

vol. [25]

REFLECTIONS

EL SHA'RAWY
الشعر اوان

فواطـر

المجلد [25]



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

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the chapter of

at-Taghabun

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

The chapter of *at-Taghabun*⁽¹⁾:

يُسَبِّحُ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ
وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١﴾

**Everything that is in the heavens and earth glorifies God;
all control and all praise belong to Him; He has power
over everything [1] (The Quran, *at-Taghabun*: 1)**

Here, Allah *the Almighty* states a fact that the human being is not aware of, that is, the earth which we walk on and which He *the Almighty* has made subservient to us is glorifying Him *Glorified is He* the heavens that are above us and shelter us and which He *the Almighty* holds from falling upon the earth are also glorifying Him *the Almighty*. So, why does the human being deviate from this matter and does not glorify and exalt Him, Who is above all imperfections, and do like what the inanimate things do?

The human being thinks that such inanimate things are totally senseless, while this is not the truth. They do not glorify Allah *the Almighty* temporarily, but rather, they permanently glorify Him. That is why He *the Almighty* uses here

(1) The number of verses of this chapter in question is 18. Scholars differed on whether it was revealed in Mecca or Medina. In his *Tafsir*, As-Sam‘ani says, ‘Most of the scholars say it was revealed in Medina.’ Ad-Dahhak said it was revealed in Mecca. Al-Kalbi said it is both Meccan and Medinan, which means that some of its verses were revealed in Mecca and some others were revealed in Medina. It was revealed after the chapter of *at-Tahrim*. It is chapter number 64 of the Quran. It is the last chapter that begins with a glorification for Allah. See *As-Sam‘ani, Tafsir Al-Quran*, 5/448

the present tense,⁽¹⁾ which means that their glorification for Him *the Almighty* started in the past, is happening in the present time and will continue in the future.

The heavens and the earth are part of the vast universe which we know little about its secrets and facts. The heavens and earth are under the control and Power of Allah *the Almighty* so they obey His Orders. Even if the human being cannot understand the nature of this glorification made by what is in the heavens and the earth and how it can be done, s/he can realise it as a practical glorification, i.e. when the heavens rain, this rain can be considered as a glorification for Allah *the Almighty* as they obeyed His Order to rain on His servants. As for the glorification of the earth, it is clear in the fact that it produces various kinds of plants.

What about you, O man? What do you do?! You rebel against Allah *the Almighty* and disobey His Orders. You are not like what is in the heavens in their glorification for Allah *the Almighty* nor like what is on earth in their submission to Him and in their bringing benefit for people. Allah *the Almighty* talks about this obedience of the heavens and the earth, saying: 'Then He directed Himself to the heaven and it is a vapour, so He said to it and to the earth: Come both, willingly or unwillingly. They both said: We come willingly.' (*Fussilat*: 11)

So, you who believe in Allah *the Almighty* as your Lord shall glorify Him, as all the universe does. You should never think that you can escape from His Dominion. That is why He *the Almighty* then says: '...all control and all praise belong to Him.' (*at-Taghabun*: 1) This means that you and whatever you own is the property of Allah *the Almighty* and that He has the Power over you. He is the Only Owner of the Kingdom. In the worldly life, He *the Almighty* made things belong to people according to their efforts, but in the Hereafter no one will have any control. In this connection, He *the Almighty* says: 'To whom belongs the kingdom this day? To Allah, the One, the Subduer (of all).' (*Ghafir*: 16) Also, He *the Almighty* says elsewhere in the Quran: 'Say, "Allah, holder of all control"...' (*Al-Imran*: 26). No one has control over things

(1) The present tense in Arabic Language refers to an act that started in the past, still continuing in the present time, and will continue in the future as well.

except Allah *the Almighty*. The control we have over things is not obtained by ourselves because if so, no one would be able to take it from us, and we would never lose it.

Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who gives control to whomever He wants. He is the Grantor of sovereignty, power, and authority. No one, even the tyrant, can force Him *the Almighty* to do something. That is why He *Glorified is He* says elsewhere in the Quran: ‘Say, “Allah, holder of all control, You give control to whoever You will and remove it from whoever You will; You elevate whoever You will and humble whoever You will. All that is good lies in Your Hand: You have power over everything.”’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 26)

It is necessary to know that there is a difference between ‘ownership’ and ‘sovereignty’. Everyone has something which s/he owns such as clothes, pen, or the furniture of his/her house. Such things are called possessions, whereas ‘sovereignty’ means to have control over those who have ownership. Allah *the Almighty* has given sovereignty to some human beings over others. First, He *the Almighty* gave them ownership of some items, and then He gave sovereignty to others over them. Allah *the Almighty* removes sovereignty from one and gives it to another in order to avoid monotony. He has the real sovereignty; He grants from His sovereignty to whomever He wills. However, the king and what lies in his sovereignty are controlled by Allah *the Almighty* since He is Ever Watchful over His creatures. No one gets out of His control.

Allah *the Almighty* has the everlasting sovereignty of the worldly life and the Hereafter. Since there is sovereignty in the worldly life, He *Glorified is He* grants part of it to His creatures, a fact which is clear in His saying: ‘...because Allah had given him the kingdom...’ (*al-Baqara*: 258). He *the Almighty* also says in another verse: ‘...You give control to whoever You will and remove it from whoever You will...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 26). So, it is clear that sovereignty is for Allah *the Almighty* and that He gives it to His creatures in the worldly life for certain reasons. However, in the Hereafter, sovereignty will be removed from everyone except Allah *the Almighty*; even the human being’s control over his/her senses will be taken away from him/her that his/her senses will testify against him/her, saying what s/he did in the worldly life.

The fact that all-sovereignty belongs only to Allah *the Almighty* ensures that the components of life on earth are sustained; the air will not be cut one day; the sun, the moon and the earth will never refuse to serve you one day because they are controlled by Allah *the Almighty*. No one shares their sovereignty with Him, and so no one can prevent you from them. They are guaranteed to serve you all the time, so do not worry about them. This is because the sovereignty of the heavens, the earth, and that which is on, inside, and between them all belong to Allah *the Almighty* Alone. In this regard, He says: 'Do you not see that Allah drives along the clouds, then gathers them together, then piles them up, so that you see the rain coming forth from their midst? And He sends down of the clouds that are (like) mountains wherein is hail, afflicting there with whom He pleases and turning it away from whom He pleases; the flash of His lightning almost takes away the sight.' (*an-Nur*: 43)

When Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Do not think those who rejoice for what they have done and love that they should be praised for what they have not done—so do by no means think them to be safe from the chastisement, and they shall have a painful chastisement.' (*an-Nur*: 188) This threatening will be achieved since no one can escape from Him out of the ultimate fact that He *the Almighty* is the Owner of the heavens and the earth. When He promises, He is Fully Able to execute what He has promised, thus no one will escape from Him. We live within His dominion; the sky is above us and the earth holds us. Both are the possessions of Allah *the Almighty* so where will you go?

Allah's Omnipotence is manifested in the issue of reproduction. He *the Almighty* says: 'To Allah is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth; He creates what He pleases; He grants to whom He pleases daughters and grants to whom He pleases sons. Or He makes them of both sorts, male and female; and He makes whom He pleases barren...' (*ash-Shura*: 49-50). He *the Almighty* has the Absolute Power to create whatever He wills. So, He *the Almighty* willed to divide people into the four logical categories, as follows: whether to create them from both parents, or to create a human being without two parents, like Adam, or to create a being from the male only, like Eve, or to create through the female only like Jesus *peace be upon him*.

The heavens and the earth are the place where all creatures, including the constellations, the sun, the planets, the moon, the stars, the air, the clouds, water,

the animals, and the human beings, exist. The earth is the bottom dominion which we see, and which upon it exist food, animals and the human beings. The heavens with all of their components represent the higher dominion; they both are the Possessions of Allah *the Almighty*. He is the Supreme Owner of everything and owns even the owners of things. No creature can avert from His Will. As for the worldly life, He *the Almighty* made its means of sustenance under the control of people; for instance, the provision of one human being is under the control of another. He *the Almighty* also has made some of us take control of the affairs of others; for instance, someone owns the food, while another owns clothes.

However, not every owner is sovereign because the sovereign is the one who owns the owners. This is a Divine Law in the universe. By contrast, in the Hereafter, there is One Sovereign Who has control over the Day of Judgment. He *the Almighty* owns the whole universe which is composed of various elements. The first element is the servant which is not served, namely, the inanimate objects, including water, mountains, iron, the sun, the moon and the stars, etc. All of these are inanimate objects since they have no senses. Such inanimate objects serve first the plants; the plants then serve the animals and finally the animals serve the human being. Thus, the inanimate objects are servants for all the superior elements: the plants, animals and the human being. The plants serve their superior elements as well which are animals and the human being, while the animals serve their superior element which is the human being.

So, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...all control and all praise belongs to Him...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 1). Whenever you hear the word ‘praise’, you have to understand that it is the word of glorification, commendation and gratitude. Praise is something innate that we direct to Allah *the Almighty* since He has provided each one of us with His Provision, as He *Glorified is He* is the Provider of Graces. Due to His Mercy, He *the Almighty* has made thanking Him in these words: ‘Praise be to Allah.’ By contrast, when you want to thank someone for a favour s/he did for you, you may spend long hours eliciting the words of gratitude and praise, removing, and adding and asking people about their opinions until you figure out a poem or a letter full of praise and gratitude. Thus, due to His Mercy, Allah *the Almighty* has taught us the way of praising Him. If He had left the matter without specifying these words, it would have

been challenging for people to find the appropriate expression to praise Him for His Divine Perfection.

No matter how eloquent and fluent people are, they fail to come up with a praise formula appropriate for the Sublimity of Allah, the Provider. How do we praise Allah *the Almighty* while the mind is unable to realise His Omnipotence, count His favours or comprehend His Mercy? Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* depicts the human failure to thank the Divine Perfection of Allah *the Almighty* saying, 'I cannot enumerate Your praises as You praise Yourself.'⁽¹⁾

Allah *the Almighty* makes all people equal through these words of praise; the illiterate who does not read or write expresses his/her gratitude through these words like all other people. As Allah *the Almighty* is All Just, He wants to make all His worshipers equal using one praise formula. The first words in the Quran are: 'All praise belongs to the Lord of the Worlds.' (*al-Fatiha*: 2) Before He created us, Allah *the Almighty* had created all the favours due for praise; He created the heavens and the earth; He provided us with water and air and placed on earth its sustenance until the Day of Judgment.

This is a favour which deserves praising because Allah *the Almighty* created His favours even before He created mankind. So, when He *the Almighty* created the human being, His favours were already there receiving him/her. Moreover, He created Adam, father of all mankind, after He had created paradise wherein he lived without fatigue or misery. So, He *the Almighty* is praised because all that is praiseworthy is actually found in the universe, even before the existence of mankind. He created in this universe what supports the human being without effort or submission; however, the human being is unable to provide him/herself with these favours which Allah *the Almighty* offers without efforts. The sun gives warmth and life to the earth without compensation or effort by the humans; the rain is sent down from the heavens without effort or ability to bring it down; and the air is there surrounding you everywhere in

(1) 'Aisha Allah be pleased with her said, 'One night I missed the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* from bed so I felt for him with my hand and I put my hand on his feet and he was prostrating and saying, "I seek refuge in Your Pleasure from Your Wrath, in Your Forgiveness from Your punishment and in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your Praises as You praise Yourself."' See Muslim, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 1118; Abu Dawud, *Sunnan*, Hadith no. 879; and At-Tirmidhi, *Sunnan*, Hadith no. 3493.

order to breathe with no effort or ability; even the earth provides you with fruits as soon as you sow it and water it; the plants grow by the Will of Allah *the Almighty*. Meanwhile, the day and night rotate in order that you can sleep and seek sustenance for your life. You did not bring the light of the day, nor did you make the darkness of the night; however, you rest at night and work all day thanks to Allah's Omnipotence and without any interference by us. This necessitates due praise.

When you say, 'Praise belongs to Allah,' this carries meanings of gratitude that even fails to provide due thanks to Allah *the Almighty* Who is All-Perfect and Who is the Provider of All Bounties. These words are not only uttered through the mouth, they pass through the mind first in order to be aware of the Greatness of Allah's Favours. They then settle in the heart in order to be influenced by the Favours, and they finally move to the organs. Thereupon, the person stands up to perform prayers thanking Allah *the Almighty* with all his/her body shaking and trembling and with his/her eyes full of tears. Allah's return of our souls to us after getting up from sleep is a favour that deserves praising. If we stood up, this is due to the ability that Allah *the Almighty* has granted us. As a matter of fact, without this ability, we would not be able to stand up. This deserves praising as well. ⁽¹⁾

Any movement of the human being in this worldly life requires praise. So, the human being should praise Allah *the Almighty* constantly. S/he should praise Him *Glorified is He* for any harm striking him/her because what you, O man, think as evil may entail good in essence. You should praise Allah *the Almighty* for all conditions because His Predestination is good, whether you like it or not. It is good for you because you do not know, while Allah *the Almighty* perfectly knows.

(1) *Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him narrated that Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said, 'When any of you goes to bed, he should say, 'With Your Name, my Lord, I place my side and with Your Grace I will raise it up. If you withhold my soul [cause me to die], have mercy on it but if You let it go [let me live], guard it against which You guarded Your pious slaves.' And when you awaken, you should say, 'All praise is due to Allah Who healed me in my body, and returned to me my soul, and permitted me to remember Him' See At-Tirmidhi, Sunnan, Hadith no. 3401; see also An-Nasa'i, As-Sunnan Al-Kubra, Hadith no. 10636.*

Among the Most Beautiful Names of Allah *the Almighty* is the Praiseworthy and the Honourable; He, says: 'Indeed, He is Praiseworthy and Honourable.' (*Hud*: 73) So, He *the Almighty* deserves praise for Himself and for all that He does to His creatures; His Goodness and Benevolence are limitless. The Arabic word *Al-Hamid* '...Praiseworthy...' (*Hud*: 73) suggests two meanings: 'praising' and 'being praised'. So, Allah *the Almighty* is *Hamid* because He praises whoever obeys Him faithfully. In the same connection, He *the Almighty* is the Praised One because people praise Him for His Generous Favours.

