allah who says to the believers (even if they were in a battle) when you are offered a greeting, then respond with a better one, or at least return it. (*an-Nisa'*: 86) You have greeted Allah by greeting the poor, so there is no doubt that He will give you in return a greeting that is better. Not just that, but He multiplies it for you innumerable times. The example we gave of that was of the single seed that the farmer plants in the ground. That seed gives him seven ears of corn, in each ear there are one hundred seeds. If that is what the earth (which was created by Allah) gives you, then what do you think of the Creator Himself?

As for Allah's Words: 'He will replace whatever you give' (*Saba'*: 39), they are a reassurance to the rich that their wealth will never diminish, and a reassurance to the poor that Allah will never abandon them or leave them alone in their poverty, That is proven by the fact that He takes out a loan on their account, for He says: 'Who will give Allah a good loan?...' (*al-Baqara*: 245) So, Allah borrows from mankind to give to mankind even though it is within His power to give abundant provision to all. But it is His aim that people live together with the love and affection that charity brings - that way the rich will love the poor and the poor will feel no resentment towards the rich. That is why the verse ends with the words: '...He is the best of providers.'" (*Saba'*: 39) He says 'the best of providers' because a provider is everyone who extends his hand to you in a way that brings you benefit. According to that definition, your father can be considered as your provider, as anyone else who supports and takes care of you. Likewise, your Lord is a provider, but there is a difference between the two: although your father is a provider in the sense that he brings you your provision, yet if you ask him where that provision came from, he would say, 'From Allah'. So, he is delivering it to you. But as for the True Lord, He is the One Who creates provision to start with, and that is why, '...He is the best of providers.'" (*Saba'*: 39)

We previously illustrated that when you see an attribute that is common to both the Creator and His creation, you must know that the definition befitting each is completely separate and different. What gives superiority to Allah's

attribute here is that He is the provider as well as the One Who creates provision and the One Who clears the way for it to reach you.

They say that Allah's superiority, when it comes to providing, stems from three things: Firstly, He does not keep your provision back until the time you need it, but rather creates it for you before you are even created, and He puts in place all the necessary ingredients for your life before summoning you into this world. Secondly, He does not charge you anything for what He provides you. Thirdly, He does not demand any reward in exchange for what He granted you. For all of these reasons the True Lord *Glorified is He* was and still is the best of providers. Reflect, for example, on the Pharaoh - after he had raised Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and demanded his gratitude, reminding him of how he raised him as his child and how he spent with them years of his life! (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 18) What he meant was, 'You should speak courteously towards us, Musa, remember my favours upon you, and do not come set a collision course with me.'

On the other hand, Allah says of Himself that He will judge among us, for He is the best of Judges. (*Yunus*: 109) Allah also says of Himself, that He is the best of creators. (*al-Mu'minun*: 14)

In all of these verses, the True Lord *Glorified is He* takes into account the talents that He has given to people, and appreciates their positive effect upon life - that is the reason He attests to them possessing features of His own attributes, namely that of creation. 'Creation' means bringing into being something that had not been in existence before. Human beings can be considered creators when they make things like crystal out of sand. The True Lord *Glorified is He* does not begrudge them that and so calls them creators. But if humans are creators, then the True Lord *Glorified is He* is the best of creators. Why? A number of different aspects demonstrate His superiority when it comes to the act of creation: Firstly, humans can only create things out of existing elements, whereas the Creator can create things out of nothing. Secondly, mankind's creations remain in one state - with no ability to grow or proliferate, whereas Allah's creation possesses the quality of life - they eat, grow, and proliferate...etc.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَيَوْمَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ يَقُولُ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ أَهْتُولَاءَ بِإِيمَانِهِمْ كَانُوا يَعْبُدُونَ ﴿٤٠﴾
 قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ أَنْتَ وَلِيِّنَا مِنْ دُونِهِمْ بَلْ كَانُوا يَعْبُدُونَ الْجِنَّ أَكْثَرُهُمْ بِهِمْ مُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٤١﴾

On the Day He gathers them all together, He will say to the angels, ‘Was it you these people worshipped?’ [40] They will reply, ‘May You be exalted! You are our supporter against them! Really, they worshipped the jinn – most of them believed in them’ [41] (The Quran, *Saba'*: 40 - 41)

The meaning is, ‘Remember that Day upon which He will gather them all together’. The day that includes the gathering and bringing together all mankind is the Day of Rising. But why would Allah mention to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that day? Because this is a sign to Prophet Muhammad, that Allah has neither forgotten him nor left him alone. That is proven by the fact that He will take revenge upon his enemies and those who reject him on that day. It is as if Allah were saying to him, ‘You will see what We shall do to them’, just as He asks at the end of *al-Mutaffifin* chapter, if the disbelievers have not been repaid for their sins? (*al-Mutaffifin*: 36), and when He asks the angels if it was them that these people worshipped. (*Saba'*: 40) It is well known that disbelievers worship many gods, so why does Allah mention the angels in particular here in this question? Because angels are the highest species that are worshipped other than Allah, and the closest of them to Him. That is why they dubbed them ‘the daughters of Allah’. They thought that the angels could plead for them with Allah, or intercede on their behalf and defend them if they worshipped them. So, Allah mentions the angels here, rather than the stones or trees they also used to worship.

But why is the question directed towards the angels who are being worshipped, and not towards those worshippers who associated others with Allah? Why does Allah not rebuke them for worshipping other than Allah? Because the True Lord *Glorified is He* wants the idolaters to hear the response directly from the angels themselves so that the proof against them is established more eloquently.

Allah asks the angels: ‘...“Was it you these people worshipped?”’ (*Saba*: 40) i.e. the idolaters, Their first response was: ‘May You be exalted!...’ (*Saba*: 41) meaning you are exalted, Lord, above anyone being worshipped apart from You. ‘...You are our supporter against them!’ (*Saba*: 41), means, ‘It is a greater honour and source of pride for us to be your lowly servants than for them to worship us. ‘...Really, they worshipped the jinn, most of them believed in them.’ (*Saba*: 41), i.e. they were not worshipping us at all, but instead were worshipping the jinn. ‘...most of them believed in them.”’ (*Saba*: 41) But why did they worship the jinn⁽¹⁾? Why did most of them believe in them?

The jinn are the counterparts of human beings. They are called jinn because they are hidden from us - they see us, but we do not see them. Allah says to us that Satan and his tribe are lurking for us where we cannot see them. (*al-A'raf*: 27) Those who worship the jinn do not worship all of them, but rather worship the shayatin (Satan) of the jinn. They worship them because they obey them, and most of them to believe in them. Why? Because the jinn used to snatch snippets of what Allah said to His angels and pick up information about certain events or realities. Then they would reveal them to their friends from among the men, and those people would take those snippets and tell them to other people claiming that they were telling them about the future. But in reality they were mixing those realities with a great deal of falsehood. Then, when some events happened in the way that they had predicted people would be fascinated by them and think that they did indeed know the hidden future.

(1) *Al-Qurtubi mentioned in his Tafsir (8/5579) ‘that a tribe called Banu Mulayh ibn Khuza’a used to worship the jinn, claiming that the jinn appeared to them and that they were really angels and the daughters of Allah.’ But Abu Yahya Zakariyya Al-Ansari narrated a question in his Book, ‘Fath Ar-Rahman Bi-kashf ma yaltabisu fi Al-Quran’ (p 345), ‘If you were to ask, ‘How could the angels say what they said with respect to the idolaters when it has never been narrated that any of them worshipped the jinn?’, we would say that what they meant was that they used to obey the shayatin (Satan) when they commanded them to worship other than Allah. So the meaning of jinn here is the shayatin. On the other hand, Al-Karmani was certain that they used to worship the jinn as well.’*

فَالْيَوْمَ لَا يَمْلِكُ بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ نَفْعًا وَلَا ضَرًّا وَنَقُولُ لِلَّذِينَ
ظَلَمُوا ذُوقُوا عَذَابَ النَّارِ الَّتِي كُنتُمْ بِهَا تُكَذِّبُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾

**‘So today neither of you has any power to benefit or harm the other,’ We shall tell the evildoers, ‘Taste the torment of the fire which you called a lie’ [42]
(The Quran, *Saba'*: 42)**

‘...Neither of you...’ (*Saba'*: 42), i.e. neither the angels nor those idolaters who worship them, ‘...today...’ (*Saba'*: 42), i.e. on the Day of Rising, ‘...has any power to benefit or harm the other...’ (*Saba'*: 42) even though they think that the angels are but honoured slaves who enjoy a high rank with Allah, and that this will make them intercede on their behalf; yet the angels would make it clear to them that they can only intercede on behalf of those with whom Allah is pleased. Indeed, no one can intercede without first being given the permission to do so. Then there is the fact that the angels would be too ashamed to intercede on behalf of someone who worshipped other than Allah, for the absolute sincerity of their devotion will prevent them from supporting people such as these or interceding on their behalf.

We saw a similar situation with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* when he gave those who believed in Allah but denied his message precedence over those who denied Allah, thus demonstrating that he sides more with his Lord than with himself.

As for Allah’s words: ‘...We shall tell the evildoers, “Taste the torment of the fire which you called a lie’ (*Saba'*: 42), this is one of the verses with which the orientalist had problems, saying that the words of Allah contradict. They said that this verse says that the evildoers call ‘the Fire’ a lie, whereas in another verse it is “the torment” of the fire which the evildoers call a lie. (*as-Sajda*: 20), so which one is it, they asked?

So, did the evildoers call the fire, or its torment, a lie? Our answer is that there were some disbelievers who rejected the existence of the fire, and to those Allah says: ‘...Taste the torment of the fire which you called a lie.’” (*Saba'*: 42) Their denial was directed at the fire, and so the relative pronoun *al-lati* denotes the ‘Fire’.