Moreover, we praise Him *the Almighty* because His Destiny and His Knowledge of the unseen are concealed from us; He is the One Who protects us from the others, that is to say that we should praise Him *Glorified is He* since He concealed our fate from the others. If you knew what I hide in my heart, it might not please you; you might never forget that and thus harbour a bad idea about me. However, bad thoughts and ideas may pass through our minds and then we forget them, without even being known by others. If each one of us knew the unseen of the other, life would be exhausting. There is a popular saying, 'If you share all of your secrets, you will not bury each other.'⁽¹⁾ Therefore, one of the greatest favours of Allah *the Almighty* which deserves praise is that He *the Almighty* conceals the defects of people from each other.

Praise is also due to Allah *the Almighty*: 'And say: (All) praise is due to Allah, Who has not taken a son and Who has not a partner in the kingdom, and Who has not a helper to save Him from disgrace; and proclaim His Greatness magnifying (Him).' (*al-Isra*': 111) Allah *the Almighty* refrains from taking sons; He *Glorified is He* made all people, His servants, equal to each other. Yet, He *the Almighty* loves the most pious ones. Thus, all creatures receive Compassion and Mercy from Him *Glorified is He*.

In the verse in question of the chapter of *at-Taghabun*, Allah *the Almighty* says: '...all control and all praise belong to Him...' (*at-Taghabun*: 1) He also

(1) In his book, Abu Bakr Ad-Dinury relates that Al-Hasan Al-Basri said, 'I hear faint sounds and see no one saying, "(The manners of) People went while the (manners of) monkeys remained. If you share all of your secrets, you will not bury each other. You exchanged plates as gifts, but you did not exchange pieces of advice."' Al-Mubarrid says, 'If you share your secrets, you will find it heavy to bury each other.' See Ad-Dinury, *Al-Mujalasa Wa Jawahir Al-'Ilm*, 3/ 21; see also Ibn Al-Jawzi, *Gharib Al-Hadith*, 2/ 291.

says in the chapter of *al-Isra'*: '...Who has not a partner in the kingdom...' (*al-Isra'*: 111). This is also one of the bounties that require praising Allah *the Almighty* for can you imagine the confusion of the servants if there is a partner with Allah *the Almighty* in His Dominion? Which one should they obey and which one should they please?!

Thus, Allah *the Almighty* explains for us this matter by offering us the following example: He *the Almighty* says: 'Allah sets forth an example: There is a slave in whom are (several) partners differing with one another, and there is another slave wholly owned by one man. Are the two alike in condition?' (*az-Zumar*: 29) Allah's being One, without a partner, in His Dominion makes you feel reassured about His Command and Proscription because His Commands are certainly implemented and no one can reverse His Decision or even oppose Him. There is no other god who commands you to something contradictory to His command. Is this not a bounty for which Allah *the Almighty* requires praising?

Allah *the Almighty* never seeks the protection of anyone, nor does He seek the support of anyone. That is because He is *the Almighty* Who grants honour, Who is Self-Sustained and Who does not need anyone. In this regard, He *the Almighty* says: '...and Who has not a helper to save Him from disgrace...' (*al-Isra'*: 111).

The Bounties of Allah *the Almighty* that we should praise Him for are countless, but these three Bounties are at the top of them all, i.e. Praise belongs to Allah *the Almighty* because He has no child; Praise belongs to Allah *the Almighty* Who has no partner because He is the One God; and Praise belongs to Allah *the Almighty* Who is not so weak as to need a protector since He is the All-Dominant the Almighty and the One Who grants honour.

The word 'praise' in the verse in question indicates restriction, that is, the absolute and complete praise belongs only to Allah *the Almighty*. It is the praise that encompasses everything as He *the Almighty* says: 'All praise belongs to Him...' (*at-Taghabun*: 1). So, the absolute praise is confined to Allah *the Almighty* Alone. This Praise for Him *the Almighty* shall be continuous, so that He *Glorified is He* is praised forever and the servant keeps praising Him eternally. We are praising Him because He is glorified by all creatures, a fact which is clear in His saying: 'Everything that is in the heavens and earth

glorifies Allah...' (*at-Taghabun*: 1) He is far exalted over any similarity with His creatures and this is a bounty for which we should thank Him *the Almighty* and praise Him. We should also praise Him because there is nothing like Him *Glorified is He*.

He is the All-Powerful Who never becomes weak and the All Knowing Who knows all that is in the heavens and the earth. He is the All-Generous Who never becomes stingy, and the All-Omnipotent Who never becomes disabled. This is a great bounty that also entails extending praising for Him *the Almighty*. How would He support those who believed in Him if He were weak? How would He know the distressed among His servants and answer their supplications if He were not All Knowing? How can a God grudge giving bounty to His creatures?!

Thus, all the praise belongs to Allah *the Almighty* because He is exalted over any defect, as He says: 'He has power over everything.' (*at-Taghabun*: 1) Everything is subjected to Allah's Will and Power. He says: 'Do you [Prophet] not know that control of the heavens and earth belongs solely to Allah?' (*al-Ma'ida*: 40) Therefore, everything in the universe is possessed by Allah *the Almighty* and He does what He wants in His Possession. So, when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* emigrated to Medina, the Jews were possessing property and some religious and mundane knowledge. For this reason, they were the masters of Medina and started to scheme against him *peace and blessings be upon him*. Allah *the Almighty* has made Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* feel reassured that the Absolute Power in the universe belongs only to Him *Glorified is He* and that the Jews' sovereignty will not last forever because He *the Almighty* takes sovereignty away from whom He wills and gives it to whom He wills. As long as He *the Almighty* is the Only Sovereign, He can take from the Jews and from all the people in the worldly life what they possess because there is nothing that He cannot do and nothing can disobey Him, as He is the All-Powerful over everything. Thus, you should seek refuge in Allah *the Almighty* Who is the Supreme Creator and holds control over everything, thus nothing can dominate Him in His affairs. He is the Ever Powerful Who can give you or hold from you, and He *the Almighty* has Unlimited Power.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says:

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ فَنَكُمْ كَافِرٌ وَمِنْكُمْ مُؤْمِنٌ وَاللَّهُ يَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿٢﴾

**It is He who created you, yet some of you disbelieve
and some believe: God sees everything you do [2]
(The Quran, *at-Taghabun*: 2)**

To start with, we must receive the information of how we were created only from Allah *the Almighty* because He is the One Who created us, thus we must believe Him regarding this matter. In this vein, He *the Almighty* says: ‘I did not make them witnesses to the creation of the heavens and earth, nor to their own creation; I do not take as my supporters those who lead others astray.’ (*al-Kahf*: 51) No one had ever claimed that s/he had created the creation, which is one of the well-established facts about the universe. Allah *the Almighty* has created the universe and all that is in it, and as no one else had claimed that, then this creation is purely attributed to Him *the Almighty*.

If there were many gods in the universe, every one of them would claim he had created the universe. However, no one except Allah *the Almighty* had claimed this. As this is the case, then it is a well-established fact that Allah is the Creator of everything. In fact, no one in the creation can claim that s/he has created him/herself or anyone else. Thus, the matter of creation conclusively belongs to Allah *the Almighty*.

In the Noble Quran, Allah *the Almighty* mentions for us what is unknown about the creation. He says that He has created man from dust, and then from clay which later became black mud fashioned in shape, and then He breathed the Spirit into him. In this connection, He *the Almighty* says: ‘O people! If you are in doubt about the raising, then surely We created you from dust.’ (*al-Hajj*: 5) He also says: ‘Surely We created them of firm clay.’ (*as-Saffat*: 11) Further, He *the Almighty* says: ‘And certainly We created man of clay that gives forth sound, of black mud fashioned in shape.’ (*al-Hijr*: 26) Moreover, He *Glorified is He* says: ‘So when I have made him complete and breathed into him of My Spirit, then fall down making obeisance to him.’ (*Sad*: 72)

Thus, the Creator *Glorified is He* says that He has created the human being from dust which turned to clay and became black mud fashioned in shape and

then became dry clay, like earthen vessels, after which He *the Almighty* shaped him in the form of a man. Then He *the Almighty* breathed into him of His Spirit and thus he became a living human being.

These stages have not been witnessed by the human being or any other creature, but Allah *the Almighty* has put forward evidence for these stages by what we can see in the case of death; the soul, which was the last thing to be put into the human being, is the first element to depart from the body. Then, the body becomes stiff like dry clay similar to earthen vessels. Afterwards, it decays and the water inside the body evaporates and thus returns to be dust. What we see in the case of death and the stages of the decay of the bodies makes us fully realise the stages of creating man from dust, which only happened for one time in the case of Adam *peace be upon him*. Thereafter, Eve was created from Adam and, afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* has made the reproduction of the human beings through the water (sperm) of the man and the woman.

In this regard, He *the Almighty* says: 'The man should reflect on what he was created from. He is created from spurting fluid, and then he emerges from between the backbone and breastbone.' (*at-Tariq*: 5-7) In reality, this fluid, which is the sperm, has special characteristics about which Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Was he not just a drop of spilt-out sperm which became a clinging form, which Allah shaped in due proportion' (*al-Qiyama*: 37-38)?

Allah *the Almighty* creates either a male or a female from the sperm and gives them the ability of reproduction, a fact which is crystal clear in His saying: 'We have created man from an essence of clay, then placed him as a drop of fluid in a safe place, then he made that drop into a clot of thick blood, and made that form into a piece of flesh, and made that piece into bones, and clothed those bones with flesh, and later made him into other forms—glory be to Allah, the best of creators.' (*al-Mu'minun*: 12-14)

In this regard, it is narrated that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'A human being is put together in the womb of the mother for forty days, and then he becomes a clot of thick blood for a similar period, and then a piece of flesh for a similar period. Then Allah sends an angel who is ordered to write four things. He is ordered to write down his (i.e. the new

creature's) deeds, his livelihood, his (date of) death, and whether he will be blessed or wretched (in religion). Then the soul is breathed into him.'⁽¹⁾

Thus, the first stage of creation of the human being is the sperm which is spurted out of the man into the womb of the woman. This fluid is called the 'spermatozoon,' which carries, as the modern science has proved, the characteristics of either femaleness or maleness. Thus, the woman has nothing to do with determining the gender of the foetus. This seems to refer to women's mission as a source of serenity for the man, just as the ovum receives the spermatozoon and embraces it so that the development of the human being's creation completes.

The sperm-drop of the man mixes with woman's water to form what we call 'a clot of thick blood'. This happens when the sperm-drop attaches to the uterine wall after forty days. The embryologists call this clot of thick blood 'zygote', which refers to a fertilised ovum that starts to take its nourishment from it.

With regard to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...and made that form into a piece of flesh...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 14), it means that out of this 'clot of thick blood,' Allah *the Almighty* then creates a piece of flesh which is proportional to the piece that can be chewed. In Arabic, the word *Mudgha* (piece of flesh) means a mixture of many kinds of food chewed together, as when one eats, for instance, a piece of meat with a spoon of a vegetable salad and a spoon of rice, which all finally turn into a mixture by chewing them together.

As far as the creation of the human being is concerned, the piece of flesh is either shaped or unshaped; the shaped one forms the limbs and the organs of the human being, while the unshaped one repairs what is damaged of the human body. For example, when an injury or any other form of disorder happens to the human being, the unshaped piece of flesh does its part to repair the body. So, the shaped piece of flesh forms the limbs and the organs whilst

(1) *This Hadith is narrated by Al-Bukhari, Muslim, Ahmad and Al-Bayhaqi on the authority of 'Abdulah ibn Mas'ud Allah be pleased with him. See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 3208, 3332 and 6594; Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 6893; Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 3624 and 4091; and Al-Bayhaqi, As-Sunnan Al-Kubra, Hadith no. 15819 and 21816*

the unshaped one serves as the balance put in the body to maintain it and compensate for any disorder that happens to the shaped limbs.

This piece of flesh remains for another forty days and then the fashioning of the human being takes place in the womb. This stage is concerned with creating the substance from which the human being will be fashioned in a specific form that differs with regard to the gender, male or female; the colour of the skin be it white, black, brown or red; and the stature, be it short or tall. These are the distinctive features that the created beings will have.

After the completion of the human being's formation, Allah *the Almighty* sends an angel who is ordered to write down the new creature's deeds, livelihood, date of death, and whether s/he will be blessed or wretched in religion. Then the soul is breathed into it.

Being wretched or blessed in religion is predestined for the one who is so described according to Allah's Eternal Knowledge. He *the Almighty* perfectly knows whether the new creature will be blessed or wretched and also knows for certain where and when s/he will be, which is beyond the ability of the doctors and researchers in the present and in the future.

In this verse in question, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'It is He Who created you...' (*at-Taghabun*: 2). Here, He *the Almighty* uses the demonstrative pronoun 'Who' after the third person pronoun 'He', in order to confine the act of creating the human beings to Himself, and to emphasise that no other creature has created them. This fact has been mentioned twenty-eight times in the Quran. For example, He *the Almighty* says: 'He it is Who created for you all that is in the earth...' (*al-Baqara*: 29); 'He it is Who shapes you in the wombs as He likes...' (*Al-Imran*: 6); 'He it is Who made the sun a shining brightness and the moon a light.' (*Yunus*: 5) In addition, He *the Almighty* says: 'He it is Who sends down water from the cloud for you; it gives drink, and by it (grow) the trees upon which you pasture.' (*an-Nahl*: 10) He further says: 'Say: He it is Who brought you into being and made for you the ears and the eyes and the hearts: little is it that you give thanks.' (*al-Mulk*: 23)

Here arises a question, which is, 'If all the creation were created by Allah *the Almighty* why does He say: '...so blessed is Allah, the best of creators...?'

(*al-Mu'minun*: 14) Are there other creators and Allah *the Almighty* is the best one among them all?' We respond to that question by stating that Allah *the Almighty* has not prevented the human beings from creating things, but the creation of Allah *the Almighty* is better than theirs, as He creates out of nothing, while they create from something already existent. He *the Almighty* creates His creatures and endows them with life and ability of multiplication, but the human beings, on the contrary, create something bereft of life and development. Moreover, the human beings do not create something out of nothing; rather, they compose something from existing substances; therefore, they use substances already created by Allah *the Almighty* to create something. Furthermore, what is created by the human beings remains in the same condition without reproduction, development, or sensibility, whereas the Great Creator, Allah *the Almighty* creates out of nothing.

So, Allah *the Almighty* has willed to bestow out of His Bounty on His servants by giving them the attribute of creating, but what they create is totally different from His Creation. He *the Almighty* has created Adam and brought his offspring into existence out of him. On the contrary, the human beings may make some useful instruments and tools for their lives, but, unlike Allah, they do not create out of nothing; they create from what is existent and their creation remains fixed in the same condition.

For this reason, those who believed in the divinity of Jesus *peace be upon him* thought that his creation of the birds from clay is evidence for his divinity. By so doing, they have committed a fatal mistake and have gone far astray. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: '...I determine for you out of dust like the form of a bird, then I breathe into it and it becomes a bird with Allah's permission...' (*Al-Imran*: 49). Thus, Jesus *peace be upon him* did not create the birds out of nothing, but rather from clay composed of dust and water, which are originally created by Allah *the Almighty* alone. Jesus *peace be upon him* only shaped from the clay a form like the bird, which is also created by Allah *the Almighty*; thus, his work is confined to shaping the birds. Afterwards, he *peace be upon him*: '...breathe into it and it becomes a bird with Allah's permission...' (*Al-Imran*: 49). This breathing of the spirit into the formed bird is not an intrinsic attribute of Jesus *peace be upon him*; rather, it is carried out with Allah's Permission.

If Allah *the Almighty* had not granted His Permission to make Jesus' breath the cause of placing the spirit into the shaped bird, it would not have become a living bird even if his breathing continued until the Day of Resurrection. Thus, Jesus' miracle of making a bird out of clay is carried out with Allah's Permission. Similarly, his healing of the blind and the leper and his bringing of the dead back to life are all carried out with Allah's permission. Thus, Jesus *peace be upon him* did not really create the birds, as his role was simply confined to making the bird's shape out of the clay.

In fact, Allah *the Almighty* is the only True Creator, for He creates out of nothing. By contrast, the human beings can make things and shape them in the image of Allah's creation, but what they make is not really a creation. This is evident in the sculptures that an artist makes out of stones or clay in the shape of a camel or a bird, for example; s/he cannot breathe the spirit into them. Further, the human being can make a cup from purified, molten sand, but we have never heard of making a male and a female cup that produces other cups!

Allah *the Almighty* describes the human being as 'a creator' and respects his/her creating of something new out of something else, whereas He is the best of creators as He creates out of nothing. Further, He *the Almighty* has created living, developing, and multiplying creatures, but the human being only creates fixed things that remain in their original conditions.

Thus, with regard to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...I determine for you out of dust like the form of a bird...' (*Al- 'Imran*: 49) it is known that the human being can make the shape of a bird out of clay, but can we say that the human being has created a real, living bird? In other words, does the greatness stem from the act of shaping the bird itself? No, the greatness is embodied in bringing life to it, which is only done by Allah *the Almighty*. That is why Jesus *peace be upon him* said: '...I breathe into it and it becomes a bird with Allah's permission...' (*Al- 'Imran*: 49).

Then, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'It is He Who created you, yet some of you disbelieve, and some believe.' (*at-Taghabun*: 2) After discussing the topic of creation, scholars discussed the question of whether or not Allah *the Almighty* has created the believer and the disbeliever as such; in other words, is the human being coerced and compelled to be a disbeliever? If so, why does

Allah *the Almighty* punish him/her and throw him/her eternally in the hellfire? Some people understood from this verse that Allah *the Almighty* has destined a person to be a believer, while in his/her mother's womb and, similarly, He has destined the disbeliever to be as such while in his/her mother's womb. They cited the Hadith of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in which he said, 'Allah has created Pharaoh in his mother's womb as a disbeliever and created John in his mother's womb as a believer.'⁽¹⁾ They also cited Messenger Muhammad's saying, 'By Allah other than Whom there is no God, certainly, one of you will definitely perform the deeds of the people of paradise until there is not between him and paradise except an arm's length and then what has been recorded will overtake him and he shall perform the deeds of the people of hell and enter it. And, certainly, one of you will definitely perform the acts of the people of hell until there is not between him and hell except an arm's length and then what has been recorded will overtake him and he shall perform the deeds of the people of paradise and enter it.'

The verse in question and these Hadiths do not give the meaning mistakenly understood by some people, which is that the servant is compelled to do his/her actions and has no choice but to do them, like a piece of paper facing a violent storm. However, creating Pharaoh in his mother's womb as a disbeliever, does not mean that Allah *the Almighty* has compelled him to disbelieve or that He *the Almighty* has predestined that for him. The fact is that He *the Almighty* has created him as a disbeliever according to His Eternal Knowledge that he, i.e. Pharaoh would not believe and would die as a disbeliever. If He *the Almighty* has compelled Pharaoh to disbelieve, why has He sent Moses *peace be upon him* to him and has given him the chance to believe? However, Allah *the Almighty* eternally knows that Pharaoh would disbelieve and claim divinity.

For this reason, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'What has been recorded will overtake him,' which means that what

(1) In his *Tafsir*, As-Suyuti narrates this Hadith on the authority of Ibn Mas'ud Allah be pleased with him. He ascribes it to Ibn 'Uday, Ad-Daraqutni, Al-Bayhaqi and Ibn 'Asakir. Furthermore, it is narrated by Al-Bayhaqi and Ibn 'Uday. See As-Suyuti, *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur*, 3/529; see also Al-Bayhaqi, *Al-Qada' Wa Al-Qadar*, 1/80; and Ibn 'Uday, *Al-Kamil Fi Du'afa' Ar-Rijal*, 8/277

Allah *the Almighty* has recorded, according to His eternal Knowledge, in the Preserved Tablet about what would happen until the Day of Resurrection and what the servant would do out of his/her own accord will overtake him/her, not what Allah *the Almighty* has compelled His servant to do.

Some other scholars stop in the recital of this verse at Allah's saying: '...created you...' (*at-Taghabun*: 2) then resume the recital with His saying: '...some of you disbelieve and some believe.' (*at-Taghabun*: 2) This means that Allah *the Almighty* has created the human beings with a true faith in Islam as Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Every child is born with true faith in Islam, then his parents convert him to Judaism or Christianity or Magianism.'

Thus, disbelief or belief comes from the human being him/herself; it is up to the servant to disbelieve or believe. Let us give an example to further illustrate this point. Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And Allah has created from water every living creature: some of them is that which walks upon its belly, and of them is that which walks upon two feet, and of them is that which walks upon four; Allah creates what He pleases; surely Allah has power over all things.' (*an-Nur*: 45) Therefore, He *the Almighty* has created all living creatures from water, yet their actions differ; some walk upon their bellies like the creeping creatures and snakes; some others walk upon two feet like the human being and the birds; and some walk upon four feet like the cattle, the cows, goats and sheep.

So, He *the Almighty* has created all of these from the same materials, but their way of walking is determined by their choice, as He says: '...some of them is that which walk...' (*an-Nur*: 45). Those who maintained this opinion were unaware that their walking upon their bellies, two feet or four feet is a sign of the perfection of their creation by Allah *the Almighty*. That is to say that He *the Almighty* has wanted to make the snakes and the creeping beings walk upon their bellies; the human being to walk on two feet; and the cattle and the lion, for example, to walk on four. All that He has willed come to pass. So, the way these creatures walk is not merely dependent on their will or independent choice.

At this point, all that remains to say is that the stance of the *Sunnites* is middle between the two previous stances: between *Al-Jabriyya*,⁽¹⁾ who maintained the Absolute Will of Allah *the Almighty* and that He has created His servants and also their deeds and that the servant has no choice or action, and those who maintained that the human being has an absolute will and that Allah *the Almighty* has created the universe and the human being, but then left them, that is, He has no Will over that of the human being. Both stances are wrong, as the sound stance is the middle between them.

The people discussed the issue of creating the servants' deeds. Let us, first of all, define the meaning of the 'deed'! It means to direct a power to do something. There is a power, for instance, in the hand that enables it to do good or bad; it does what the human being wants, such as hitting someone, carrying someone off the ground, or patting on an orphan's head. The limbs and its readiness to do good or bad are created by Allah *the Almighty* but it is the human being who directs them to do what Allah *the Almighty* has obliged him/her to do. This direction of the power is what the servant will be rewarded or punished for. Thus, you will be held accountable not for the creation of the actions, but rather for doing them, as Allah *the Almighty* is the Creator of the actions and you carry them out by your choice and will. The tongue, for example, has a created power to express what is in the soul; it enables the believer to say, 'There is no god but Allah,' and also the atheist to say – Allah forbid –: 'There is no God.' The tongue, created by Allah *the Almighty* does not disobey man in either case.

Thus, the human being's limbs are nothing but witnesses against him/her on the Day of Resurrection, a fact which is crystal clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Until when they come to it, their ears and their eyes and their

(1) *Al-Jabriyya* is a sect whose followers believe that the servant is compelled to do his/her actions and that s/he has nothing to do with it, to the extent that they believe that attributing the action to the servant is an act of disbelief. In their opinion, the servant has no control over his actions like someone falling from a high place or a palm leaf moved by the wind. They also maintain that the servant does not do an act of obedience or disobedience with his/her free will and that Allah does not burden him/her according to his/her ability, but rather, He overburdens him/her. Further, they hold that the servant does not create his/her actions and has no power over them. By so doing, they excused the disbelievers, the transgressors and the disobedient. See Al-Hakami, *Ma'arij Al-Qabul*, 1/372

skins shall bear witness against them as to what they did. And they shall say to their skins: Why have you borne witness against us? They shall say: Allah Who makes everything speak has made us speak, and He has created you at first, and to Him you shall be brought back.' (*Fussilat*: 20-21)

When we ponder over the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'It is He Who created you, yet some of you disbelieve and some believe...' (*at-Taghabun*: 2), we find that He *the Almighty* mentions the disbeliever before the believer, so what is the reason for this? The intended meaning here is to rebuke some people for disbelieving in Allah *the Almighty* even though He has created them and bestowed life and countless Bounties on them. The disbelieving group is the majority of people and that is why Allah *the Almighty* will say to Adam *peace be upon him* on the Day of Resurrection: 'Bring forth the group of (the denizens of) Fire.' Adam would say: 'Who are the denizens of Hell?' It would be said: 'They are out of every thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine.'⁽¹⁾ In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And very few of My servants are grateful;' (*Saba*': 13) He *the Almighty* also says: '...but most people do not believe.' (*ar-Ra'd*: 1)

With regard to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'It is He Who created you, yet some of you disbelieve and some believe...' (*at-Taghabun*: 2), we notice that the verse only mentions two kinds of people, namely: the disbeliever and the believer. It does not make mention of the hypocrites, the transgressors or the wrongdoers. The reason for this is that the position here is intended to talk about the creation of the human being: 'It is He Who created you...' (*at-Taghabun*: 2) and, then, the creation of the heavens and earth: 'He created the heavens and earth for a true Purpose...' (*at-Taghabun*: 3). The people are divided in this regard into believers and disbelievers, either believing that

(1) Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri narrated that Messenger Muhammad Allah's peace and blessings be upon him said, 'Allah, the High and Glorious, would say: O Adam I and he would say: At Your service, at Your beck and call, O Lord, and the good is in Your Hand. Allah would say: Bring forth the group of (the denizens of) fire. He (Adam) would say: 'Who are the denizens of hell? It would be said: 'They are out of every thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine.' Prophet Muhammad then said: 'It is at this juncture that every child would become white-haired and every pregnant woman would abort and you would see people in a state of intoxication, and they would not be in fact intoxicated but grievous will be the torment of Allah.' See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 3348; Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 554*

Allah *the Almighty* is the Creator or disbelieving in that. Accordingly, Allah *the Almighty* only mentions two kinds of people here.

Some scholars consider this verse an argument against those who maintain that there is a degree between belief and disbelief. Although we also believe that this article of faith is wrong, this verse has nothing to do with this. The verse talks about those who deny the Existence of Allah *the Almighty* and His Creation of the universe with its heavens, earth, human beings, jinn, and angels.

The previous chapter of *al-Munafiqun* exposes the hypocrites and discloses their secrets because they are included under the category of disbelief, as they inwardly disbelieve even if they outwardly claim otherwise. The hypocrites are even more dangerous than the disbelievers who declare their disbelief. For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Surely, the hypocrites are in the lowest stage in the Hellfire.’ (*an-Nisa*: 145)

Thus, the verse in question addresses two kinds of people: the believers who believe in Allah’s creation of the universe and that He is the Creator and the Originator. It also addresses those who disbelieve in that. It does not, however, address the article of faith of the degree between ‘belief’ and ‘disbelief’ because there are only two degrees with regard to belief in Allah’s Creation, that is, either to believe or to disbelieve in that.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...Allah sees everything you do.’ (*at-Taghabun*: 2) This means that He *the Almighty* sees our deeds and utterances, as the ‘doing’ includes both the deeds of the limbs and the utterances of the tongue. This part of the verse indicates clearly that every action carried out by the human being proves his/her belief, or his/her disbelief. As for the actions, Allah *the Almighty* does not compel anyone to do an act of belief or disbelief, nor does He *the Almighty* order anyone to do an act of transgression or injustice.

So, as for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...Allah sees everything you do.’ (*at-Taghabun*: 2) it means that He *the Almighty* knows our actions and that is why we should not think that there is anything hidden from Him or that someone can deceive Him, for He sees everything, not only what you reveal, but also what you conceal in your soul that no other human being knows about it.

In the same connection, He *the Almighty* also says: '...Allah sees the servants.' (*Al-Imran*: 15) Here, He does not say that He knows His servants because His Knowledge is pertinent to perceiving people's hidden beliefs. Therefore, He *the Almighty* describes Himself in the verse in question, saying: '...Allah sees everything you do.' (*at-Taghabun*: 2) This is because the sight is only used to perceive a movement or a conduct.

So, what does Allah *the Almighty* see from His servants? He *Glorified is He* sees the movements of His servants and whether they are in conformity with Islam or not. Overseeing a movement requires the existence of the Attribute of sight, not that of Knowledge. Describing Himself as seeing what they do signifies the stupidity of the wrongdoers because they did not even try to conceal themselves while committing their sins, that is, they made the act of sinning a visible movement. Thus, using the Attribute of sight is more expressive than the Attribute of Knowledge, as employing the latter may indicate that they feel ashamed so that they conceal their sins, but, on the contrary, their movements are obvious and visible.

One of the miraculous aspects of the Quran is that when Allah *the Almighty* talks about the hypocrites, He says: '...Allah is Fully Aware of what you do.' (*al-Munafiqun*: 11) The outward actions of the hypocrites are in conformity with the principles and the rulings of Islam. They, for example, pray and fast like all Muslims, and they are even keen on praying in the front rows in the mosque. Therefore, knowing about their real intentions requires the existence of the Attribute of Knowledge of Allah *the Almighty*.