As for those who believed in the existence of the fire, but rejected the fact that they would be punished by it, Allah says to them to taste the 'torment' of the fire which they called a lie. (*as-Sajda*: 20) In this case, their denial was directed at the torment, not the fire, and so the relative pronoun *al-ladhi* denotes the 'punishment'.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وإِذَا تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُنَا يَسْتَبِشُوا قَالُوا مَا هَذَا إِلَّا رَجُلٌ يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَصُدَّكُمْ
عَمَّا كَانُوا يَعْبُدُ آبَاءَكُمْ وَقَالُوا مَا هَذَا إِلَّا إِفْكٌ مُّفْتَرًى وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ
كَفَرُوا لِلْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ إِنَّ هَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿٤٣﴾

When Our messages are recited to them, clear as they are, they say, 'This is only a man who wants to turn you away from what your forefathers worshipped,' and, 'This [Quran] is nothing but lies he has made up.' When the Truth comes to the disbelievers, they say, 'This is just plain sorcery' [43] (The Quran, *Saba*': 43)

The meaning of: 'to turn you away' (*Saba*': 43) is take you away: 'from what your forefathers worshipped!' (*Saba*': 43) This proves that their worship of other deities than Allah was no more than their blind following in the footsteps of their forefathers. By saying this, they were not coming up with anything new, for Allah had already told us that they would say that when they were still in the world of unformed atoms when He extracted from them their solemn oath that they would take Him as their Lord. Allah says to prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that He took out the offspring from the loins of the children of Adam and made them bear witness about themselves, and asked them, 'Am I not your Lord?' and they replied, 'Yes, we bear witness.' Hence, they cannot say on the Day of Resurrection, 'We were not aware of this,' or, 'It was our forefathers who, before us, ascribed partners to Allah, and we are only the descendants who came after them: will you destroy us because of falsehoods they invented?' (*al-A'raf*: 172-173)

After saying what they said about Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* this is what they said about the Quran: '...This (Quran) is nothing

but lies he has made up...' (*Saba'*: 43): *ifk* is turning realities or events upside down, and it was on account of this that lies came to be called *ifk* because lying is saying something that contradicts reality, whereas telling the truth is saying something that supports reality. When you turn a reality upside down, you change it altogether.

It is like when Allah says in one of the verses that it was He who 'turned down' the ruined cities. (*an-Najm*: 53): *mu'tafika* are villages that Allah has turned upside down. Another example is when Allah asks how they can 'turn away' from the truth; (*al-An'am*: 95) i.e. how have you turned away from the truth and inverted it until it became falsehood? Did they stop at that description of the Quran? No, they added the word: '...made up...' (*Saba'*: 43), i.e. deliberately invented. Then Allah says: 'When the Truth comes to the disbelievers, they say, "This is just plain sorcery,"' (*Saba'*: 43). Of the words '...This is just...' (*Saba'*: 43), they mean, 'this thing that you brought, Muhammad, is just: "...plain sorcery!"' (*Saba'*: 43) It is amazing that they described that which Muhammad brought as magic, since magic is what is used to cast a spell over people's eyes. Nothing that a magician does is real - it is all illusion. That is why we say that there is a difference between the magic that the magicians of Pharaoh cast and the staff of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*. Their magic was as Allah *Glorified is He* describes it when He *Glorified is He* says: 'they bewitched the eyes of the people,' (*al-A'raf*: 116) and when He *Glorified is He* says: 'seemed to him from their magic that they were moving [like snakes].' (*Ta Ha*: 66) It was nothing more than pretence - there was nothing real about it. But when Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* threw his staff, it turned into a real snake. Had it not turned into a real snake, then Musa *peace be upon him* would have been afraid of it, for Allah *Glorified is He* says of him: 'And he sensed within himself apprehension, did Musa' (*Ta Ha*: 67)?

If it had not been a real snake, then the most skilled of the magicians would not have believed in him, for the Quran relates that once they saw what the staff did, they said, 'We have come to believe in the Lord of Musa and Harun (Aaron)!' (*Ta Ha*: 70) In other words, they recognised that it is not something that came from Musa *peace be upon him* but rather from Allah *Glorified is He*.

So, where then is this magic that Muhammad brought? If Muhammad truly were a magician who had bewitched the believers as they said, then why

did he also not bewitch you, thereby bringing an end to this matter? It is also well known that those who are bewitched never get anything good from the one who bewitches them. So, this statement of theirs is a clear lie against the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and an indication of their stubborn refusal to accept the truth brought by him.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

﴿٤٤﴾ وَمَا آتَيْنَاهُمْ مِنْ كُتُبٍ يَدْرُسُونَهَا وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ قَبْلَكَ مِنْ نَذِيرٍ

**Though We have not given them any books to
study nor sent any warner before you [44]
(The Quran, *Saba*: 44)**

It is as if the True Lord *Glorified is He* were asking, ‘Where does this statement of theirs originate? And where do those accusations come from? Have we given them books which they are studying [and from which they quote]? Did they learn that from them?’ Then He *Glorified is He* Himself gives the answer to that unvoiced question: ‘And We had not given them any scriptures which they could study.’ In addition to, ‘and We had not sent to them before you, [O Muhammad], any warner,’ meaning a Messenger who told them those things. So, from where then did they get them?

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَكَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ وَمَا بَلَّغُوا مَعْشَارَ مَا
ءَاتَيْنَاهُمْ فَكَذَّبُوا رُسُلِي فَكَيْفَ كَانَ نَكِيرِ ﴿٤٥﴾

**Those who lived before them also denied the truth – these
people have not attained even a tenth of what We gave their
predecessors – they, too, rejected My messengers, and how
terrible My condemnation was! [45] (The Quran, *Saba*: 45)**

The meaning of this is that whatever they said about the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* or about those who brought them guidance before him, is simply a denial of the truth, just like the earlier people who denied the truth. Their denial is a closely-followed custom, and indeed a natural tendency in those to whom Messengers are sent; whenever

a new religion is brought to them that brings an end to their oppression, tyranny, lordship and their enslavement of others. So, in order to protect their instruments of oppression and corruption, they felt that they had to oppose religion and deny the Messengers. In this context, the meaning of: 'And those before them denied,' is that there were nations who came before you and denied your brothers, the previous Messengers, so you are not the first to receive this reaction, O Muhammad.

'And they have not attained a tenth of what We had given them.' This means not even a tenth of the message, guidance, proof, and evidence that we have given you, O Prophet, reached those previous peoples who denied their Messengers. The reason is that the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* brought the complete religion and the perfect way, not open to any amendment.

Or it means the disbelievers of Mecca who denied Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'And they have not attained,' even a tenth of the power that we granted to those earlier peoples. In other words, those peoples who denied previous Messengers were more powerful, more influential and more civilised than the disbelievers of Mecca, when compared to 'Ad, Thamud or Pharaoh. Read Allah's words: 'Have you not considered how your Lord dealt with "Ad, Who were very tall like lofty pillars; the likes of whom had never been created in the land? And [with] Thamud, who carved out the rocks in the valley? And [with] Pharaoh, owner of the stakes [All of] whom oppressed within the lands' (*al-Fajr*: 6-11).

Where is the strength of Quraysh when compared to the strength of these people whose strength, power, oppression, and tyranny is infamous!? And despite that, still what befell them of Allah's might befell.

As for Allah's words: 'so how [terrible] was My reproach,' they mean, 'Look at how I took hold of the deniers and did not leave them be without punishment. No, on the contrary, I seized them with the seizing of One Who is Almighty, All-Powerful. As for 'My reproach,' it means 'My rejection of them by destroying them and punishing them, and My rejection of them at the same level that they rejected Me.'

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَعْظِيكُمْ بِوَحْدَةٍ أَنْ تَقُومُوا لِلَّهِ مِثْلَ شُحْرِ وَفَرَدَى ثُمَّ تَنفَكُّوْا مَا
بِصَاحِبِكُمْ مِنْ جِئَةٍ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْوَلِيُّ نَذِيرٌ لَّكُمْ بَيْنَ يَدَيْ عَذَابٍ شَدِيدٍ ﴿٤٦﴾

**Say [Prophet], ‘I advise you to do one thing only: stand before God, in pairs or singly, and think: there is no sign of madness in your companion [the Prophet] – he is only warning you before severe suffering arrives’ [46]
(The Quran, *Saba*: 46)**

After having given them a warning and a lesson by mentioning what happened to those deniers of the truth who came before them, the True Lord *Glorified is He* addresses His Words towards them once again and says to His Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* ‘Say’ to them, ‘I only advise you of one [thing].’ When you counsel someone, you are not issuing a new ruling, but rather are reminding someone of a previous ruling that people have forgotten. So an exhorter is one who clarifies matters in religion that people already know and believe in. But the desires and heedlessness of people caused them to forget those matters, so he comes and reminds them of the previous rulings. And counsel is only given by those who love you and desire the best for you.

For that reason, the True Lord *Glorified is He* gives us a good example of what counsel is in the story of Luqman when he was counselling his son: ‘And [mention, O Muhammad], when Luqman said to his son while he was instructing him, “O my son, do not associate [anything] with Allah.”’ (*Luqman*: 13)

As for the Words: ‘of one [thing],’ they mean ‘a single admonishment containing all the ones’. In other words, ‘I do only counsel you with this one thing.’ What is that thing? ‘That you stand for Allah, [seeking truth] in pairs and individually,’ beware of standing up for your own personal desire or for leadership that you look out for; beware of standing out of a desire to stand above this Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* but rather make your standing be only for Allah *Glorified is He* stripped of all desires, stripped of all appetites and stripped of any partisanship.

And as long as you make them want to stand for Allah *Glorified is He* it is inevitable that Allah *Glorified is He* will come to occupy a place in their hearts.

He *Glorified is He* is indeed in their hearts, as is proven by the Words: ‘And if you asked them, “Who created the heavens and earth?” they would surely say, “Allah.” Say, “[All] praise is [due] to Allah.”’ (*Luqman*: 25)

And by the Words: ‘And if you asked them who created them, they would surely say, “Allah.”’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 87) So, they used to believe that Allah *Glorified is He* was the One Who created them and the One Who created the heavens and the earth because that was a matter that was abundantly clear and something that nobody could possibly deny, no matter how far they have fallen into disbelief. Why? It is because creation is something that no man has ever claimed for himself. Such claims can only be made when a matter is ambiguous to such an extent that falsehood can easily be confused with the truth. But this matter is a clear one that indulges no ambiguity, for no matter how much they search, they will never find anyone who can create them or the universe around them except for Allah *Glorified is He*. This is why He *Glorified is He* uses this logic to argue with them, saying, ‘Based on your position, there are two possibilities before you: either you yourselves created this creation, or you were created without a creator.’ The first is rejected because there is no one who claims to have created creation; the second is rejected because things that are smaller and more trivial than the heavens and earth or human beings need a maker to make them - for example, do not the shoes you wear on your feet require someone to make them?

So, the heavens, earth, and human beings must also have a maker that befits their grandeur and greatness. And how could anyone deny this fact when they are able to recognise each other based on the smallest of things: They know the one who possesses those things and take pride in him. For example, so-and-so used to bury his daughters alive, so-and-so used to have a platter of food from which such-and-such a number of guests used to eat, so-and-so was the bravest of the Arabs, etc. And, indeed, the words, ‘I am the son of so-and-so, and I am the son of so-and -so’ feature heavily in their poetry.

So, when it came to this matter of creation, not one of them dared to deny it. And as long as they recognise that Allah *Glorified is He* is the one who creates, they must then also stand for that Allah *Glorified is He* whose role in creation they affirmed. They must ensure that their standing is sincerely for

Him and that no one other than Him is in their hearts and minds. If you do that, then have absolute confidence in the fact that that standing will bring you to the truth, for nothing shuts out truth from the intellects of those who search for it so much as personal whim, as the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'But if the Truth had followed their inclinations, the heavens and the earth and whoever is in them would have been ruined.' (*al-Mu'minun*: 71)

The standing that is meant here is not conditional upon there being a congregation or a crowd since it is a standing for the purpose of reflection. That is why it should be done, 'in pairs and individually,' whereby each person is left alone to reflect upon the matter of Muhammad in stark and real terms: How was he when he was amongst you? How was his conduct and character? Did you ever experience from him lies or magic or soothsaying? Did he ever claim anything as his that was not his own? Did you ever see a single sign of madness in him before his mission began? "And then give thought." There is not in your companion any madness.'

This reflecting on the state of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* requires a person to be objective; it is why Allah *Glorified is He* chooses that they are separate and do it singly or in pairs. When a human being is on his own, there is no opponent for him to lose to and no opponent to drive him to other than the truth. In such circumstances, his own point of view will be much closer to the truth.

When someone is alone and reflects, he will arrive at the truth because he is not going to trick or deceive himself and he is not going to be too arrogant to return to the truth. But when people are in a group, every one of them must establish his own proof, even if that means that he is forced to lie and cheat. As we have seen many times in such circumstances, everyone swears that he is in the right and everyone else is in the wrong.

It is as if the True Lord *Glorified is He* were protecting us by means of this way of reflecting from the clamour and din of crowds, that clamour that we witness, for example, in protest marches where everyone shouts out for what he wants, and their voices run together and become so mixed up with each other that it becomes impossible to make out what is being said.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* teaches us how to reflect singly or in pairs, for that is what protects from the deafening clamour. This matter takes us back to the objection the orientalist have with Allah's words: 'Verily, He knows all that is said openly, just as He [alone] knows all that you conceal.' (*al-Anbiya'*: 110)

The nub of their objection is this: if Allah *Glorified is He* honours us by knowing what it is we conceal, then where is the benefit in Him knowing what we say openly? Does every one of us not know what is said openly? We say that here He is addressing us in the plural. So what the verse is saying is that He knows what all of you are concealing or saying openly at any given moment - if your voice becomes mixed up with those of others, still He knows it. He is able to trace each voice back to the one it belongs.

Indeed, having knowledge of what is voiced out loud but is mixed up is greater than having knowledge of what is concealed since something that is concealed may well be indicated and given away by certain outward signs. But as for what is voiced out loud and mixed up with other sounds, it is very difficult to distinguish it from those other sounds.

It is similar when people are in pairs, for two is, as they say, one opinion and its opposite. Even if one opinion were to be defeated by the other, that defeat would be a secret one. We hear people all the time say to their opponents, 'I want to sit alone with you, just the two of us.' It is because you represent the two sides of an issue, and there is no third side to embarrass you or cause you to feel humiliated if you change your position over to his when you are with him.

'There is not in your companion any madness.' Allah *Glorified is He* says this because they used to say that the Prophet Muhammad was mad. But it is strange that they used to describe him as being mad when they were the ones who knew him the best, and had never once seen on him any of the telltale signs of madness. Indeed, he never once did anything against the society in which he lived. They used to refer to him before his mission began as the 'honest truthful one'. They themselves were shown up as being liars by saying that he was a magician and saying that he was mad.

But were one of these people to go somewhere alone and reflect sincerely on the person of the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*, he would arrive at the truth by himself. And if he were to allow those accusations

to pass through his mind, he would find the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* to be innocent of all of them. And as long as he remains alone with those reflections, he will never feel too ashamed to come back to the truth because he will never be defeated by anyone else.

The Noble Quran has tackled every one of the lies they directed at the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* and exposed their untruth. For example, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '[That] indeed, the Quran is the word of a noble Messenger. And it is not the word of a poet; little do you believe. Nor the word of a soothsayer; little do you remember.' (*al-Haqqqa*: 40-42) And He says: 'For this companion of yours is not a madman' (*at-Takwir*: 22).

The True Lord *Glorified is He* does not mention here what the result will be of our reflecting and searching for the truth singly and in pairs because it is something which is obvious and which we all know. The only thing He says is: 'He is only a warner to you before a severe punishment.'

Moreover, did all people automatically start believing in the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* after hearing this miraculous Quran from him so that we could then say, 'This Quran is the miracle that proves the truthfulness of the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*?' The answer is no because from among those people, there were some who did not believe after hearing the Quran as well as others who believed before the Quran was even revealed. For them, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying, 'I am the Messenger of Allah' was enough a proof. The first of those people were Khadija *may Allah be pleased with her* and Abu Bakr A-Siddiq *may Allah be pleased with him*. But what made them believe in the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*? What was the miracle by means of which they recognised him to be telling the truth? The proof and the miracle for these people were first and foremost the way He *peace and blessings be upon him* conducted himself among them - that alone was enough to make them believe him when he said, 'I am the one whom Allah *Glorified is He* has sent to you.' As for the Quran, it is a miracle and a challenge to those who deny him.

We see the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* reminding his people of the way he had conducted himself among them and using that as a proof to back his position up. For when he was sent to Safa and called his

people, they gathered around him and he *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Tell me, if I were to tell you that a group of cavalry were behind that mountain, coming here to attack you, would you not believe me?' They replied, 'We have never heard you tell a lie.' So he said, 'I am the Messenger whom Allah *Glorified is He* has sent to you.' They replied immediately, 'You are a liar. May you meet your doom! Is that the only reason you brought us together?!'"⁽¹⁾

It is narrated in the account of 'Abdullah ibn Salam *may Allah be pleased with him* one of the great rabbis of the Jews, becoming Muslim "that when his heart had been put to rest after seeing that the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* possessed all the qualities and characteristics with which he had been described in their books, and after he had become convinced that he really was the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* he went to him and said, 'O Messenger of Allah, Allah *Glorified is He* has guided me to faith! Know, O Messenger of Allah, that the Jews are a people given to telling lies, and if I become Muslim, they will say things about me that are not true. So call them now, Messenger of Allah, and ask them about me. Then I will announce my Islam in front of them after you have heard what they think of me.' And so the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* called them and asked them, 'What do you say about Ibn Salam?' They replied, 'He is our master and the son of our master, and our rabbi and the son of our rabbi.' They ascribed to him all manner of praiseworthy attributes. At that moment Ibn Salam *may Allah be pleased with him* said, 'As for me about whom they have said what they said, I bear witness that you are the Messenger of Allah.' So, they said, 'Rather, you are the worst of us and the son of the worst of us!'"⁽²⁾

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- (1) From Ibn 'Abbas *may Allah be pleased with him* who said, 'When the verse: "And warn, [O Muhammad], your closest kindred," (ash-Shu'ara': 214) was revealed, the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* went out and stood on the peak of Safa (the mountain of Mecca), whereupon the people gathered around him. So he said to them, Tell me, if I were to tell you that a group of cavalry were coming from the foot of that mountain, would you not believe me?' They replied, 'We have never heard you tell a lie.' So he said, 'I am here to warn you of a severe punishment that is coming.' So Abu Lahab said, 'May you meet your doom! Is that the only reason you brought us together?!' And that was when this chapter: "May the hands of Abu Lahab be ruined, and ruined is he." (al-Masad: 1) was revealed.' It is related by Ahmad in his Musnad (1/307); Muslim in his Sahih (355) in Kitab Al-'Iman; and Al-Bukhari in his Sahih (8/738 - Fath Al-Bari).
- (2) It is related by Al-Bukhari in his Sahih (8/165 - Fath Al-Bari); and Al-Bayhaqi in Dala'il An-Nubuwwa (2/ 527-529) in a Hadith from Anas ibn Malik *may Allah be pleased with him*. =

So, Ibn Salam *may Allah be pleased with him* said, 'Did I not tell you, Messenger of Allah, that they were a people given to telling lies?'

You will notice that those who opposed the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* at the beginning of his mission, and those who accused him of lying were from his own family and those who were closest to him. Indeed, it was his own paternal uncle who said to him, 'May you meet your doom! Is that the only reason you brought us together?!' And in this fact, we find a nugget of wisdom and a proof that the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent. Allah *Glorified is He* used that to let people know that it was not the status and pre-eminence of Quraysh in the Arab peninsula that led to Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* receiving his message. He did not receive the message so that Quraysh might rule the world, for his fiercest enemies were from Quraysh. And his victory did not come in Mecca, but rather came in Yathrib (the city of Medina was known as Yathrib before the Prophet emigrated).