On the contrary, the actions of both the believers and the disbelievers, whether good or bad, are clear and obvious to Him *Glorified is He* and that is why the Attribute of the All Seeing perfectly fits this context. Allah *the Almighty* knows the movements that the servant makes, whether they are acts of worship or sins because they are visible. He gathers between the two Attributes of Seeing and Knowing about the actions of His servants when He says: 'Your Lord is sufficient as Knowing and Seeing with regard to His servants' faults.' (*al-Isra'*: 17)

As a matter of fact, the Attribute of sight is one of the requirements of Divinity and that is why Prophet Abraham *peace be upon him* said to His father:

‘O my father! Why do you worship what neither hears nor sees, nor does it avail you in the least?’ (*Maryam*: 24) How can they worship a false god that cannot hear their moaning and sufferings and that cannot see anything due to its blindness? These are not the Attributes of the One worthy of being worshipped. Allah’s seeing of His servants does not mean that He *the Almighty* has an eye like ours; we should understand this fact within the context of His saying: ‘...nothing is like Him; and He is the Hearing, the Seeing.’ (*ash-Shura*: 11) Allah *the Almighty* can hear and see, but His Attributes of Hearing and Seeing are not similar to yours – Exalted is He over any similarity with His creatures.

Subsequently, Allah *the Almighty* says:

خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ وَصَوَّرَكُمْ فَأَحْسَنَ صُورَكُمْ وَإِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿٣﴾

**He created the heavens and earth for a true purpose;
He formed you and made your forms good: you will all
return to Him [3] (The Quran, *at-Taghabun*: 3)**

These verses continue addressing the topic of creation. First, they remind us about our creation: ‘It is He who has created you...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 2). Then, they talked about what is greater than the creation of the human being, namely: the creation of heavens and earth. In this vein, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘The creation of the heavens and the earth is certainly greater than the creation of men, but most of them do not know.’ (*Ghafir*: 57) The people were created from the earth, a point which is clear in the following Hadith of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in which he says, ‘Allah has created Adam from a handful which he took from the whole of the earth; so the children of Adam are in accordance with the earth: some red, some white, some black, some a mixture, also smooth and rough, bad and good.’⁽¹⁾

(1) This Hadith is narrated by Abu Dawud, At-Tirmidhi, Ahmad, Al-Bazzar and Al-Bayhaqi on the authority of Abu Musa Al-Ash‘ari Allah be pleased with him. See Abu Dawud, Sunnan, Hadith no. 4795; At-Tirmidhi, Sunnan, Hadith no. 2955; Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 19659 and 19597; Al-Bazzar, Musnad, Hadith no. 3026; and Al-Bayhaqi, As-Sunnan Al-Kubra, Hadith no. 18163

We have to express our wonder about the creation of the heavens and the earth. The human being should know what has been created for him/her, in order to find the evidence of the existence of the Creator in which s/he believes and to whom s/he bears witness that He is the only God. If the human being reflected on the creation of the heavens and the earth, s/he would be guided by his/her natural disposition to the fact that there is a Creator Who has created this universe in a precise and accurate manner. If s/he thought about the creation of the heavens and the earth, s/he would find that it is greater than the creation of mankind, for the universe includes the heavens, the earth, and what is between.

Allah *the Almighty* has created the heavens and the earth out of nothing, and no one should dare to ask how He has created them, as He *the Almighty* says in the Quran: 'I did not make them witnesses of the creation of the heavens and the earth, nor of the creation of their own souls; nor could I take those who lead (others) astray for aiders.' (*al-Kahf*: 51) So we have to take information about the creation from our Creator, Allah *the Almighty*. Some people said that the earth had separated from the sun and then it cooled; these are just unproved hypotheses because no one of them had seen the creation of the heavens and the earth. The saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...nor could I take those who lead (others) astray for aiders,' (*al-Kahf*: 51) applies to those people.

When we carefully reflect on the heavens and the earth, we become fully aware of the absolute precision of Allah's Creation. The heavens and the earth encompass the human being, the Vicegerent of Allah *the Almighty* on the earth. The human being came to this universe, with all its powers and laws, after Allah *the Almighty* prepared it for him/her. This was prior to the creation of man, so that s/he would find a universe subjected to him/her, and where nothing can disobey Allah *the Almighty*.

Allah *the Almighty* has willed to create the heavens and earth in Six Days similar to the days of our worldly life, even though He *Glorified is He* has the Full Ability to create them in a time less than a twinkle through His command: 'Be.' There is a difference between creating something and bringing the components necessary for that creation. When you think about the creation of the heavens and the earth, you will find it a very mighty matter. It is sufficient

for you to be baffled by the matter of your creation and formation, even though you are only one individual with limited space and a limited lifetime. What would you think then about the creation of the heavens and earth that came into existence before you and that will last after your passing away, until they split and the stars break with the Permission of Allah *the Almighty*!

Allah *the Almighty* veiled two matters from the minds so that the human being should not exhaust him/herself in looking for them. The first matter is how the human being was created, and whether s/he was an individual from the outset and then evolved. You have nothing to do with this matter, and so you should not involve in it with hypotheses that lead you to error.

The second matter is the creation of the heavens and the earth. You should not hypothesise that the earth was part of the sun from which it separated, then its surface cooled down and became frozen; these hypotheses are baseless and groundless.

No one has the ability to create the like of the heavens and the earth; they were not created according to any previous pattern, as Allah *the Almighty* says that He is: ‘The Wonderful Originator of the heavens and the earth....’ (*al-Baqara*: 117). This means that He has not created the heavens, the earth and all what they contain from any previous model, i.e. there had not been another heaven, earth, angels, jinn or human beings and then He *the Almighty* has created something similar to any of them in the shape, size or power; that is to say that He *the Almighty* has not resorted to what we call ‘the template.’

The one who makes a cup first makes a pattern in which the marble of the molten glass is poured and, eventually, the cups will be similar to each other. All the creations, apart from Allah’s, are based on making the pattern and then the production follows. For this reason, the true cost lies in preparing the good pattern or model that gives us an image of what we want. The one who bakes bread, for example, may not need a template, as s/he imitates someone before him/her; the shape of the loaf and its quality has been prepared before and s/he just imitates it every time. S/he, nevertheless, cannot give the similarity in the weight, the shape, or the roundness; rather, there is a difference in the imitation and there is no perfection in the product.

When Allah *the Almighty* creates the human beings from Adam, and up till the Day of Resurrection, He *Glorified is He* makes them similar in some features: in the form of the body, shape, head, legs, hands, eyes and other organs. They are precisely similar in the form and the function so that every individual carries out his/her mission in life. This similarity, nevertheless, has not been done by using a template; rather, through Allah's Word: 'Be,' without any previous model, as He is the Wonderful Originator and Creator.

The purpose of the universal signs of Allah *the Almighty* is to attract the creatures' attention towards His Wonderful Creation, and to convince them of the necessity of believing in Him. Through this wonderful universe, we came to know that there is a Creator and a power that provides and regulates it. Who provides the sun with this immense power? Who created it out of nothing and provided it with a power that comes from nothing? If you looked at the sun and asked yourself about how many generations enjoyed its warmth and benefited from it, you would not, for sure, know the answer because the sun was created before the human beings and everyone enjoys it and benefits from it for the period of his/her lifetime and then passes away.

Allah *the Almighty* tells us about the creation of the Heavens and the Earth, saying: 'Do those who disbelieve not see that the heavens and the earth were closed up, but We have opened them; and We have made of water everything living, will they not then believe?' (*al-Anbiya*: 30) The people before us did not deeply understand this verse, but we understood it when the scientists found out that the heavens and the earth were one entity and then Allah *the Almighty* willed to separate them and made of water everything living.

However, some scholars maintained that the heavens and the earth had not been joined together; they cited the following verses as evidence: 'The man should reflect on his food that We pour down the water, pouring (it) down in abundance, then We cleave the earth, cleaving (it) asunder, then We cause to grow therein the grain, and grapes and clover.' (*Abasa*: 24-28) In another verse, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'So We opened the gates of the cloud with water pouring and We made water to flow forth in the land in springs, so the water gathered together according to a measure already ordained.' (*al-Qamar*: 11-12) The intended meaning, according to these scholars, is that

the earth was closed up and then it was opened by the plants; and similarly, the heaven was closed up and was then opened by the rain. Thus, Allah *the Almighty* has cleaved the heaven with the rain and the earth with the plants that split it. We understand from this opinion that the split is not related to ripping the heaven apart from the earth; rather, separating each one from itself.

Allah *the Almighty* has created the heavens and the earth with truth so that the universe is constructed with truth, a fact which is clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘We did not create them both but with the truth, but most of them do not know.’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 39) ‘Truth’ is the established matter that does not change. All the matters of truth are consistent: Allah *the Almighty* is the True God; the creation of the heavens, the earth, and the whole universe was done with truth; the universe was originated with rightful Laws; and the Divine Laws of Allah *the Almighty* continue in the universe with truth. Further, Allah *the Almighty* has made His following saying one of the supplications of the believers: ‘Those who remember Allah standing and sitting and lying on their sides and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord! You have not created this in vain; save us then from the chastisement of the Fire.’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 191) Thus, He is the True God and the heavens and the earth were created with truth and their natural laws and systems were prescribed with truth. Thus, we have to receive Allah’s Bounty that He *the Almighty* has created for us in the right way because if someone dealt with it unrightfully, it would be calamitous for him/her.

Allah *the Almighty* is the Supreme Truth Who created everything with truth: the creation of the heavens and the earth, the running of the sun and the falling of the rain are all created with truth. Everything, whether static or dynamic, has laws prescribed by Allah *the Almighty*. Creating with truth means that the creation of the heavens and the earth was carried out with subtle and precise balance and that Allah *the Almighty* has set for them a fixed system that regulates their motion with truth and wisdom. The sun, for example, did not fail to rise one day so that we would say, ‘The sun did not rise on those people because they are wrongdoers.’ This does not happen because the sun has certain laws that regulate its motion, and it was created with established truth that does not change. As long as these cosmic creatures were created with

unchangeable truth, you can base your calculations on them and regulate your life according to them. That is why Allah *the Almighty* says: 'The sun and the moon follow a reckoning.' (*ar-Rahman*: 5) This means that they were created with a reckoning and thus Allah *the Almighty* has made them a means of calculation.

In this regard, He *the Almighty* also says: 'We were not playing a pointless game when We created the heavens and earth and everything in between.' (*ad-Dukhan*: 38) He has not created the heavens and the earth as a game; rather, He has created them with truth. As a matter of fact, there is a big difference between the truth and the game. The ones who randomly mess around with something may realise something by chance and then s/he or someone else uses it as a game.

On the contrary, Allah *the Almighty* has created everything with truth and thus He will not leave the people wandering without a purpose; rather, every action done by man is recorded and s/he will be held accountable for it on the Day of Resurrection. In this connection, He *the Almighty* says: 'Does man think that he is to be left to wander without an aim? Was he not a small seed in the seminal elements, then he was a clot of blood, so He has created (him) then made (him) perfect. Then He has made of him two kinds, the male, and the female.' (*al-Qiyama*: 36-39) Thus, we were not created in vain, without an aim. This fact is clearly mentioned by Allah *the Almighty* Who says: 'What! Did you then think that We have created you in vain and that you shall not be returned to Us?' (*al-Mu'minun*: 115) Had Allah *the Almighty* left us without any Reckoning, the deviated person, who satisfies his/her whims and desires in this worldly life, would have been more fortunate than the righteous one. However, Allah *the Almighty* could never deceive His servant who believed in Him and followed His Way of Guidance. In addition, He could never equate him/her with the wrongdoers and deviant people.

Allah *the Almighty* created the heavens and the earth and also created the sun and the moon and made them two of the Signs of His Omnipotence and of the Greatness of His Dominion. In fact, He did not create them in vain, but for a great Wisdom, which is stated plainly in the saying of Allah: '...that you might know the computation of years and the reckoning.' (*Yunus*: 5) Thus, nothing was created in vain; everything was created with truth.

Allah *the Almighty* does not show His Bounty on us by the creation of the heavens and the earth because they are the most wonderful creation, but because they are created for the people and subjected to their service. The whole universe is made subservient to the human being. Therefore, s/he should have searched with his/her mind about the One Who subjected all of that for him/her. S/he should have been guided to the One Who created the heavens and the earth and what is between them because He has not created them in vain or for playing but to serve the human being.

Then, Allah *the Almighty* says in the verse in question: ‘...He formed you and made your forms good...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 3). Here, Allah *the Almighty* refers to the formation of the human being in the womb; not the first formation of Adam from clay, and that is why He says: ‘...and made your forms good...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 3) using the plural form. He says in another verse: ‘He it is Who shapes you in the wombs as He likes...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 6). The formation of the human being in the womb means finding the substance from which s/he will be created in a specific form that differs in the gender, male or female; in the skin colour, white, black, brown or red; and in the stature, short or tall. Allah *the Almighty* shapes our forms according to His Choice for us and every formation has a profound wisdom and, subsequently, all of His Creation is beautiful. You should not think about your formation without taking the wisdom behind it into consideration; rather, consider every formation according to the wisdom behind it. Thus, what makes you say that so and so is ugly is separating the creation from its wisdom. So, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘O man! What has beguiled you from your Lord, the Gracious One Who has created you, then made you complete, then made you symmetrical? Into whatever form He pleased He constituted you.’ (*al-Infitar*: 6-8) Here, Allah *the Almighty* numerates some of His Bounties on the human being with regard to their creation in the best form, the perfection of their creation and making them symmetrical. The human being cannot doubt these facts when s/he reflects on his/her intellect, form, and perfection of his/her creation above the rest of Allah’s creatures. Allah *the Almighty* has not made the human being walk upon his/her belly or four feet, but rather, He *Glorified is He* made him/her upright. Not to mention the perfection of his/her subtle systems about which the scientists are still wondering and discovering its secrets.