We said previously that it was belief in Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that created the partisanship around Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* not the partisanship around Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that created the belief in him.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

قُلْ مَا سَأَلْتُكُمْ مِنْ أَجْرٍ فَهُوَ لَكُمْ إِنَّ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ ﴿٤٧﴾

**Say, 'If I have asked you for any reward, you can keep it.
It is God alone who will reward me: He is witness to
everything' [47] (The Quran, *Saba'*: 47)**

Payment is what one receives in exchange for work. It was this same expression that every one of the Messengers used. Indeed Allah *Glorified is He* taught each of them to say to his people: 'And I do not ask you for it any

= And in some versions of this Hadith, it is said that they said first, 'That is our master and the son of our master, and the most knowledgeable of us and the son of the most knowledgeable of us.' And in another version: 'The best of us and the son of the best of us, and our master and the son of our master.'

payment. My payment is only from the Lord of the worlds.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 109) If one reads between the lines of this statement, it is as if he were saying, 'If what I have done for you were to have been valued justly, I would deserve a wage for bringing you the message and calling you to religion, for by guiding you I have brought you immense benefit - not some worthless bargain in this transient world but an everlasting benefit in that realm that goes on forever and never fades. But the reality is that I do not demand any payment from you. No, instead, I take it from Allah *Glorified is He* since the work I have done for you is so great that you are incapable of evaluating it. The True Lord *Glorified is He* is the One Who evaluates my work, and I am confident that He will give me the wage it merits: 'My payment is only from Allah.' As for the Words: 'it is yours,' they mean, 'If I were to have taken payment from you, then I would have used that payment to work on your behalf, or the reward for it would have come straight back to you.'

We previously said that this expression was used by all the Messengers except for two, for this expression never appeared in the course of anything they said. Those two Messengers were Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* and Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*. This indicates that this matter is based upon a deep and profound wisdom.

But why, out of all the Messengers, were Ibrahim and Musa the ones not to say this? Because, they say, when Ibrahim *peace be upon him* confronted those who opposed him, the first person he confronted was his own paternal uncle⁽¹⁾. When his paternal uncle opposed him and refused to accept his call, he separated himself from him and made do with calling him to Allah *Glorified is He*. As it would have been unreasonable for him to have expected a wage from his

(1) The Sheikh here has adopted the position that Azar was the paternal uncle of Abraham and not his father. There is a difference of opinion regarding the name of Abraham's father, for some of the genealogists and exegetists say that his name was Tarih, while others said that it was Tarikh. Still, others said that they were both names of his, just like many other people who have two names. For example, Jacob was also known as Israel. Others say that Tarih was his proper name and Azar was his nickname. It is also said that Azar was the name of the idol that they used to worship. Look at the Tafsir of Al-Qurtubi (2/2544); the Tafsir of Ibn Kathir (2/149); Qisas Al-Anbiya' of Ibn Kathir (p. 104); Lisan Al-'Arab (Subject matter: (*azara*)); and Qisas Al-Anbiya' of 'Abd Al-Wahhab An-Najjar (pp. 93-96).

paternal uncle, this matter of payment never came up in the words with which he spoke to them.

The same was true with Musa, for the first person he called to Allah *Glorified is He* was Pharaoh, who had said to him: 'Did we not raise you among us as a child, and you remained among us for years of your life?' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 18) This meant that even if he were to have deserved a wage for calling Pharaoh to Allah *Glorified is He* still he would have been too embarrassed to have asked for it, given that he had been raised in his house under his care.

There are two possible meanings for the expression: 'Say "Whatever payment I might have asked of you," it either means, I took a wage for it and gave it to you.' Or 'From the very beginning, I never asked you for a wage.' Then the verse concludes with the Words: 'and He is, over all things, Witness.' It means He sees all of us, knows the hardships that I faced in calling you to the truth and knows the stubborn and obstinate way that you acted towards me. He will raise my wage based on the level of suffering I have endured in the course of guiding you along the way, and take you all by the hand into His court.

If human beings generally only do actions when there is some benefit or advantage in it for them, then know that the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* is not asking you to give him any payment for the work he is doing. So what is there left for you of which to accuse him?

After that, the True Lord *Glorified is He* wants to clarify for us a matter that is strongly connected to the truth brought by the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* for the objections of the disbelievers had mainly been based around who the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* was, as is proven by their statement: 'Has the message been revealed to him out of [all of] us?' (*Sad*: 8) And: 'they said, "Why was this Quran not sent down upon a great man from [one of] the two cities?"' (*az-Zukhruf*: 31)

They acknowledged the Quran and knew that it was a reminder and absolutely incontrovertible, but had a problem with the fact that it had been sent down to this man in particular, and not sent down to one of the great men of the people? It is why Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to make it clear that Allah's Guidance is only sent down to the earth through the medium of those whom Allah *Glorified is He* has chosen, not those whom creation has chosen.

There is no sense to their words: 'Why was this Quran not sent down upon a great man from [one of] the two cities?' It is why Allah *Glorified is He* responds to them with a decisive proof: 'Do they distribute the mercy of your Lord? It is We Who have apportioned among them their livelihood in the life of this world and have raised some of them above others in degrees.' (*az-Zukhruf*: 32) He also says: 'Allah is most knowing of where He places His message.' (*al-An'am*: 124)

Allah's Mercy is that which brings benefit to people in this world — and that mercy encompasses believers and disbelievers, or in the hereafter, and that mercy is only for believers, not disbelievers. That hereafter mercy is eternal, for they will be in a bliss that never runs out or fades away. If I allotted to you your provision and livelihood in this world, how could I leave in your hands the choice of who is going to show you mercy in the Hereafter? Should I allot temporary mercy for you, and then leave you without eternal mercy?

Then the Quran takes them off in a different direction after having counselled and befriended them. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

قُلْ إِنَّ رَبِّي يَقْذِفُ بِالْحَقِّ عَلَ الْغُيُوبِ ﴿٤٨﴾
قُلْ جَاءَ الْحَقُّ وَمَا يُبْدِيُ الْبَاطِلُ وَمَا يُعِيدُ ﴿٤٩﴾

**Say, 'My Lord hurls the Truth down [before you].
He has full knowledge of all that is unseen.' [48]
Say, 'The Truth has come; falsehood is powerless' [49]
(The Quran, *Saba*': 48 - 49)**

You will take note of the sharpness and vehemence of the style employed here, as opposed to the previous verses which exalted them and curried their friendship. It is as if the True Lord *Glorified is He* were saying to them, 'Do not think that we will continuously try to win your friendship, or that you are the ones whose ships will be kept afloat. No, for Allah *Glorified is He* will give victory to His religion despite your stubbornness, and the truth will be raised high despite your disbelief.'

He says in response to them: 'Indeed, my Lord projects the truth.' So, after having given you the opportunity and after your rebellion has gone on for a long time, my Lord is now going to hurl the truth against falsehood, as

He says in another part of the Quran: 'Rather, We hurl the truth upon falsehood, and it destroys it, and thereupon it departs. And for you is destruction from that which you describe.' (*al-Anbiya*: 18)

To hurl is to throw something with force. It is a word that is suggestive of violence and strength when it is used in conjunction with a human being, so how do you think it is when the one doing the throwing is Allah *Glorified is He*? The thing that is hurled by Allah *Glorified is He* here is the truth, and as we have said before, the truth is that which is firmly established and does not change.

Hurling must be done with an aim and a purpose, for anyone who wants to throw something must first define the distance to his target and see whether it is near or far. If he is throwing at something that is nearby, then it is seldom that the thrower misses the target, but if he is throwing at something that is far away, then the chances of his missing the target increase. The further away the target is, the more and more likely it becomes for him to miss. It is because the action of hurling requires that you set a target that you hope your thrown object will hit.

When that target is nearby, the changes that can befall it are few since it takes the thrown object such a short period of time to reach it, but when the target is far away, it becomes increasingly susceptible to significant change. For example, the angle at which it faces may be altered as a result of its being blown around by the wind, a hurricane, or something else entirely.

It is why, in circumstances such as those, we need precise equipment and instruments to measure the exact distance to the target, the strength with which the object is being thrown and the strength of the wind with which it comes into conflict, as well as many other instruments to measure speed and the passing of time. Take someone who hunts birds, for example: before firing, he must change the point at which he is aiming to take into account the movement, direction and speed at which the bird is flying.

And there is no one more capable of carrying this procedure than the One Who has full knowledge of the Unseen, the One Whom not one atom's weight of whatever there is in the heavens or on earth escapes His knowledge. It is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* uses correspondingly fine language to describe this procedure, saying: 'Say, "Indeed, my Lord projects the truth. Knower

of the unseen”” First, He hurls the truth, and then makes clear that what He hurls does not miss the target because He has full knowledge of the Unseen.

The truth that Allah *Glorified is He* hurls is the Divine guidance that He sent down to us from heavens, and the reason for Him doing the hurling is to get the message to where He wants it to be, for as He Himself says: ‘Allah is most knowing of where He places His message.’ (*al-An‘am*: 124)

So, the hurler is Allah, and the hurled object is the truth, that thing that is firmly established and does not change. And the reason for the hurling is so that the message can reach those whom Allah *Glorified is He* has chosen for it. And this is a process that never goes awry since the One doing the hurling knows every unseen thing that might affect the path of the hurled object. So, the truth will always inevitably reach the one who has been chosen to bear it and no one else.

This verse is a rebuttal and a refutation of those who say, ‘The message and the revelation were a mistake - they were revealed to Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* instead of being revealed to the one to whom they should have been revealed.’⁽¹⁾ Such a view is no more than baseless fumbling around in the dark.

The Words: ‘Knower of the unseen,’ here refers to the many different things that might obstruct the object that has been hurled from reaching its target. These influencing factors are known by none but Allah *Glorified is He*.

If you were to say, ‘The fact that the verb ‘hurl’ appears in the imperfect, a tense that refers to either the present or the future, shows that it is Allah’s job to hurl truth to His Messengers. But did He hurl that truth to the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*?’ The reply to this question comes in what Allah *Glorified is He* says in the very next verse: ‘Say, “The truth has come,” meaning He actually did hurl it down in the shape of the Quran which was sent down to Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the one whom Allah *Glorified is He* had chosen to carry His message and pass on His Divine

(1) *Among those who say this are one of factions of the Shi‘a, namely the followers of Al-‘Alba’ ibn Dhira’ Ad-Dusi, who preferred ‘Ali may Allah be pleased with him to the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him claiming that Muhammad was sent to guide people to ‘Ali, but instead called people to himself (Al-Milal wa An-Nihal of Ash-Shahrastani 2/175).*

guidance to creation so that their lives might be put back in order. And if the clear and incontrovertible truth has come, and the one who hurled it is He who has full knowledge of the Unseen, then what must be the position of the opposing falsehood? There is no doubt that it must retreat, for there is no way that it can stand firm when faced with the strength of the truth.

‘And falsehood can neither begin [anything] nor repeat [it].’ it cannot bring anything into being in the first world nor bring anything back in the next world. In other words, it is neither here nor there - it can neither bring in nor drive away. That is if falsehood actually has some form of existence. But in truth, falsehood is no more than a distant imagining in the heads of those who dream it up, and has no existence.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* gives us a physical representation of truth and falsehood when He says: ‘He sends down from the sky, rain, and valleys flow according to their capacity’ (*ar-Ra’d*: 17), i.e. every riverbed fills with water according to its breadth and capacity: ‘and the torrent carries a rising foam.’ (*ar-Ra’d*: 17) Foam is the straws and crumbs that are carried by the water, things that are commonplace and totally without benefit. Then the wind comes along and blows them here and there, leaving the surface of the water clean so that people can benefit from it. This indicates that falsehood is totally without benefit and does not last, no matter how high up it goes, and that it exists only in the same way that scum exists, a life without use or value.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

قُلْ إِنْ ضَلَلْتُ فَإِنَّمَا أَضِلُّ عَلَى نَفْسِي وَإِنْ اهْتَدَيْتُ
فَمَا يُرِيحُنِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِ إِنَّهُ سَمِيعٌ قَرِيبٌ ﴿٥٠﴾

**Say, ‘If I go astray, that is my loss, and if I am rightly
guided, it is through what my Lord has revealed to me.
He is all hearing, and ever near [50] (The Quran, *Saba*: 50)**

We notice here that He *peace and blessings be upon him* ascribes misguidance, when it occurs, to himself, but ascribes guidance to Allah *Glorified is He* and to the Revelation that was sent down to him. It is because when Allah *Glorified is He* sends down guidance to a human being who has free choice — and the arena

for free choice is when there are alternatives between which his intellect can choose, — since the intellect has no role to play when confronted by a single matter for which no alternative exists. For example, let us say you wanted to travel to a specific destination, but you could only find a single way to get there. In such circumstances, the intellect has no job to do and there is no scope for free choice. But then let us say that you wanted to travel to Alexandria and found two possible ways of getting there: a dirt track, the characteristics and distinguishing features of which are such-and-such, or a desert road, the characteristics and distinguishing features of which are such-and-such.

Allah *Glorified is He* created the whole of existence with free will, except when it comes to matters decided by fate and destiny. Those matters are ones for which human beings are given no choice because if they were to interfere in them they would spoil them.

Do not think that you are the only one in existence with free choice, for the reality is that everything around you in the heavens and the earth also had the freedom of choice. The only difference is that the heaven, the earth, and the mountains made their choice on one occasion and then extended that all-inclusive choice to cover all the individual details that came later. For proof of that, read Allah's words: 'Indeed, we offered the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, and they declined to bear it and feared it; but man [undertook to] bear it. Indeed, he was unjust and ignorant.' (*al-Ahzab*: 72)

So, the inanimate objects of this world chose in the beginning of the affair to be compelled by the Will of Allah *Glorified is He* and refused to bear that trust. But as for man, he bore it and said, 'By means of my mind, I am able to choose between the alternative paths.' But it escaped his notice that he was only taking into account the time of taking on the trust and not the time of paying it back. Neither was he taking into account all the accidents that would befall him as well as all the appetites, whisperings of Satan (Iblis) and so on. It is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* describes man as being most wrongdoing and most ignorant - i.e. doing the most wrong towards himself and being the most ignorant of the consequences.

The guidance which the True Lord *Glorified is He* laid out for man was general, one which was laid out for believers and disbelievers alike. Allah

Glorified is He guided everyone to the path of good and left everyone with the freedom to choose. Some of them chose their base appetites in this world, seeking maximum thrill and excitement now and damn the consequences later, while others reflected carefully upon this guidance and found it to be backed by a miracle. That miracle broke the basic laws of existence. So it was a guidance that had come from an All Knowing, All-Powerful being - it was Allah *Glorified is He* Most-High who chose this guidance for the good of creation.

Man, generally speaking, likes what is best for himself. But people differ when it comes to their understanding of what is best. It is why Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And man supplicates for evil as he supplicates for good, and man is ever hasty.' (*al-Isra'*: 11) And why He says: 'I will show you My signs, so do not impatiently urge Me.' (*al-Anbiya'*: 37)

It is as if the True Lord *Glorified is He* were saying to man, 'Do not be impatient for your supplication to come true, but rather be content with what I have chosen for you. For your judgement and understanding of what is best for you is limited by your knowledge of what is best, and I have more knowledge than you - I know how you will receive that good and what effect it will have on you.'

It is why we say, 'We hear many people say, 'I pray and live my life according to Allah's Guidance, but despite that He does not answer my supplications'. To those people we say, 'That is because you asked for good according to what you understand is good, but your Lord knows better than you what is best for you. It is why He did not answer you.'

We also often hear mothers supplicate against their only children in moments of anger, saying, 'My Allah, let him taste your Fire. My Allah will bring me news of your fate.' By Allah, were Allah *Glorified is He* to answer her supplication, what would she then say about her Lord? So, Allah *Glorified is He* not giving you that which you ask for is sometimes the very thing that is best for you since He knows how foolish your supplication actually is. Allah *Glorified is He* is not a Lord Who is content for you to suffer the effects of that foolishness, and so He puts right the mistake that you made.

Another related matter is that a supplication may be for something which is actually good, but the one who asks may not have been compelled when he

made his supplication, but rather still had other means at his disposal. For the True Lord *Glorified is He* promises to answer the compelled when he calls on Him, saying: 'Rather, who is it that responds to the distressed when he calls out to Him' (*an-Naml*: 62)? So if you were truly distressed, He *Glorified is He* would give you what you ask because the distressed is one who exhausts all the means granted to him by Allah *Glorified is He* and whose strength proves insufficient to the task, so he takes refuge in Allah *Glorified is He* the Primary Cause. Most of us, however, call on Allah without being forced into a position where we are compelled to do so.

Now, let us return to our discussion of the guidance which Allah *Glorified is He* put in place to guide all of mankind. We say, 'Allah *Glorified is He* helps those who believe in this guidance and are rightly guided by it, and increases them, as He *Glorified is He* himself says in the Quran, "And those who are guided - He increases them in guidance and gives them their righteousness." (*Muhammad*: 17) But as for those who deviate from it and go astray, Allah *Glorified is He* increases them in misguidance and puts a seal on their hearts so that no belief can get in and no disbelief can get out. He *Glorified is He* is a Lord Who helps His servants to do what they want and increases them in the direction they choose.'

So, as long as there is freedom of choice when it comes to accepting or rejecting the guidance, there must be both right guidance and misguidance. The guidance attracts what is good and brings reward, while the misguidance attracts what is bad and brings punishment. Here, the True Lord *Glorified is He* makes it clear to us that misguidance is ascribed to oneself while guidance is ascribed to one's Lord and His guidance. Indeed, Allah *Glorified is He* has said elsewhere in the Quran: 'What comes to you of good is from Allah, but what comes to you of evil, [O man], is from yourself.' (*an-Nisa*': 79)

Before that, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Say, "All is from Allah."' (*an-Nisa*': 78) Why? Because He *Glorified is He* created two paths and then guided everyone. When you look at any action of yours, know that it is Allah *Glorified is He* who gives you the ability to do it, as He *Glorified is He* Himself says: 'To each [category] We extend - to these and to those - from the gift of your Lord. And never has the gift of your Lord been restricted.' (*al-Isra*': 20)

So, for example, Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who gives you the either tongue with which you utter the doctrine of monotheism or utter words that reject Allah *Glorified is He* - and we seek refuge in Allah *Glorified is He* from ever doing that. So, the tongue did not disobey you when it said this or said that. Who is the one who gives you that freedom of choice? Allah *Glorified is He* of course. It is why we say, 'Disbelievers do not disbelieve because they have been compelled to do so by Allah *Glorified is He*.' As for Him not being pleased of disbelief, that is another matter entirely.

As for Allah's words: 'Say If I should err, I would only err against myself,' they mean, 'You and I are the same in every respect, for misguidance comes about as a result of the wrong actions that the self commits - that is the source of all misguidance. As for right guidance that comes from Allah *Glorified is He*, it comes about as a result of following His Divine Guidance

The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* is just like his community when it comes to ascribing misguidance to the self, but differs from them when it comes to guidance: 'But if I am guided, it is by what my Lord reveals to me.' For the guidance came to him from Allah *Glorified is He* directly before Allah *Glorified is He* sent him a messenger bearing the message and before Allah *Glorified is He* revealed revelation from heaven to him. But as for the guidance of his community, it came about through the medium of the Messenger who conveyed Allah's Guidance to them and brought the miracle.

The guidance of the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* happened first when Allah *Glorified is He* chose him to be a messenger, and then Allah *Glorified is He* revealed His guidance to him so that he could guide the community.

'For Indeed, He is Hearing and near.' Hearing means that what is wanted of me and what hears my every breath. In addition to the fact that He *Glorified is He* hears me, He is also close by and does not take long to answer my supplications. It is obvious that Allah's actions do not need to go through a process and nor does He *Glorified is He* need to apply Himself. Rather, Allah *Glorified is He* simply says 'Be' and it is!