Allah *the Almighty* also shows His Bounty on the human being when He says: 'Have We not given him two eyes, and a tongue and two lips.' (*al-Balad*: 8-9) The dominion and the creation belong only to Allah *the Almighty* and so is the formation of the human being in the womb, a fact which is clear in His saying: 'He shapes you in the wombs as He likes, no God but He...' (*Al-'Imran*: 6). In this context, the meaning of the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'No God but He...' (*Al-'Imran*: 6) is that Allah *the Almighty* forms the people while knowing that they will take on such forms because there is no other god to say to Him, 'I do not like this form and I will make another one.' This does not happen because the One Who forms the people is Allah *the Almighty* Who no one can overcome or prevent what He wants. All what He wants will come to pass, and everything He does has a profound wisdom behind it. With regard to His saying: 'He shapes you in the wombs as He likes...' (*Al-'Imran*: 6), someone may say, 'What about the deviant and unnatural forms?' But Allah *the Almighty* says to you, 'I Am the All-Wise and I have done so for Wisdom, so do not separate the action from the Wisdom behind it and consider both of them. Then you will find these forms beautiful.'

So, Allah *the Almighty* forms the people in the wombs as He likes. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* taught us how to recognise that fact in our prostration in prayer. He used to say when he prostrated, 'O Allah, to You I have prostrated and to You I have submitted, and in You I have believed. My face has prostrated to the One Who created it and shaped it well, and brought forth its hearing and sight. Blessed be Allah the best of Creators.'⁽¹⁾ Besides, he *peace and blessings be upon him* used to say when he looks in the mirror: 'Praise belongs to Allah Who has beautified my creation and my conduct and beautified me with what He deprived others of.'⁽²⁾

(1) 'Ali ibn Abu Taleb related that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* used to say when prostrating: 'O Allah, to You I have prostrated and in You I have believed and to You I have submitted, and You are my Lord. My face has prostrated to the One Who created it and formed it, and brought forth its hearing and sight. Blessed be Allah the best of Creators.' See Muslim, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 1848; Abu Dawud, *Sunnan*, Hadith no. 760; and At-Tirmidhi, *Sunnan*, Hadith no. 3421

(2) This Hadith is narrated by Abu Ya'la and At-Tabarani in the *Book of Supplication* on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas Allah *be pleased with him*. See Abu Ya'la, *Musnad*, Hadith no. 2611; and At-Tabarani, *Hadith* no. 402.

Allah *the Almighty* also says: ‘Certainly We created man in the best make.’ (*at-Tin*: 4) This means that He *the Almighty* with regard to the material side, created the human being in an upright form and in the best state. Further, He *the Almighty* wants man to remain in this fine state in everything, so if this Vicegerent violates the laws of his/her preservation, s/he undoubtedly makes Allah *the Almighty* angry as He *Glorified is He* wants His Make to remain beautiful as He has originated it.

As Allah *the Almighty* talks about the creation of the human being in the best form after talking about the creation of the heavens and the earth, He says in another verse: ‘Allah is He Who made the earth a resting-place for you and the heaven a canopy, and He formed you, then made goodly your forms...’ (*Ghafir*: 64). He has created the heavens and the earth and made the earth a resting-place, that is, a proper place for the human being to live on. He *the Almighty* also made the heavens a strong construction; He even holds it, lest it falls on the earth.

The creation of the human being and shaping him/her in such a form was addressed along with the creation of the heavens and the earth; this is conclusive evidence that Allah *the Almighty* has formed man without a previous pattern, as He wonderfully originated the whole universe. This fact refutes the hypothesis of those who believe in the evolution of the human being from an ape. How can we believe that an ape evolved into a man? Why did the ape of Darwin evolve, while the rest of the apes did not? Further, why did the rest of the apes not evolve into men so that the species of apes come to an end? What completely refutes Darwinian Theory is to understand the nature of evolution according to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘Of everything We have created pairs...’ (*adh-Dhariyat*: 49). This means that all the beings are originally created by Allah *the Almighty*; not a single species evolved of another one. Shaping the human being in this wonderful form constitutes honour bestowed by Allah *the Almighty* upon mankind. He *the Almighty* says: ‘Surely We have honoured the children of Adam.’ (*al-Isra*: 70)

The aspects of honouring the human being are numerous; s/he was honoured by the intellectual ability, discerning, the freedom of choice, walking upright – unlike the cattle – and the shape of the fingers and its symmetry in a

wonderful form that allows him/her to move easily while handling things and carrying out precise actions. S/he was also honoured by making him/her eat with his/her fingers, not with the tongue like some animals, not with the beak like the birds, and not with the trunk like the elephant. All of this is manifested in the creation of man.

One of Allah's Names is the Fashioner Who creates everything in a distinct form which no two species, kinds or even two individuals share; everyone has its special form that distinguishes him/her from others. Thus, the 'Fashioner' is one of the Most Beautiful Names of Allah *the Almighty* Who wonderfully originated and beautified the forms of the creatures. He *the Almighty* gave each creature its form according to His Infinite Wisdom, and likewise, He has formed men in the wombs of their mothers in different stages and forms.

Then, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'You will all return to Him.' (*al-Munafiqun*: 3) This means that to Allah *the Almighty* all people will return and no one will be able to escape, for the ultimate destination and the returning of the people on the Day of Resurrection will be to Allah *the Almighty* as He *Glorified is He* says: 'They said: No harm; surely to our Lord we go back.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 50) Allah *the Almighty* Who has created the heavens and the earth with truth, has not created the human beings in vain or in play. He has created them also with truth, as He says: 'What! Did you then think that We had created you in vain and that you shall not be returned to Us? (*al-Mu'minun*: 115)

Our belief in the ultimate returning to Allah *the Almighty* is the core of our belief because it entails belief in the Last Day and the Resurrection after death. If we will return to Allah *the Almighty* why then do we disobey Him and violate His Way of Guidance? If the human being disobeyed Him *the Almighty* as He has given him/her the choice to obey or disobey, s/he will not have any choice after death but to return to Him *the Almighty* willingly, out of his/her love for meeting with Him, or unwillingly by being compelled against his/her will.

You should not think that you will have any place of refuge, as Allah *the Almighty* says: 'He asks: When is the Day of Resurrection? So when the sight becomes dazed, and the moon becomes dark, and the sun and the moon are brought together, the man shall say on that day: Whither to fly? By no means! There shall be no place of refuge! With your Lord alone shall on that day be

the place of rest.’ (*al-Qiyama*: 6-12) Allah *the Almighty* also says: ‘Therefore strive with one another to hasten to virtuous deeds; to Allah is your return, of all (of you), so He will let you know that in which you differed.’ (*al-Ma‘ida*: 48) So, we should compete with each other in doing righteous deeds as all people will return to Allah *the Almighty* whether they were adhering to His Way of Guidance or even deviating from it. We will return to our inevitable destination of standing before Allah *the Almighty* to let us know that in which we differed. If our beginning was brought about by Allah *the Almighty* Who has created us and the heavens and the earth, and Who shaped our forms, why then some people consider returning to Him far-fetched?

With regard to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘You will all return to Him.’ (*al-Munafiqun*: 4) employing of the preposition ‘to’ attracts our attention to the inevitability of the human being’s return to Allah *the Almighty* not to any other false god. The returning back will be to your Creator Who also has created the heavens and the earth and formed you in the wombs as He liked. The ultimate destination must be to Allah *the Almighty*; otherwise, those who have excessively committed evil in this world would not be punished for their misdeeds, and those who dedicated themselves to fulfilling Allah’s Obligations and carrying out the acts of worship and who deprived themselves of some of the gratifications and pleasures of this worldly life would have endeavoured in vain.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says:

يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تُسْرُونَ وَمَا تُعْلِنُونَ ۚ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ ﴿٤﴾

He knows what is in the heavens and earth; He knows what you conceal and what you reveal; God knows very well the secrets of every heart [4] (The Quran, *at-Taghabun*: 4)

To Allah *the Almighty* belongs the Dominion of the heavens and the earth and He is the Creator of everything, including mankind. He has formed us in a fine and good state. As long as He *the Almighty* is the Owner of the dominion and the Creator of everything, then He knows for certain everything about His creatures. It is as if this verse in question serves as the conclusion of the previous three verses of this chapter: ‘Everything that is in the heavens and

earth glorifies Allah; all control and all praise belongs to Him; He has power over everything. It is He who created you, yet some of you disbelieve and some believe: Allah sees everything you do. He created the heavens and earth for a true purpose; He formed you and made your forms good: you will all return to Him.' (*at-Taghabun*: 1-3)

Allah *the Almighty* makes it crystal clear that He knows everything about us, as He says: 'Does He not know, Who created? And He is the Knower of the subtleties, the Aware.' (*al-Mulk*: 11) Let us give an example for this point by the maker of the chair. S/he knows the kind of wood which s/he uses to make the chair and the kind of nails that bring the pieces of wood together. Besides, s/he knows which glue to be used to stick the parts of the chair together and likewise the painting material. So, the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Does He not know, Who created? And He is the Knower of the subtleties, the Aware...' (*al-Mulk*: 11) does not need any evidence. Thus, the carpenter who wants to make his product obvious would say to the buyer, 'I will make a chair from beechwood, so come and see the stages of making it.' Similarly, Allah's Creation is also obvious and clear, as He *the Almighty* says: 'He created the heavens without pillars as you see them, and put mountains upon the earth lest it might convulse with you, and He spread in it animals of every kind; and We sent down water from the cloud, then caused to grow therein (vegetation) of every noble kind.' (*Luqman*: 10) Then, He *the Almighty* clearly says: 'This is Allah's creation, but show Me what those besides Him have created.' (*Luqman*: 11)

The creation of the heavens, the earth, the sun, and the moon is a challenge for all the worlds; it is so obvious that no one can deny it. When Allah *the Almighty* orders the polytheists to show Him what those gods besides Him have created, they provided no answer for this question, for they do not have a tangible proof and cannot deny His Creation. Therefore, the truth is obvious and clear and the falsehood is doubtful. Accordingly, we did not hear anyone of them saying, 'Our gods created the mountains, the sun, or the moon.' They could not answer Allah's question even though they are adamant disbelievers.

This is the creation of Allah *the Almighty*. The human being is not challenged to create something like the heavens, the earth, or the mountains and s/he is

not asked to cause the rain to fall or the plants to grow; rather, s/he is challenged to do what is easier than that. Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Those whom you call upon besides Allah cannot create a fly, though they should all gather for it.’ (*al-Hajj*: 73) Those whom the polytheists worship and pray to besides Allah *the Almighty* cannot create a fly, which is one of the smallest creatures, even if they all gathered and cooperated to accomplish this task and meet that challenge. So, Allah *the Almighty* does not challenge them to create the heavens, the earth or even a human being; rather, to create a fly. He *the Almighty* decisively says that they will not be able to do that. This verse negates the future, not only the past, so this negation is eternal; they could not create a fly in the past and will not be able to do so in the future. So, no one should think that s/he will be able to do that in the future.

If the matter of creating the cosmos is conclusively ascribed to Him, then attributing Knowledge to Him is also conclusive, as the one who creates something knows everything about his/her creation. In this connection, He *the Almighty* says: ‘Does He not know, Who created? And He is the Knower of the subtleties, the Aware.’ (*al-Mulk*: 11) It is thus conceivable that Allah *the Almighty* knows everything about His Creation, as He is the Creator. Every maker knows the secrets of his/her make. So how should we think about the Supreme Creator Who is All-Aware and All Knowing about everything?

In this regard, Ibn Mas‘ud *Allah be pleased with him* narrated that two people of Bani Thaqif and one from Quraysh, who had fat bellies but little wisdom, met near the *Ka‘ba*. One of them said, ‘Do you see that Allah hears what we say?’ The other said, ‘He hears us if we speak aloud, but He does not hear if we speak in stealthy quietness (softly/murmuring).’ The third fellow said, ‘If He hears when we speak aloud, then He surely hears us if we speak in stealthy quietness (softly).’ So Allah *the Almighty* revealed His saying: ‘And you did not veil yourselves lest your ears and your eyes and your skins should bear witness against you, but you thought that Allah did not know most of what you did.’ (*Fussilat*: 22)

Those three men, out of their narrow mindedness and caring for their big bodies and not their minds, were thinking that Allah *the Almighty* does not know what they are saying and doing. They thought that He does not know

what they confined to themselves and that He does not know what they conceal in their hearts. But one of them has more understanding than the rest, even if they all lacked the deep knowledge, so he said, 'If He hears when we speak aloud, then He surely hears us if we speak in stealthy quietness.'

Allah *the Almighty* controls the creation from the time of its beginning until its end and to Him all will return: '...you will all return to Him.' (*at-Taghabun*: 3) This matter requires Knowledge and Awareness because the one who makes something must know what reforms it and what ruins it. That is why Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Allah is Knowing and Powerful.' (*an-Nahl*: 70) The creation was originated with Allah's Knowledge, but Knowledge alone is not enough, as you may be knowledgeable but unable to apply what you know. The electrician, for example, may have vast knowledge about electricity, but s/he cannot make an electrical network or a laboratory, so s/he goes to one of the financiers to help him/her. For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* describes Himself as having both Knowledge and Power.

In the verse in question, He *the Almighty* says: 'He knows what is in the heavens and earth...' (*at-Taghabun*: 3). He is the All Knowing and All-Wise; His Knowledge and Wisdom are unlimited that nothing in the heavens or the earth escapes it. In this connection, He *the Almighty* says: 'With Him are the keys of the unseen treasures-- none knows them but He; and He knows what is in the land and the sea, and there falls not a leaf but He knows it, nor a grain in the darkness of the earth, nor anything green nor dry but (it is all) in a clear Book.' (*al-An'am*: 59) Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* knows all the unseen because His Knowledge is all-inclusive and nothing can escape from it. He knows what is in the heavens with all its spaces, bodies, suns, and stars. He also knows all that is in the heavy clouds and what they carry for the people and for the earth and its living creatures. Moreover, He *the Almighty* says: 'Do you not see that Allah sends down water from the cloud, and then We bring forth therewith fruits of various colours.' (*Ya Sin*: 27) Allah *the Almighty* sends down water from the cloud and no one of His Creation has anything to do with this, as we are unconscious of the water evaporation. We have known how the clouds are filled with the water and how the rain falls afterwards.