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* returns to the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* in order to console him, saying:

وَلَوْ تَرَىٰ إِذْ فَزِعُوا فَلَا فَوْتَ وَأُخِذُوا مِنْ مَّكَانٍ قَرِيبٍ ﴿٥١﴾

**[Prophet], if you could only see their terror!
There will be no escape when they are seized
from a nearby place [51] (The Quran, *Saba'*: 51)**

As for Allah's words: 'And if you could see,' the conditional clause is used many times in the Noble Quran, but many times you will notice that the answering-clause is left unsaid because of the context. The implied meaning here is, 'If you, O Muhammad, could but see the disbelievers when they shrink in terror on the Day of Resurrection, you would see something immense, something incredible that would set your heart at rest. It would be a fitting revenge for the way they denied you and stubbornly refused your message. This same message is also expressed in Allah's words: 'Have the disbelievers [not] been rewarded [this Day] for what they used to do?' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 36)

Those who oppressed and tyrannised others in this world and fought against the word of Truth, those haughty tyrants and their ilk, you will see them in the Hereafter, when they are overcome by their fear, as cats, kittens and rabbits.

As for Allah's words: 'but there is no escape,' they have no way of saving themselves, because it is possible for people to fear something and yet still be able to escape from it, or maybe for someone else to rescue them. But as for these people, they will shrink in terror without any possibility of rescue and without any escape or way out. So, let that heal your heart and the hearts of the believers who suffered harm along with you in the course of propagating the call of truth.

Just as they stood in the way of the call to Allah *Glorified is He*, so too, will they stand on the Day of Resurrection humiliated and degraded. Reflect on Allah's words: 'shall be made to stand before their Lord,' (*Saba'*: 31) 'when they will be made to stand before the fire,' (*al-An'am*: 27) and 'when they shall be made to stand before their Lord.' (*al-An'am*: 30) They will have to wait for permission to be granted them so that they can see what their intercessors whom they worshipped apart from Allah *Glorified is He* will say. But instead, they will be surprised by seeing their intercessors and leaders preceding them to the hellfire and the punishment, just as they preceded them to misguidance.

It is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'Then We will surely extract from every sect those of them who were worst against the Most Merciful in insolence.' (*Maryam*: 69) And it is why He *Glorified is He* says about Pharaoh: 'He will precede his people on the Day of Resurrection and lead them into the Fire; and wretched is the place to which they are led.' (*Hud*: 98)

In this way, Allah *Glorified is He* causes them to despair of being rescued because they were waiting for those intercessors and leaders to defend them, and yet there they are, preceding them to the punishment!

Each one of those places we have mentioned the disbelievers as standing in on the Day of Resurrection brings them humiliation and each one of them brings them terror. Indeed, every one of those places is itself a form of punishment. It is as if the True Lord *Glorified is He* were saying to His Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* 'If you were to see the places in which they stand and the terror they feel, your thirst for revenge would be quenched and you would know that We are fully capable of recompensing them in the way that they deserve.

The meaning of: 'and they will be seized' is 'made to perish: 'from a place nearby,' i.e. from the place they will stand in on the Day of Resurrection for the Reckoning. In other words, the True Lord *Glorified is He* did not leave them in ease and comfort, but rather took them from the Reckoning to the fire.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَقَالُوا ءَامَنَّا بِهِ ۖ وَأَنَّى لَهُمُ التَّنَاقُوسُ مِنْ مَّكَانٍ بَعِيدٍ ﴿٥٢﴾

They will say, 'Now we believe in it,' but how can they reach it from such a distant place [52] (The Quran, *Saba*': 52)

Glory be to Allah! After what they did to the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* and his followers, and after feeling great terror and being encompassed by the punishment, they then announce their belief, saying: "'We do [now] believe in him!'" This is almost exactly like the belief of Pharaoh, when he was on the point of drowning: 'I believe that there is no deity except that in whom the Children of Israel believe, and I am of the Muslims.' (*Yunus*: 90) And Allah *Glorified is He* responds by saying: 'Now?

And you had disobeyed [Him] before and were of the corrupters?' (*Yunus*: 91) This is a time when belief will not be of benefit to you.'

Here, the True Lord *Glorified is He* rejects their belief, saying: 'but how for them will be the taking [of faith] from a place far away?' How could they have belief now, when they are in the place of death or the place of resurrection?' Belief was close to them in this world, but as for now it is as far away from them as it possibly could be.

The phrase 'but how' has two meanings; one which indicates amazement as in it is astonishing and very strange that they should say this; and another that indicates the meaning of 'where', as in Zechariah's question to Mary: 'Every time Zechariah entered upon her in the prayer chamber, he found with her provision. He said, "O Mary, from where is this [coming] to you?"' (*Al-Imran*: 37) 'Where did this provision of yours come from?'

The master of a house should learn from this verse that when he sees one of the people of his house with something with which he did not provide them, he should ask them where it came from and how it made its way into his home. And that is a necessary precaution because that thing may be a sign of slipping towards disobedience.

So, Mary responded to this question: 'It is from Allah.' (*Al-Imran*: 37) In reply to that question, Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* said: '... Allah provides limitlessly for whomever He wills' (*Al-Imran*: 37). She drew the attention of Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) that when it comes to Allah's sustenance, things should not be measured by our limited powers. It is astonishing that some would have summer fruits in winter or winter fruits in summer. However, considering Allah's Might, nothing is impossible.

It was as if her answer reminded Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) of something he almost forgot. The moment he heard her answer, he thought to himself, 'Why, then, should I not ask Allah to give me a son even though I have grown old and my wife has always been barren. 'There and then Zakaryya prayed to his Lord, saying, "Lord, from Your grace grant me virtuous offspring: You hear every prayer"' (*Al-Imran*: 38). The answer he received from Maryam served as a reminder to him. Allah answered his call and gave him a son. He

sent down angels to give him the good news and confirmed it by telling him the name of the son he was to be given: 'Then the angels called to him as he stood praying in the sanctuary: That Allah gives you the good news of Yahya verifying a Word from Allah, and honorable and chaste and a prophet from among the good ones' (*Al-Imran: 39*).

Thus did Allah foretell him the future event he was to expect? The same happened with Companion Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him*. Before he died, he told the Mother of the Believers, 'Aisha concerning the particulars of those who would inherit him, 'There are your two sisters and your two brothers'. At that time, she only had two brothers, Abd Al-Rahman and Mohammad, and one sister, Asma' *Allah be pleased with her*. After Abu Bakr died, his wife, Bint Kharija,⁽¹⁾ gave birth to a daughter, making true the news told by As-Siddiq. He was not someone who knew the Unseen. Rather he was taught that news and made to speak those words by Allah Almighty; since the One Who knows what is inside wombs is Allah.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is narrated to have said to *Al-Ansar*, Medinan Muslims, 'My life is with you, and my death is with you'⁽²⁾. This clearly tells where he would die, but Allah says: '... and no one knows in what land he will die...' (*Luqman: 34*). The Messenger of Allah did not know the Unseen, but he was informed of it by the Knower of the Unseen Who reveals it to whoever He wills.

Allah gives this privilege to His devout servants. He would teach them news of the Unseen, whether of the past or the future. They would be given good news yet to come. Allah teaches those whom He chooses for that very special knowledge.

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- (1) *That was Habiba bint Kharija ibn Zayd Al-Khazrajiyya, the wife of Abu Bakr As-Siddiq Allah be pleased with him. She was the mother of Umm Kulthum Allah be pleased with her the daughter with whom she was pregnant when Abu Bakr died. He said, 'I do not think the womb of Bint Kharija is carrying anything but a female' and indeed it was so. She married Isaf ibn 'Uta ibn 'Amr after the death of Abu Bakr Allah be pleased with him. [See: Al-'Isaba fi Tamyiz As-Sahaba (8/48).]*
- (2) *It is cited by Muslim in his Sahih (1780), Hadith no. 86, chapter: Fighting in the Cause of Allah and Biographies, that Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said to Al-Ansar in a long Hadith, 'I am Muhammad, the servant and Messenger of Allah. I have emigrated to you for His Cause. My life is with you and my death is with you.'*

When people name their children, they choose names that bear good omens. Arabs would name a boy *Sa'id* (happy) or *Dhakyy* (intelligent), for example, in the hope that the child would indeed be happy or intelligent. However, no one has the power to make the name a reflection of the character of the person given that name. No parent is able to make his child exactly the way he wants him to be. When the one who gives the name is Allah, He alone does have the power to make the name a true reflection of the one who is named.

When Allah gave Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) a son and called him *Yahya* (Living), it was meant to foretell the fact that he would not taste death, for he would be martyred and thus his worldly life and Afterlife would be joined. Not many people paid attention to this meaning. If his murderers understood this fact, they would not have killed him. This meaning is reflected in the following poetic verses about Hamza ibn 'Abd Al-Muttalib *Allah be pleased with him*:

O Hamza, uncle of the Chosen One!

Master of all martyrs, excepting none!

Let martyrdom to you amply suffice!

It has spared you death and made you live twice!

So it is a fundamental fact about faith that Allah provides limitlessly for whomever He wills, a fact from which Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) benefited when he asked Allah for a son. So did Maryam (Mary); she too benefited from it when she later became pregnant without having been touched by a man. She remembered that fact and her heart found rest.

In the verse we are considering, the particle *anna* is used, which does not only mean 'how' but it also denotes surprise, for the thing wondered about is so far from possible. 'They will say, "Now we believe in it," but *anna* (how) can they reach it from such a distant place?' (*Saba'*: 52) When she was given the news of 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* Maryam (Mary) said: '... *anna* (how) can I have a son when no man has ever touched me?...' (*Maryam*: 20) Another example is found in the verse: '... *anna* (how) could Allah bring all this back to life after its death?' (*al-Baqara*: 259) Bringing a dead land into life can barely be visualized, but requires to be seen by the eyes for the mind to grasp. Have we not read the words of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*:

‘...“My Lord, show me how You give life to the dead,” He said: “Have you not believed, then?” “Yes,” said Ibrahim [Abraham], “but just to put my heart at rest.”...’ (*al-Baqara*: 260)?