Allah *the Almighty* says: '...and He knows what is in the land and the sea...' (*al-An'am*: 59). There is a countless number of Allah's Creatures in

the land and in the sea, which all are beyond the knowledge of anyone. The human being perceives all the inanimate objects, plants, trees, animals, other human beings, countries, and roads. There are countries that do not overlook any seas, and that is why Allah *the Almighty* mentions the land first before the sea that some people may not see. Allah's Knowledge of what is in the heavens and the earth is not only general, but rather, it is fully detailed; He knows what happens in the heavens, the earth and what is between them, as He says: '...and there falls not a leaf but He knows it...' (*al-An'am*: 59). So, He *the Almighty* knows all about the leaf of the tree after it does its part in the photosynthesis process and the ripening of the fruits until it falls on the ground. Thus, He *the Almighty* knows the time of the movement of all the leaves in any tree, which signifies His Perfect and All-inclusive Knowledge. Then, He *the Almighty* says: '...nor a grain in the darkness of the earth, and nor anything green nor dry but (it is all) in a clear Book.' (*al-An'am*: 59) He *the Almighty* furthermore knows everything about every being in the worldly life, as all the beings are either green or dry.

In this regard, He *the Almighty* tells us in the Quran about what Luqman said to his son: 'O my son! Surely if it is the very weight of the grain of a mustard-seed, even though it is in (the heart of) rock, or (high above) in the heaven or (deep down) in the earth, Allah will bring it (to light); surely Allah is Knower of subtleties, Aware.' (*al-Ahzab*: 16) Here, Luqman teaches his son one of the Attributes of Allah, namely: His absolute Knowledge from which nothing escapes. It is as if he said, 'Do not think that what can be hidden from the people can also be hidden from Allah *the Almighty*.' As the very weight of the grain of a mustard-seed cannot be hidden from Him, even if it is in the heart of a rock or above the heaven or even deep down in the earth; He *the Almighty* also knows the good and the bad deed, even if it is subtle and even if its doer tried to conceal it. Thus, nothing escapes His Knowledge, even something as little as a mustard-seed, which signifies His All-Encompassing Knowledge.

Allah *the Almighty* then directs our attention to another aspect of His Knowledge, namely: what the human being conceals or reveals. He says: 'He knows what you conceal and what you reveal.' (*an-Nahl*: 19) The secret—as we know—is what you conceal in yourself or what you confine to someone

else and ask him/her not to reveal it to anyone else. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...surely He knows the secret, and what is yet more hidden.’ (*Ta Ha: 7*) This means that He *the Almighty* knows what we conceal in our souls and also what may be a secret before we conceal it. Thus, no one can deceive Allah *the Almighty* as He knows everything: what we conceal or reveal. He knows the secret and what is more hidden than the secret. But is there something more hidden than the secret? Yes, the secret is what you confine to someone else, so it is known by two people, but what is more hidden than the secret is what you keep to yourself and do not reveal to anyone. In this connection, He *the Almighty* says: ‘And if you utter the saying aloud, then surely He knows the secret, and what is yet more hidden.’ (*Ta Ha: 7*)

Allah *the Almighty* criticises the hypocrites who think that they can deceive Him, saying: ‘And when they meet those who believe they say: We believe, and when they are alone one with another they say: Do you talk to them of what Allah has disclosed to you that they may contend with you by this before your Lord? Do you not then understand?’ (*al-Baqara: 76*) Then, He *the Almighty* says: ‘Do they not know that Allah knows what they keep secret and what they make known?’ (*al-Baqara: 77*) What is the concealed matter and what is the revealed one? The revealed matter is what you say out loud so that anyone can hear it and what is visible so that anyone can see it. If the action is a soundless movement, it is perceived by the eye, and if it has a sound, it is perceived by the ear; these are the basic faculties of perception.

The secret is what you do not confide to anyone else because if you did so, it would not be a secret anymore. The secret, however, is what you conceal in your soul. Thus, what you revealed is what you declare, and it thus becomes an apparent matter if it is known by two people. The apparent matter is known to the people, whereas the secret is hidden from them. However, Allah *the Almighty* knows the secret and the public and also what is more hidden than the secret: ‘...surely He knows the secret, and what is yet more hidden.’ (*Ta Ha: 7*) So, if the secret is what you conceal in yourself, Allah *the Almighty* knows what is more hidden, that is, He knows what you will do before you do it.

Allah *the Almighty* can use what is hidden as the opposite of the manifest when He says: ‘That they do not make obeisance to Allah Who brings forth

what is hidden in the heavens and the earth and knows what you hide and what you make manifest.’ (*an-Naml*: 25) This makes us recall once again the relation between Allah’s Knowledge of what is in the heavens and the earth and what the human being conceals or reveals. What is hidden in the heavens refers to the rain and what is hidden in the earth refers to the plants. These two elements are the sources of sustenance in the worldly life, as the water of the rain and the fertility of the soil bring out the plants that nourish the animals and the human beings.

In the verse in question, Allah *the Almighty* then says: ‘Allah knows very well the secrets of every heart.’ The human being cares to hide in his/her heart what s/he wants to keep to him/herself, just as the friend cares for his/her friend. It is as if the heart avoids revealing what it contains, but Allah *the Almighty* exposes the hypocrites’ secrets before the people and themselves so that they may not be deceived by themselves. The words for the ‘secrets of the heart’ refer to the qualities that never leave the heart; they are always in the heart, whether they are bitterness or hatred. These secrets may also refer to the good or bad intentions that do not appear in the outward actions.

Allah *the Almighty* depicts for us the image of those who think that He *the Almighty* does not know what they reveal or conceal or what their hearts hide. He says: ‘Now surely they fold up their breasts that they may conceal (their enmity) from Him; now surely, when they use their garments as a covering, He knows what they conceal and what they make public; surely He knows what is in the breasts.’ (*Hud*: 5) When the human being folds up his/her breast, s/he folds it to the direction of his/her bellies to hide his/her face and conceal his/her facial expressions, given that the sentiments of the human soul appear on the faces. They covered their faces with their garments in order to hide their facial expressions. Allah *the Almighty* also says: ‘Whether you hide what is in your hearts or manifest it, Allah knows it, and He knows whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth, and Allah has power over all things.’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 29) He *the Almighty* knows what is concealed in the hearts, let alone what is revealed, which could be known by anyone else. Thus, what is concealed in the heart is only known by Allah *the Almighty* and no one else knows it except Him, the Creator of the human being.

After talking about His Knowledge of what the human being hides or reveals, Allah *the Almighty* attracts our attention to the fact that: 'He knows whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth, and Allah has power over all things.' (*Al-'Imran*: 29) He knows all that is concealed or revealed, for All-Knowledge comes from Him. He knows our intentions and the degree of our sincerity. Further, He knows what the disbelievers and the hypocrites' scheme and even what is in their breasts before they even utter it. Recalling Allah's Most Beautiful Name and Attribute of Knowledge regulates the conduct of the human being because s/he knows very well that Allah *the Almighty* knows what s/he reveals or conceals and what is in his/her heart. Allah *the Almighty* gives us an example of this when He says: 'Bequest is prescribed for you when death approaches one of you, if he leaves behind wealth for parents and near relatives, according to usage, a duty (incumbent) upon those who guard (against evil).' (*al-Baqara*: 180) Allah, Who is the All Knowing about the soul of His servants, expects that the testator may be wrong and the heir may be right, so He takes precaution in this Legislation. When the legatee takes his/her share, s/he will decrease the shares of the heirs. Thus, Allah *the Almighty* wants to preserve the rights of all the parties by protecting the testator, the legatee and the heir. Here, He *the Almighty* says: 'Whoever then alters it after he has heard it, the sin of it then is only upon those who alter it; surely Allah is Hearing, Knowing.' (*al-Baqara*: 181) The testator cleared him/herself, but the heir should be notified that Allah *the Almighty* knows what the hearts hide, for He is All Hearing and All Knowing.

Allah *the Almighty* says in another verse: 'And make not Allah because of your swearing (by Him) an obstacle to your doing good and guarding (against evil) and making peace between men, and Allah is Hearing, Knowing.' (*al-Baqara*: 224) He *the Almighty* hears the oath of the one who took it and He knows the intention behind it, whether good or bad. So, you should not take the oath as a pretext to prevent righteousness, piety, and reform. Allah's Knowledge is intrinsic, but the knowledge of the human being stems from the events' pressure that provokes his/her thinking about what rids him/her of a potential evil, but Allah's Supreme Knowledge surpasses that because it is intrinsic.

As His knowledge is intrinsic and He is the All Knowing about what the hearts conceal, then He is not only Able to repay the people for their inclination,

but also to expose what their hearts hide. Knowledge is often unapparent to the people, unlike what they hear or see; that is why Allah *the Almighty* gathers between the Hearing and Knowing, saying: ‘He is the Hearing, the Knowing.’ (*al-Ma‘ida*: 76) Hearing refers to perceiving the utterances that can be heard, whereas Knowing refers to perceiving what is in the minds. When you talk, He *the Almighty* hears what you say, and when you think about something, He knows it, as the reasonable person should think about his/her speech before uttering it. Every speech has an inclination which is known by Allah *the Almighty* with His Eternal Knowledge that remains forever.

Likewise, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘He is the Hearing and Seeing.’ (*al-Isra*’: 1) He hears what can be heard and sees what can be perceived by sight, but His Attribute of Knowledge perceives what was not heard or seen, namely: what is in the soul. Allah *the Almighty* hears the utterance of the one who cannot do an action and sees the one who does this action.

Knowing the intentions needs Allah’s Knowledge and Awareness. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘The reward of deeds depends upon the intentions, and every person will get the reward according to what he has intended. So, whoever emigrated for Allah and His Messenger, then his emigration was for Allah and His Messenger, and whoever emigrated to take some worldly benefits or for a woman to marry, then his emigration was for what he emigrated.’ Thus, Allah *the Almighty* knows the intention behind your action. The one who pats the head of an orphan, for example, has a great reward, and the one who takes care of an orphan will be with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in the paradise. But the one who determines this is Allah *the Almighty* according to the intention of the human being who does these actions, as the doer may seek the closeness of an orphan and treats him/her with kindness and gentleness to get closer to the mother of that orphan. Thus, the cause of reward or punishment is the intention which drives you to do the deeds. Accordingly, you should be careful to make the patting of the head of an orphan for the sake of Allah *the Almighty* not to get closer to his/her mother.

The intention can only be good when it is accompanied with the fear of Allah *the Almighty* as He says: ‘Be mindful of Allah for He knows what is in

the hearts.’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 7) Piety does not stem from the sensual action, rather, from the inward, concealed state of the soul. An example for this is the good and the bad intentions. So, the bad qualities like bitterness, envy, and scheming, which are hidden in our hearts, are known by Allah *the Almighty*. Piety purifies you from these bad qualities so that your behaviour would be in line with fearing Allah *the Almighty* and certitude that He knows what is in your soul even before you utter it or act upon it.

Allah *the Almighty* subsequently says:

الْمُيَاقِينُ نَبَأُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ فَذَاقُوا وَبَالَ أَمْرِهُمْ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

[Disbelievers], have you not heard about those who disbelieved before you? They tasted the evil consequences of their conduct, and a painful torment awaits them [5]
(The Quran, *at-Taghabun*: 5)

When Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Have you not heard the story?’ (*at-Taghabun*: 5) this affirms that the news about those people reached the disbelievers. When you negate something already negated, you affirm it. You do not ask such a question unless you are certain that the answer is in the affirmative. You may say to someone, ‘You have forsaken me in my calamity,’ but he replies to you, ‘Have I not visited you on so and so day? Have I not given you such and such? Have I not done so and so to your son?’ He is sure that you cannot deny anything of these because they are affirmed by reality.

We notice here that Allah *the Almighty* makes the verse in a form of address like when He says: ‘O assembly of jinn and men! Did there not come to you Messengers from among you, relating to you My communications and warning you of the meeting of this day of yours?’ (*al-An’am*: 130) Likewise, He *the Almighty* says: ‘Has the account not reached you of those before you, of the people of Noah and ‘Ad and Thamud, and those after them?’ (*Ibrahim*: 9) The address from the beginning of this chapter is for the second person, as He *the Almighty* says: ‘It is He who created you, yet some of you disbelieve and some believe...He formed you and made your forms good.’ (*at-Taghabun*: 2-3) The address for the second person then continues, as He *the Almighty* addresses the disbelievers and then the believers. That is why He *Glorified is He* says: ‘It

is He who created you...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 2) and then addresses all His creatures, saying: ‘...some of you disbelieve and some believe.’ (*at-Taghabun*: 2) As long as Allah *the Almighty* addresses the disbelievers, saying: ‘[Disbelievers], have you not heard the story of who disbelieved before you?’ (*at-Taghabun*: 5) Then this question is used to rebuke and reproach them because they rejected the Truth. Here, the word ‘story’ signifies the importance of what Allah *the Almighty* wants to attract their attention to, because the Arabic word for ‘story’ is only used for the important news that attracts the attention, not any normal kind of news. An example for this is Allah’s saying: ‘About what are they asking one another? About the great news.’ (*an-Naba*: 1-2) Thus, this word refers to very important news, not trivial news which the usefulness of knowing it equates the harm of ignoring it. Thus, the word for ‘story’ refers to the great and surprising news that is valuable and beneficial. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘[O Muhammad], inform My servants that it is I who is the Forgiving, the Merciful.’ (*al-Hijr*: 49) The informing here is about something very important. Likewise, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘It is a message of importance, (And) you are turning aside from it.’ (*Sad*: 67-68) The great news should not be neglected; rather, we should keep it in mind and prepare ourselves for it. So, we should not turn our backs on it or neglect it in our action because this leads to perishing. You should listen attentively to the great news and take it into consideration.

The Arabic word translated in the verse in question as ‘story’ and which refers to the important news also appears in Allah’s saying: ‘Has the news of those before them not come to them; of the people of Noah and ‘Ad and Thamud, and the people of Abraham and the dwellers of Midyan and the overthrown cities; their Messengers came to them with clear arguments; so it was not Allah Who should do them injustice, but they were unjust to themselves.’ (*Ibrahim*: 70) The word for news is used in the singular form to refer to the action of those who disbelieved in the Messengers of Allah because this is regarded as one action even if the Messengers are numerous, as we say, ‘Disbelief is one religion.’

However, when Allah *the Almighty* mentions the news of the Messengers, He says: ‘And all we relate to you of the accounts of the Messengers is to strengthen your heart therewith.’ (*Hud*: 120) The plural form of the word

'accounts' has been used because Allah *the Almighty* talks about the experience of every Messenger with his people; what Noah suffered is different from what Saleh, Hud, Moses, Jesus and Abraham *peace be upon them* have suffered. Every one of them has a different story, so each one of their stories was important news. Additionally, the news of the Prophets is scattered in the chapters of the Quran to illustrate what every Prophet came with to heal the diseases from which his people were suffering and to show the stubbornness of the people to whom each Messenger was sent. Those accounts were mentioned in the Quran to strengthen the heart of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* because he was facing troubles and difficulties in his Mission.