Orientalists have attacked the aforementioned verse quoting Prophet Ibrahim's words to Allah. They wonder how Allah addresses the Father of Prophets with such a question: ‘... Have you not believed, then?...’ and how Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) replied: ‘... yes,... but just to put my heart at rest...’. Is faith anything but the heart being put at rest based on beliefs already established in it? In response to this, I say Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) certainly had faith that Allah can bring the dead back to life. He did not ask, for example, 'Does Allah have the power to bring things back to life?' He only wanted to be granted knowledge of the manner of doing that. This is why Allah showed him a practical sign and made him witness an actual physical experience of the process through the slain birds.

So Allah rebukes the disbelievers for professing faith at the last moment after they wasted numerous opportunities to accept faith at leisure and prove their sincerity. They wanted faith without responsibility, and how could they have that? This statement of theirs is just like that of their fellow disbelievers who said: ‘They will cry out loud in Hell, “Lord, let us out, and we will do righteous deeds, not what we did before!”...’ (*Fatir*: 37)

Then, Allah says:

وَقَدْ كَفَرُوا بِهِ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَيَقْذِفُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ مِنْ مَّكَانٍ بَعِيدٍ

They denied it all in the past, and threw conjecture from a far-off place – when a barrier has been placed between them and what they desire, just as was done with their kind before? They were deep in doubt and suspicion [53]
(The Quran, *Saba*: 53)

When faith was presented to them during their lives in this world, they rejected it. This world is the place for embracing faith and undertaking its responsibilities by committing oneself to divine commands and avoiding prohibitions. When death comes- let alone the Day of Resurrection- faith will avail nothing those who have disavowed it in their worldly lives. The disbelievers

made conjectures about matters of faith they had no knowledge of, hoping to arrive at their goal of being spared punishment. However, they were fruitless attempts made at the wrong time.

Whereas the disbelievers made false conjectures about faith, Allah has always made clear the truth: 'Say, "My Lord hurls the Truth down [before you]. He has full knowledge of all that is unseen."' (*Saba'*: 48) People's conjectures lead to misjudgements, which takes them away from the ultimate goal. Furthermore, we have no knowledge of the Unseen. We cannot predict the outcomes. As for Allah *the Exalted*, He has Omnipotent Knowledge and nothing whatsoever escapes Him.

Allah concludes the chapter by saying:

وَحِيلَ بَيْنَهُمْ وَبَيْنَ مَا يَشْتَهُونَ كَمَا فُعِلَ بِأَشْيَاعِهِمْ
مِّن قَبْلُ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا فِي شَكٍّ مَُّرِيبٍ

And a barrier shall be placed between them and that which they desire, as was done with the likes of them before: surely they are in a disquieting doubt [54] (The Quran, *Saba'*: 54)

What is it that the disbelievers desire? They desire to block the way of the truth before people, to abolish the call to faith, but Allah never gives them the power to do that as He says: 'They try to extinguish Allah's light with their mouths, but Allah insists on bringing His light to its fullness, even if the disbelievers hate it' (*at-Tawba*: 32). He also says: 'It is He who sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth to show that it is above all [other] religions, even though the idolaters hate it' (*as-Saff*: 9). They wished to continue to enslave the weak, usurp their rights and claim superiority over them. They feared Allah's Law would be an obstacle in their way, so they fought against the spread of His Message.

We have pointed out before that the first enemy of a person is his own self, even before Satan. A proof of this can be found in the following Hadith where Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'When *Ramadan* comes, the Gates of Paradise are opened; the Gates of the fire are closed; and

the devils are chained up.⁽¹⁾ Still, people commit crimes and misdeeds in *Ramadan*. If not Satan, what then incites one to do evil? Nothing but himself, It is as though Allah wants to expose wrongdoers who accuse Satan of insinuating every mischief. They claim he only leads them astray and is accountable for every wrong they do.

We have previously explained how one may differentiate between a wrong action insinuated by Satan and another insinuated by the self. If a desire to do a particular sin persists, it means the self is behind it. Craving a particular pleasure and not being able to dissuade yourself from it is a reflection that the self longs to attain it. When the self desires something, it is not contented with anything else. As for Satan, if he finds it difficult to push you to any particular act of disobedience, then he will try another. It does not matter to him what the sin you do is. His aim is to make you disobey Allah, regardless of the manner in which you do that.

In the verse under discussion Allah says: 'And a barrier shall be placed between them and that which they desire' (*Saba'*: 54). The word 'desire' indicates that whatever they wished of abolishing the call of Islam was a matter of personal desire, an appetite of the self, and Satan had nothing to do with it. Satan was already done with them after they shunned faith and declared disbelief. His mission was thus accomplished and he wanted nothing else from them. Whatever they did apart from that was insinuated by their own self. Their fighting to abolish the call and humiliate the believers stemmed from a desire to prevent the progress of their mission. They wanted to make the believers an example to deter anyone who probably thought of embracing faith. However, Allah set a barrier between them and what they desired, and whatever they did never impeded the progress of the call. All of those believers who were humiliated and tortured became even firmer in faith. Oppression never prevented anyone from embracing Islam. What the earliest believers suffered never frightened anyone who wanted to become a Muslim.

Some might wonder why Allah let the earliest Muslims suffer torture and humiliation by the disbelievers. Why did Allah allow His enemies to oppress

(1) Cited by Imam Ahmad in his *Musnad* (2/257), and Muslim in his *Sahih* (1079), on the authority of Abu Hurayrah

His devout servants and force them out of their homes? The answer is simple: Allah wanted to purify the earliest community of Muslims from hypocrisy. He did that for the higher aim is to differentiate those who truly believed from those who did not by testing their patience and perseverance. That early group of Muslims would have to bear the burden of delivering Allah's Message, so they had to be prepared for the hard mission. Allah chose for carrying the burden of the call those of His servants who would willingly sacrifice everything for His cause. That is why the earliest believers were sorely tested and deeply shaken. That was the purpose behind many of the early events, including the Night Journey and the trip to Tai'f. All were tests to purify the believers.

Seeing his Companions suffer, Prophet Muhammad thought of a way by which their lives and religion would both be safe. The only place he could find was Abyssinia, so he said to his Companions, 'Go to Abyssinia, for there is a king there who never wrongs anyone staying in his land.'⁽¹⁾

King Negus was exactly as Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had described him. He honoured the emigrant believers and refused to hand them over to the delegation who came from Quraysh to take them back. Prophet Muhammad rewarded him by entrusting him mediation to marry Him off to Umm Habiba *Allah be pleased with her*.⁽²⁾ Umm Habiba had emigrated to Abyssinia with her husband, but he converted to Christianity there. She, however, remained firm in her faith, which proved her sincerity and that she

(1) *Umm Salama Allah be pleased with her narrated, 'Mecca became too constricted for us, and the Companions were severely tortured; their religion was in danger due to the trials and tribulations they faced. The Messenger of Allah was under the protection of his people and his uncle, yet he was unable to protect his Companions, so he told them, 'In the land of Abyssinia is a king who wrongs no one in his land, so go to his land and stay there until Allah gives you relief and a way out of the situation you find yourselves in.' This is part of a long Hadith cited by Al-Bayhaqi in Dala'il An-Nubuwwa (2/301), and Ibn Hisham in his As-Sira An-Nabawiyya (1/321).*

(2) *She is Ramla bint Abu Sufyan, one of the wives of Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him. She was the daughter of Mu'awiya Allah be pleased with him and one of the most eloquent women of Quraysh. She was remarkable for her good sense and sound judgment. The Messenger of Allah married her after her husband became Christian in 7 AH after they emigrated to Abyssinia. She died in Medina in 44 AH at the age of 69, 24 years after the death of Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him. [Cited by Az-Zirikli in his Al-'A'lam 3/33]*

had not emigrated on account of her husband, but rather for the cause of Allah alone. Prophet Muhammad recompensed her by marrying her.

So the disbelievers wanted to inflict harm on the Messenger of Allah and the believers, but the outcomes of their plots were always unwelcome to them. They conspired against Prophet Muhammad to kill him, but: '...They schemed and so did Allah: He is the best of schemers' (*al-Anfal*: 30). Allah made all their efforts come to nothing, and His Messenger walked out right through the men who were waiting outside his home to kill him, scattering dust in their faces and saying, 'May the faces be disfigured.'⁽¹⁾ Allah also says: '...then We have covered them over so that they do not see' (*Ya Sin*: 9).

In this way, Allah set a barrier between the disbelievers and their desires. He rendered all their plotting against His Messenger futile. They even tried to use magic against him. They secretly asked Labid ibn Al-A'sam⁽²⁾ to cast a spell of black magic on him, by the aid of jinn he used. Allah also made their attempts with magic come to nothing, and they proved unable to cause any real harm to the Messenger of Allah or stop the progress of the divine Message. It was like a message telling them, 'Spare yourselves the effort. The Messenger of Allah is protected by Allah', which is clear through these words Allah addresses to His Messenger: '... Allah will protect you from people...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 67).

In the verse we are considering, Allah says: 'And a barrier shall be placed between them and that which they desire, as was done with the likes of them before...' (*Saba'*: 54). So that punishment was not specifically for the disbelievers of Mecca. The disbelievers of the previous nations also faced the same destiny.

(1) *This statement of the Messenger of Allah is narrated in the Hadith about his emigration narrated on the authority of Ibn Abbas and cited by Ahmad in his Musnad (1/368). Muslim also cited it in his Sahih in the Hadith about the Battle of Hunayn, narrated by Iyas ibn Salamah on the authority of his father =(1777). It is also cited by Ahmad in his Musnad on the authority of Abu 'Abd Ar- Rahman Al-Fihri (1/286), and is cited by Ad-Darimi in his Sunnan (2/219).*

(2) *Labid ibn Al-A'sam was a Jew from Banu Zurayq. He was a hypocrite who professed faith. He was a magician. Some Jews went to him and said, 'O Ibn Al-A'sam, you are the most skilful of us in magic. We have tried to bewitch Muhammad, but we have failed. We will pay you to cast a spell on him that will wound him', and they gave him three dinars. [See Fath Al-Bari by Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani (10/226).]*

The disbelievers at the time of Prophet Muhammad were taken by the same punishment that was administered to those of the previous nations, yet only in a different manner. As for the disbelieving peoples of the previous Messengers, Allah punished them directly sometimes by earthquakes, being swallowed up by the earth, destroyed by a blast, transformed into animals, etc.