Here, a question arises, which is, 'How has the news of the previous disbelievers come to the disbelievers of Quraysh?' We respond that the people of Quraysh were traders and they had two annual journeys: one to Ash-Sham in the summer and the other to Yemen in the winter, a fact which is clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'For the protection of the Quraysh is their protection during their trading caravans in the winter and the summer.' (*Quraysh*: 1-2) Allah *the Almighty* has given the mastery to the tribe of Quraysh so their caravans were going to Al-Yemen and Ash-Sham and no other tribe could dare to attack them. The prosperity of the tribes of Quraysh comes from settling beside the Sacred House of Allah. Their mastery and safety come from their staying in prosperity, while their caravans travel to Ash-Sham and Al-Yemen and then return with goods and profits. Thus, they lived in safety and assurance. In their trading journeys, they used to hear the stories of the previous nations and what happened to them. Further, the routes of trade to Ash-Sham and Al-Yemen enabled them to see the remnants of the disbelievers whether from the people of Thamud, 'Ad or other nations. Thus, they should have taken admonition from their journeys.

In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Say: Travel in the land, then see what was the end of the rejecters.' (*al-A'raf*: 11) The purpose of travelling is to take admonition and lessons; thus, there should be some remnants belonging to the people of ancient civilisation to be taken into account. So, the remnants of the inhabitants of those before us are still there and anyone can go and

examine them. The cities of Prophet Saleh, ‘Ad and everywhere have remnants of previous nations.

Allah *the Almighty* explains that the believer believes in these accounts. As for the disbeliever, s/he can verify the veracity of these accounts when s/he: ‘Travel through the land; then observe how the end of the deniers was.’ (*an-Nahl*: 36) Further, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘And indeed, you pass by them in the morning.’ (*as-Saffat*: 137) The disbelievers used to pass by the cities of the previous disbelievers like Sadum in the morning and evening during their travels in trades in the winter and summer. They also witnessed the remnants of these cities and what is left from their homes. So, people of Quraysh used to pass by these places built by the disbelievers before them. These disbelievers wronged themselves, so Allah *the Almighty* punished them.

Allah *the Almighty* says about the habitations of Prophet Lut’s people, Sadum, on which the punishment had fallen: ‘And surely it is on a road that still abides.’ (*al-Hijr*: 76) This means that the road that the people of Quraysh pass by when they go to that place is still there. This road, therefore, is known to them as it has not been hidden by the means of covering of sand and changes; these means will not make the place hidden except with Allah’s Will. The people of Quraysh were the people of travelling and journeys and they had seen what happened to the people before them, so how could they turn their backs on the signs of Allah *the Almighty*? How could not they understand these signs? How could not these signs affect their hearts? Allah *the Almighty* says about them: ‘And certainly they have (often) passed by the town on which was rained an evil rain; did they not then see it?’ (*al-Furqan*: 40) The city that was rained an evil rain is Sadum, the city of Prophet Lut’s people. Did they not then see it and watch it in their travels? These are not merely some historical scenes that the Quran portrays; rather, the disbelievers of Mecca saw these habitations in their summer journeys and passed by them: ‘So, those houses have fallen down because they were unjust.’ (*an-Naml*: 52) ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar Allah *be pleased with him* said that they passed by the habitations of *al-Hijr*, so Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* told them: ‘Do not enter but weeping to the habitations of these persons who committed tyranny among themselves, lest the same calamity should fall

upon you as it fell upon them. He then urged his mount to proceed quickly and pass through that valley hurriedly.’⁽¹⁾

You find the true Muslim remembering Allah *the Almighty* in his/her travels and take a lesson from the history of the nations before him/her. S/he knows what happened to them and guards him/herself against falling in what makes them deserve the punishment. When s/he passes by the remnants of their houses and habitations, s/he recalls the punishment that befell them and sweepingly should implore Allah *the Almighty* not to inflict the similar punishment on him/her. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was always careful to teach this to his *ummah*. In the battle of Tabuk, which is a place to the north of Medina far away from the road to Ash-Sham, he *peace and blessings be upon him* and his Companions passed by the town of Thamud about which He *the Almighty* says: ‘And certainly did the companions of Thamud deny the Messengers.’ (*al-Hijr*: 80) The companions of Thamud were the people of Prophet Saleh *peace be upon him*. The place of their habitation was stony; it is still known til today between Khaybar and Tabuk. Allah *the Almighty* says about them: ‘Do you construct on every elevation a sign, amusing yourselves, and take for yourselves palaces and fortresses that you might abide eternally?’ (*ash-Shu'ara*: 129)

The people of Prophet Saleh are the Thamud about whom Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘And Thamud, who carved out the rocks in the valley.’ (*al-Ghashiya*: 9) The power of the people of Thamud was greater than that of Quraysh, as the latter had the mastery only because of the existence of the *Ka'ba*, and had Allah *the Almighty* left Abraha to destroy it, they would not have prosperity on earth. The people of Saleh had stony houses and were skilful in carving their houses from the mountains. The one who visits the area between Syria and Medina can watch the cities of Prophet Saleh carved in the mountains. Allah *the Almighty* says regarding them: ‘And you hew houses out of the mountains exultingly...’ (*ash-Shu'ara*: 149).

(1) This Hadith is narrated by Muslim and Ibn Hibban on the authority of Ibn 'Umar Allah be pleased with him. See Muslim, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 7656; Ibn Hibban, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 6199; and Ibn Al-Kharrat, *Al-Ahkam Ash-Shar'yya*, 3/345

The people of Prophet Saleh disbelieved after the coming of a specific pregnant she-camel out of the stones, which is the miracle that they asked for. But they slaughtered it and that was the sign of the falling of the punishment on them. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘But they slew her, so he said: Enjoy yourselves in your abode for three days, that is a promise not to be belied.’ (*Hud*: 65) These cities of Prophet Saleh are still the evidence for the truthfulness of the Message that the people of Thamud, ‘Ad and Lut all rejected. So, the one who passes by them should be admonished by them, and should not pass by obliviously They wronged themselves when they disbelieved, a fact which is crystal clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘We did not wrong them; they wronged themselves.’ (*an-Nahl*: 118)

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is reported to have said, ‘Do not enter but tearfully (the habitations) of these people.’ So, he *peace and blessings be upon him* commanded the companions to take admonition by the remnants of these habitations when they passed by them, lest they would be affected by the same punishment. After all, they were not stronger than those people who were afflicted with that Divine Punishment.

In the same vein, when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* passed by the remnants of Thamud, he forced his she-camel to hurry in order to get out of that place that was exposed to Allah’s Punishment. The she-camel hurried till it passed the dwellings of the people of Thamud that were carved inside the mountains.

When Allah *the Almighty* commanded the people of Quraysh to believe in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and in the Quran, many of them opposed and disbelieved in him. That is why He *the Almighty* reminded them about what they used to see in the summer and winter, that is, the remnants of the evildoing people who preceded them.

They knew about the previous nations through many ways; not only did they use to pass by the remnants of the previous nations, but they also lived in their dwellings. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘And you dwell in the abodes of those who were unjust to themselves, and it is clear to you how We dealt with them and We have made (them) examples to you.’ (*Ibrahim*: 45)

The disbelievers of Mecca were not admonished by the fate of the previous nations whose dwellings were not far away from them, as they used to pass by the cities of Prophet Saleh in their summer and winter journeys and saw the remnants of those who wronged themselves by disbelief and polytheism. They also used to pass by the region of Al-Ahqaf and saw what happened to the people of 'Ad.

All of these previous peoples were punished by Allah *the Almighty* either by a screaming, violent wind, or a violent storm, or a shriek [It is the *Saiha* (the loud cry) by which Allah destroyed some disbelieving nations and peoples as He *the Almighty* says: 'So the shriek seized them in truth, and We made them as [plant] stubble. Then away with the wrongdoing people!' (*al-Mu'minun*: 41)] from the sky, or by being drowned; each of them was seized by their sins.

Hence, Allah *the Almighty* makes it clear that the people at the time of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* were able to see the traces of the punishment that befell the previous nations that rejected their Messengers. The news that came to them is not like any normal news. He *the Almighty* says about it: '...the news of those who disbelieved before.' (*at-Taghabun*: 5)

With regard to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...those who disbelieved before...' (*at-Taghabun*: 5) disbelief means covering the belief in Allah *the Almighty* and Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Due to their disbelief, He *the Almighty* seals their hearts, eyes and ears, which are the main faculties of perception. Disbelief, thus, means trying to hide the reality of Allah's Existence. In fact, this trial in itself is a confession of His Existence because you do not try to hide something that does not exist.

One of the established Laws of Allah *the Almighty* on the earth is to punish those who disbelieve in His Messages in this worldly life first and then in the Hereafter. He *the Almighty* does not postpone all the punishment till the Hereafter. Otherwise, the good people would be inflicted with the harm of the disbelieving and disobedient people. That is why these disbelievers receive part of the punishment in this worldly life. In this connection, He *the Almighty* says: '(Such has been) the way of Allah with respect to those who have gone before; and you shall not find any change in the Way of Allah.' (*al-Ahzab*: 62)

The ‘way’ here means the law that controls life. We knew from the news of the previous people what happened to both the believers who obeyed their Lord, and the disbelievers who denied their Messengers. With regard to these disbelievers, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘And We punished each one of them for their sins: some We struck with a violent storm of stones; some were overcome by a sudden blast; some We made the earth swallow; and some We drowned. It was not Allah who wronged them; they wronged themselves.’ (*al-’Ankabut*: 40)

These are the various kinds of punishment that afflicted the disbelievers of the previous nations. The people of Mecca knew well what happened to them. So, were they waiting for a similar end? In this vein, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘What do they wait for then but the like of the days of those who passed away before them? Say: Wait then; surely I too am with you of those who wait.’ (*Yunus*: 102)

Thus, the disbelievers of Quraysh should not have stubbornly rejected belief in Prophet Muhammad’s Message. In one verse, Allah *the Almighty* mentions all kinds of punishment that afflicted the previous nations, though they were in different times and the reasons for their punishment were various. This is because these disbelievers were similar to each other. He *the Almighty* says: ‘And We punished each one of them for their sins...’ (*al-’Ankabut*: 40). This means that He *the Almighty* did not wrong any of them, but rather, He *the Almighty* punished them justly due to their sins. That is why He *the Almighty* says at the end of this verse: ‘It was not Allah who wronged them; they wronged themselves.’ (*al-’Ankabut*: 40)

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...some We struck with a violent storm of stone...’ (*al-’Ankabut*: 40). The violent storm here is that which carries small stones that are very hot and cause pain when thrown by the wind. He *the Almighty* does not say that He had sent fire on them because fire would cause them to die quickly, while the firing stones would increase their pain.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...some were overcome by a sudden blast...’ (*al-’Ankabut*: 40). The sudden blast is that which causes the earth to shake. Those who were seized by it are the people of Thamud. With regard to His saying: ‘...some We made the earth swallow...’ (*al-’Ankabut*: 40). It refers to the punishment that befell Qarun; and His saying: ‘...and some

We drowned...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 40) refers to the punishment of the people of Noah and Pharaoh.

These are four ways of destroying the disbeliever: they are destroyed either by fire which afflicted them in the form of stones, or by air which afflicted them in the form of a shriek, or by the collapse of the earth with them, or by drowning them in water.

Instead of taking a lesson from what happened to the previous nations, you find that when one of them, 'Amr ibn Luhayy⁽¹⁾ travelled to Ash-Sham, he found them worshipping idols, and he brought one of them, Hubal' to Mecca. By so doing, he was the first one to bring idols to Mecca. The idols they worshipped came from Byzantines and were placed around the *Ka'ba*, the House of Allah *Glorified is He*.

In the verse in question, the word: '...before...' (*at-Taghabun*: 5) aims at reassuring Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by informing him that his people were not the first to disbelieve, for the people before them denied the Messages of their Prophets as well. In this vein, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And if they reject you, then already before you did the people of Noah and 'Ad and Thamud reject (Prophets).' (*al-Hajj*: 42) This means that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is not a special case, for many Prophets before him were denied.

As a matter of fact, we should not look at disbelieving apart from its punishment. What was the result of their disbelief? Had Allah *the Almighty* left them unpunished or had He *Glorified is He* taken them with His Mightiness and Power?! So, He *Glorified is He* reassured Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that the punishment could befall the disbelievers of Mecca just as: '...the people of Abraham and the people of Lut, as well as those of Midyan, and Moses (too) was rejected, but I gave respite to the unbelievers, then did I overtake them, so how (severe) was My disapproval.' (*al-Hajj*: 44)

(1) 'Amr ibn Luhayy was from the tribe of 'Khuz'a'ah' and was the leader of Mecca. He was the first to change the religion of Abraham *peace be upon him* as he was the first to bring the idols inside the Arabian Peninsula. He added many things to the original religion of Abraham *peace be upon him*.

Allah *the Almighty* prolonged enjoyment for the disbelievers till they thought that they would not be punished. He *the Almighty* gave them a complete opportunity to believe and follow the Guidance. So, what did they do? Not only did they disbelieve, but they also tried to mislead the believers. That is why Allah's Punishment befell them.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says in the verse in question: 'They tasted the evil consequences of their conduct...' (*at-Taghabun*: 5). The 'evil consequences' here refer to the difficult and bad outcomes of their misdeeds. To know the meaning of tasting the consequences, you should read the following saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'And Allah sets forth a parable: (Consider) a town⁽¹⁾ safe and secure to which its means of subsistence come in abundance from every quarter; but it became ungrateful to Allah's favors, therefore Allah made it taste the utmost degree of hunger and fear because of what they wrought.' (*an-Nahl*: 112)

We know that food is the thing that could be tasted, and that only the tongue can sense that taste, unlike the garment which covers the whole body. But in this verse, Allah *the Almighty* mentions that all the body will taste, not only the mouth. The mouth intakes the food in favour of the whole body, but if the food does not reach the body, all the body tastes the hunger.

Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* made every part of their bodies taste the consequences, and hence the torture. He *the Almighty* makes every organ in the body able to taste, just like the tongue, as if the taste turned to a garment of hunger that is felt by all the body. He *the Almighty* uses the word 'taste' to express the strength of the feeling, and the word 'garment' to express its inclusion of all the body, as if the whole body has the ability to taste: the fingertips, the feet, the chest, the neck, etc., that is, all of them are able to taste.