Thus did Allah grant victory to His previous Messengers and those who believed with them? They were not entrusted to defend Allah's religion with their swords. As for Muslims, however, they were trusted by Allah to carry out this task, so they were the ones who fought for His cause. That is why Allah honoured this community. They were commanded to fight and defend their religion by themselves, so their enemies have not been punished in the same way as those who disbelieved before them. None of them was made to be swallowed by the earth or transformed into an animal, but they had to face the believers in direct confrontations.

When Prophet Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* despaired of winning the hearts of his people, he made a supplication against them: 'And Noah said, "Lord, do not leave any of the disbelievers on the earth— if you leave them, they will lead Your servants astray and beget only sinners and disbelievers' (*Nuh*: 26-27).

Contrarily, when an angel went down to Prophet Muhammad, offering to take revenge on those who denied his message, he said, 'No, I hope Allah will cause to spring from their loins people who say, 'There is no God but Allah'. Indeed, many of them did become believers, like Khalid ibn Al-Walid, 'Amr ibn Al-'As and 'Ikrimah ibn Abu Jahl *Allah be pleased with them all*. They had been among the fiercest enemies of Islam, but later became its victorious leaders.

It hurt Muslims that some of the disbelievers were let without punishment, for they did not know then that Allah had another plan for them: He was actually preparing them for carrying the burden of the Message. Khalid ibn Al-Walid became 'the unsheathed sword of Allah' and 'Amr ibn Al-'As one of the greatest leaders who conquered huge lands and presented Islam to their peoples. Let it suffice as a testimony in favour of 'Ikrimah⁽¹⁾ that he was the

(1) *He is 'Ikrima ibn Abu Jahl ibn Hisham Al-Makhzumi Al-Qurashi, one of the leaders of Quraysh both before and after he embraced Islam. Both he and his father were among the harshest enemies of Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him. 'Ikrima=*

son of Abu Jahl, who was one of the sworn enemies of Islam. When he was struck by a fierce blow during the Battle of Yarmuk, Khalid held him to his chest as he was dying, and 'Ikrimah said, 'O Khalid, is this a death that Allah and His Messenger will be pleased with?'

Even those who remained disbelievers actually served a good purpose in proving the truthfulness of the message of Islam. Take Abu Lahab, for example. He was the uncle of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. When the Prophet gathered Quraysh to announce the Message among them in public, Abu Lahab said to him, 'May you meet your ruin! Is that why you have gathered us?!' When the son of Prophet Muhammad died, Abu Lahab gloated over his misfortune, saying, 'Muhammad's line was cut off!'⁽¹⁾ He still had daughters, but the sons of his daughters would be attributed to their fathers, not to him, as a poet⁽²⁾ once said:

Mothers give birth to their children,
But only fathers give them names.⁽³⁾

= *became Muslim after the Conquest of Mecca. He took part in several battles and was one of the governors appointed by Caliph Abu Bakr. He was martyred at the Battle of Yarmuk in the year 13 AH when he was 62 years old [Al-'A'lam by Az-Zirikli 4/244]. According to Ibn Sa'd in his At-Tabaqat (9/408), 'He was martyred on the day of Ajnadin.'*

- (1) 'Ata' said about Allah's words: 'It is the one who hates you who has been cut off' (*al-Kawthar*: 3), 'It speaks about Abu Lahab and was revealed when a son of Prophet Muhammad died and Abu Lahab said, "Muhammad has been cut off tonight!" [*Ibn Kathir* 4/559] That son was not Ibrahim, for Mariya begot him the latter in Medina, not in Mecca. Most probably that son who died on that occasion was Al-Qasim.
- (2) He is Mohammad ibn Harun Ar-Rashid Al-Abbasi. He was given the title Al-Amin Al-'Abbasi and was one of the Abbasid caliphs. He was born in Baghdad in the year 170 AH. He was pledged as caliph after the death of his father (193 AH) at the bequest of his father. His brother Al-Ma'mun came to power two years after him. He was a courageous and well-educated man who wrote fine poetry. However, he was extravagant and a poor planner. He was criticized for wasting so much money on leisure and sitting around with drunk companions. He died in the year 198 AH [*Al-Mawsu'a Ash-Shi'riyya*].
- (3) These lines are part of a poem written by Al-Amin Al-'Abbasi, in which he says:
Do not belittle men who belong by birth
to Roman mothers or non-Arab black maids.
Mothers give birth to their children,
But only fathers give them names.
An Arab woman may be barren
And fertility may belong to a black woman.

It is amazing how Abu Lahab himself contributed to the prevalence of Islam almost as did Khalid or 'Amr! How was that? When he said to Prophet Muhammad, 'May you meet your ruin', Allah responded by the verses: 'May the hands of Abu Lahab be ruined! May he be ruined too! Neither his wealth nor his gains will help him: he will burn in the Flaming Fire— and so will his wife, the firewood-carrier, with a palm-fibre rope around her neck' (*al-Masad*: 1-5) Allah thus made it clear, while Abu Lahab was still living, that he would never embrace faith and is doomed to the Fire. Abu Lahab could have professed faith to prove that verse wrong. He had the freewill to do that, but he just did not do it. By that, he proved the truthfulness of the Quran and that it is indeed the Word of Allah.

Allah concludes the verse by saying: '... surely they are in a disquieting doubt' (*Saba'*: 54). They doubted that Prophet Muhammad would finally gain victory and that his Lord would never abandon him. They entertained that doubt even though they were in constant contact with the people of the Scripture who recited their Books to those disbelievers and. They even held their Scripture as evidence against the disbelievers and prayed for victory against them to be attained when the final Messenger- told of in their Scripture- came. The disbelievers declared enmity against Prophet Muhammad even though they had learnt that all the battles that were waged throughout history between Allah's Messengers and those who denied the truth always ended in favour of the Messengers. Allah would never have sent a Messenger only to abandon him and let his opponents defeat him.

This fundamental matter of faith has been mentioned in all the previous Books, just as it is mentioned in the Quran. Even though the previous Books have been distorted, the Quran is the remaining Book of Allah that He has guaranteed to preserve. It will be recited in the same way in which it was revealed until the Day of Resurrection. Allah says: 'We support Our messengers and the believers, in the present life and on the Day when witnesses arise' (*Ghafir*: 51). He also says: 'Our word has already been given to Our servants the messengers: it is they who will be helped, and the ones who support Our cause will be the winners' (*as-Saffat*: 171-173).

That is why we have said previously if Muslims are defeated, it means they have not met the prerequisite of victory; namely, total submission to

Allah and commitment to His Law. Allah would not grant victory to the believers so long as they disobey His Commands, or else Islam would not be truly established in the hearts and lands. What would be the use of obedience if Muslims were granted victory anyway? This is the lesson that we learnt at the Battle of Uhud. The archers did not heed the command of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had commanded them, 'Do not leave your positions whatever happens.'⁽¹⁾ Then, when they left their positions, the disbelievers rallied against them and almost defeated them.

Even though the disbelievers did not really gain victory at the Battle of Uhud, but neither did Muslims. If Muslims had been victorious despite going against the direct commands of the Messenger of Allah, they would have thought ever after that the commands of the Messenger of Allah were of little importance. They would have thought, 'We went against his commands at Uhud and still won'. Thus we cannot say that Islam was defeated then, but Muslims were when they abandoned its laws. As for Islam, it was victorious.

The archers were sure true believers, but they were in doubts about what would the outcomes be when they disobeyed Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Undoubtedly, they believed in Allah, that He is the Creator of all things and that Muhammad was His Messenger: 'If you [Prophet] ask them who created them they are sure to say, "Allah"...' (*az-Zukhruf*: 87).

Speech can be divided into six categories with respect to which of the different levels of certainty it represents. One of those levels is 'doubt'. Speech among humans started when Allah taught all the names to Adam *peace be upon him*. For communication to be made through speech, addressees have to be familiar with the language used by a speaker so they can get the meaning he intends to convey.

(1) *Ibn Hisham mentioned in As-Sira An-Nabawiyya (3/10) that Prophet Muhammad put 'Abdullah ibn Jubayr in command of the archers, a group that comprised of fifty men, and said to them, 'Use your arrows to keep their cavalry at bay so that they cannot attack our lines from behind. Whether we come closer to victory or defeat, hold your positions to ensure that we are not attacked from your direction.' Still, they went against the command of the Messenger of Allah when they saw that the disbelievers of Quraysh were being routed. They went down from their positions to collect the spoils of war. Khalid ibn Al-Walid, who was then a leader in the army of the disbelievers, noticed that, so he attacked Muslims and pierced their lines, safe from the arrows of the archers.*

Speech must have a message, a complete thought. It must convey a meaning. If one says, 'Mohammad', for example, this is meaningless, whereas 'Mohammad is generous' is meaningful. This statement, ascribing generosity to Mohammad, is based on a conviction of the speaker. If reality corroborates this statement, then we have a piece of information as well as evidence for it. This is 'certainty'. If this information is not certain, it therefore falls under the category of 'doubt'. Doubt implies neither affirmation nor negation, but it gives equal weight to both possibilities. If the possibility of its being true is greater, this is 'assumption'. In case the possibility of its being false is greater, this is 'illusion'.

So there are 'doubt', 'assumption' and 'illusion', and all three categories are subsumed under 'uncertainty'. As for the levels of certainty, they are three too. If it is a thing that corresponds to reality and can be proved, this is 'knowledge'. If it is held to be true or acceptable, yet cannot be proved, this is 'imitation'. To hold something to be true whereas neither reality corroborates nor a proof of it can be obtained, this is ignorance. So here are the other three categories: knowledge, imitation, and ignorance.

So the disbelievers were certain that Allah is the Lord and Creator of all things, but they had doubts with regard to Prophet Muhammad and whether what he delivered for them was truly the Message of Allah. That doubt was where their anxiety originated: '... surely they are in a disquieting doubt' (*Saba'*: 54).

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