The Quranic style uses the word 'taste' in the verse in question, which is different from 'swallow' or 'to be full', so why? The punishment that the disbelievers

(1) In his *Tafsir*, *At-Tabari* says that the city, according to *Mujahid* and *Qatada*, is Mecca; yet another group of scholars believe that it is Medina. In his *Tafsir*, *Ibn Al-Jawzi* says, 'It is just an example.' It is also said to be a village that was very rich to the extent that they were using bread in cleaning themselves after using the toilet, so Allah *the Almighty* sent them hunger, till they were forced to eat their dirt. See *At-Tabari*, *Jame' Al-Bayan*, 17/309; see also *Ibn Al-Jawzi*, *Zad Al-Masir*, 4/132.

underwent at the hands of the believers at the battle of Badr is nothing compared to their severe, painful, and endless punishment in the Hereafter.

Allah *Glorified is He* says to the disbelievers after the battle of Badr: 'That is what you get! Taste that!'—'and the torment of the fire awaits the disbelievers.' (*al-Anfal*: 14) This refers to what happened at the battle of Badr, when the believers struck them upon the necks and struck from them every fingertip. In this connection, Allah *the Almighty* says: '...strike above their necks and strike all their fingertips.' (*al-Anfal*: 12)

In fact, the disbelievers at all times tasted the consequences of their misdeeds, which are disbelief, denial, deviating from the Way of Allah *the Almighty* and disobeying their Messengers. They will taste the punishment in this worldly life and in the Hereafter: '...a painful torment awaits them.' (*at-Taghabun*: 5) Thus, besides being tortured in this worldly life, there is a painful punishment waiting for them in the Hereafter. Describing the punishment as: '...painful' (*at-Taghabun*: 5) shows that they will suffer a punishment followed by another punishment that will be more painful and severe.

Now, the strength of the deed comes in accordance with the strength of its doer. For example, when we say that a child slapped a man, we understand that the slap of a child differs from that of a young man, and that the young man's slap differs from that of a boxer, and so on. Hence, we know that the strength of the deed depends on the strength of the doer. So, if the Doer is Allah *the Almighty* this means that the pain of the punishment is infinite, may Allah protect us from such a punishment.

There are many aspects of torture; the torture may be painful, but the tortured endures it and shows some patience. His/her arrogance may prevent him/her from showing pain, as one poet says:

I keep patient to show my enemies
that forever I cannot be defeated

This patience is in fact a kind of arrogance and that is why the people of the fire will be exposed to another kind of torture which is great in amount, more painful and more humiliating; it breaks the arrogance of the human soul. It will be said to the tortured one: 'Taste! Indeed, you are the honoured, the

noble!’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 49) The chastisement will break the arrogance and haughtiness of the disbeliever who felt proud over Allah *the Almighty* and His Messengers. If s/he is really honoured, s/he would not have disbelieved and led him/herself to the hell.

Thus, the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘Taste...’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 49) here means to taste and feel the humility, as food and drink are not meant here. This is more severe and painful, may Allah protect us from the hellfire.

Allah says:

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُ كَانَتْ تَأْتِيهِمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَقَالُوا أَبَشَرٌ يَهْدُونَنَا
فَكُفِّرُوا وَتَوَلَّوْا وَاسْتَغْنَى اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ غَنِيٌّ حَمِيدٌ ﴿٦﴾

That is because their messengers came to them with clear signs, yet they said, ‘Should we take guidance from mere mortals?’, rejected the message, and turned away. But God had no need for them: He is all sufficient, worthy of all praise [6] (The Quran, *at-Taghabun*: 6)

The word ‘that’ here indicates the reasons why they were punished; it correlates to the previous verse: ‘They tasted the evil consequences of their conduct...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 5). Thus, this punishment is not unfair; rather, it is because of what they have done.

This is similar to the verse in which Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Those who disbelieved from among the children of Israel were cursed by the tongue of David and Jesus, son of Mary; this was because they disobeyed and used to exceed the limit.’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 78) Being cursed and driven away from Allah's Mercy is the result of their disobedience and transgression. In another verse, He *the Almighty* says: ‘And abasement and humiliation were brought down upon them, and they became deserving of Allah’s Wrath; this was so because they disbelieved in the communications of Allah and killed the Prophets unjustly; this was so because they disobeyed and exceeded the limits.’ (*al-Baqara*: 61)

Further, Allah *the Almighty* addresses them, saying: ‘Allah has certainly heard the saying of those who said :⁽¹⁾ Surely Allah is poor and we are rich. I

(1) *Ibn ‘Abbas* narrated that *Abu Bakr* once entered a place and found a group of Jews therein, whereupon he said to one of their scholars called ‘Finhas’, ‘Fear Allah and be=

will record what they say, and their killing the Prophets unjustly, and I will say: "Taste the chastisement of burning." (Al- 'Imran: 181) Then, He *the Almighty* says: 'This is for what your own hands have sent before and because Allah is not in the least unjust to the servants.' (Al- 'Imran: 182) The word 'this' here refers to the chastisement of burning. So, Allah *Glorified is He* has not wronged them, but they wronged themselves. This is a general principle in Islam: Allah *Glorified is He* is not ever unjust to His servants.

In the same connection, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'It was not Allah who wronged them; they wronged themselves.' (al- 'Ankabut: 40) This emphasizes that Allah *the Almighty* will judge them according to their understanding of the miracle of the Messenger. This verse means that He *the Almighty* would not have wronged them. If you say, 'I would not do this,' you mean that you were able to do that, but it is not good from you to do it. So, He *the Almighty* says that He is far removed from committing injustice; however, this is not because He is not Able to do it, but because this Attribute does not behove Him *the Almighty*. That is because injustice aims at taking others' rights, and since He *the Almighty* is the Owner of everything, why does He need to be unjust? Thus, He *the Almighty* was not unjust to them when He punished them, a fact which is crystal clear in His saying: 'And Allah was not unjust to them, but they were unjust to themselves.' (an-Nahl: 33)

Moreover, Allah *the Almighty* does not punish without warning, or without criminalising the actions for which they are punishable because it is not accepted to punish someone for a sin without warning and showing what the punishment would be. If you punish someone for a crime without clarifying that it is a crime, you do injustice to him/her. That is why the lawgivers say, 'Nullum crimen sine lege, and nulla poena sine lege [no crime without law and no punishment without law]'.

= a Muslim. You know that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah'. The man then said bad words and said that Allah is poor and they, i.e. the Jews are rich. Abu Bakr became very angry and hit Finhas strongly on his face. Finhas went to Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him and complained to him, and denied that he had said that, so this verse was revealed. In his Tafsir, As-Suyuti narrates this Hadith and ascribes it to Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Jarir, Ibn Al-Mundhir and Ibn Abu Hatim, on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas. See As-Suyuti, *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur*.

Indeed, the disbelievers received the text that shows that their deeds are crimes. Further, the Messengers have informed and warned them, a fact which is clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘And never would We punish until We sent a Messenger.’ (*al-Isra*: 15)

This proves what we have previously said in explaining the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘It is He who created you, yet some of you disbelieve and some believe...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 2). He *the Almighty* does not force you to be a believer or a disbeliever; it is according to your choice, which is proven by your deeds and sayings. Our Lord created us and gave us the choice either to obey or disobey Him, and to believe or disbelieve in Him. Thus, He *the Almighty* gave the people the freedom of choice in this worldly life, but this choice is not against His Will, for if someone chooses to disbelieve, s/he does so according to the freedom of choice given to him/her by Him *Glorified is He*.

If they had been forced by Allah *the Almighty* He would not have punished them. So, the disbelievers simply realise His Will regarding them. He *the Almighty* gave us the freedom of choice, and gave us the ability to either obey or disobey and, thus, the human being has the choice to do any of them. Consequently, people have no excuse, for He *the Almighty* gave them the ability to choose and sent His Messengers to guide them to the Right Path and to give glad tidings to those who obey and to warn those who disobey.

Before we speak more about the Messengers and their Messages, we should clarify that this verse refutes all the excuses of the disbelievers on the Day of Judgment which Allah *the Almighty* calls: ‘The Day of Mutual Gain and Loss’. It is the Day when the people of paradise will triumph over those of the hell who gave up paradise in exchange for hell. The loss occurred because they changed the good for the bad, the enjoyment for torture. For example, when you exchange a bad type of goods with a good type, you will be considered a winner. No doubt that the loser in this worldly life feels great pain and sadness, so how about losing on the Day of Judgment?! In this worldly life, you may have other opportunities, but the pain of loss, on the Last Day, will be endless and cannot be compensated.

In the same vein, Allah *the Almighty* allocated a place in paradise for all the people, but the disbeliever loses it because of his/her disbelief, and then his/her

share goes to a believer. The disbeliever must realise that these consequences are due to his/her own deeds because s/he chose the way of disbelief, rejected the Message and went against his/her own natural disposition with which Allah *the Almighty* created him/her.

We know that Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'These are they who are the heirs, Who shall inherit the Paradise; they shall abide therein.' (*al-Mu'minun*: 10-11) When you read this verse, you know that Allah *Glorified is He* will make the believer inherit that place in paradise which was prepared for another one, i.e. the disbeliever if s/he had believed. So, the believers will inherit the disbelievers' share in paradise.

In fact, Allah's Knowledge about the destiny of the people preceded their creation. He *the Almighty* created for every one of us a place in paradise and a place in hell. Those who will stay in hellfire forever will leave their places in paradise empty, so He *the Almighty* will give them to the believers, in addition to their original places in paradise.

In this regard, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'There is no one among you who does not have two abodes: An abode in Paradise and an abode in Hell. If he dies and enters Hell, the people of Paradise inherit his abode.'⁽¹⁾

The disbeliever wronged him/herself and lost his/her place in paradise because of his/her own misdeeds; nobody has wronged him/her. So, the saying of Allah *the Almighty* in the verse in question: 'That...' (*at-Taghabun*: 6) refers to the reason why the painful torment befalls the disbelievers in this worldly life, and in the Hereafter: '...a painful torment awaits them.' (*at-Taghabun*: 6) Then, He *the Almighty* clarifies this reason, saying: 'That is because their Messengers came to them...' (*at-Taghabun*: 6).

In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* refers to the previous nations without details, but in another verse, He *Glorified is He* mentions them in detail, saying: 'Has the news of those before them not come to them, of the people of Noah and 'Ad and Thamud, and the people of Abraham and the dwellers of Midyan and the overthrown cities? Their Messengers came to them with clear

(1) See Ibn Maja, *Sunnan*, Hadith no. 4341; and Al-Bayhaqi, *Al-Ba'ath Wa An-Nushur*, 1/151.

arguments; so it was not Allah Who should do them injustice, but they were unjust to themselves.’ (*at-Tawba*: 70)

So, not only did the people of Noah, Abraham and other Messengers and Prophets receive the Divine Messages, but they also saw the miracles that prove the truthfulness of their Messengers. They have no excuse to reject or deviate from the Divine Way of Guidance, given the fact that every Message is supported by a miracle that proves the truthfulness of the Messenger.

The Messengers were sent to the human beings to guide them to Allah’s Way of Guidance, and to show them the Right Path. In another verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Has the account not reached you of those before you, of the people of Noah and ‘Ad and Thamud, and those after them? None knows them but Allah. Their Messengers come to them with clear arguments, but they thrust their hands into their mouths and said: Surely we deny that with which you are sent, and most surely we are in serious doubt as to that to which you invite us.’ (*Ibrahim*: 9)

Messengers carried Allah’s Way of Guidance for their people, but the reaction of their people was that: ‘...they thrust their hands into their mouths and said: Surely we deny that with which you are sent...’ (*Ibrahim*: 9). The disbelievers put their hands over the Messengers’ mouths to prevent them from delivering the Message. Another possible interpretation is that some of them told their Messengers that their speaking with such people was in vain.

In this verse, the disbelievers declare openly that they disbelieve, saying: ‘Surely we deny that with which you are sent...’ (*Ibrahim*: 9). To be logical, they said that they are in doubt about what their Messengers came with, as if they were willing to believe if their doubts were to be omitted. That is why they said: ‘...and most surely we are in serious doubt as to that to which you invite us.’ (*Ibrahim*: 9)

But in the verse in question, they said: ‘Should we take guidance from mere mortals?’ (*at-Taghabun*: 6) Here, they search for another excuse for their disbelief other than doubt, a lame excuse that has no credibility. They said, ‘Shall human beings guide us? They are humans just like us, not better, how will they guide us?!’ However, do the Messengers guide them by a human message that they invented or by a Divine Message from their Lord?! Every

Messenger conveys a Message from Allah *the Almighty*. He *the Almighty* chooses to send human Messengers to the human beings, a fact which is clear in His saying: 'And We have not sent before you but men from (among) the people of the towns...' (*Yusuf*: 109). Thus, Allah *the Almighty* chose them as humans.

This was the excuse used by the disbelievers to justify their disbelief. In this vein, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And nothing prevented people from believing when the guidance came to them except that they said: What! Has Allah raised up a mortal to be a Messenger?' (*al-Isra'*: 94) So, they asked for non-human Messengers.

But why does Allah *the Almighty* not send angels to humans? If there had been angels living on earth, The Almighty Allah would have sent an angel for them. Yet, as long as those who live on earth are mere humans, it is more convenient to send a human Messenger like them. That is why He *the Almighty* says: 'Say: Had there been in the earth angels walking about as settlers, We would certainly have sent down to them from the heaven an angel as a Messenger.' (*al-Isra'*: 95)

Even when Gabriel came to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and asked him about Islam, Faith, and Goodness, he did not appear in the form of an angel; rather, he appeared in the form of a human and left directly after completing his duty, without being noticed. Later, when being asked about him, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* told his Companions that he was Gabriel who came to teach them their religion.⁽¹⁾ 'Umar ibn Al-Kattab, the narrator of this incident, said, 'While we were one day sitting with the Messenger of Allah, there appeared before us a man dressed in extremely white clothes and with very black hair. No traces of journeying were visible on him, and none of us knew him. He sat down close by the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* rested his knees against the knees of the Prophet and placed his palms over his thighs.'

In this Hadith, 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* describes the clothes of the man as being extremely white, meaning that his clothes are not affected by

(1) See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 50 and 4777; and Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 106 and 108.*

the sand of the desert, and he stresses this meaning by saying, 'No traces of travelling were visible on him,' moreover, 'none of us knew him'. This means that he was not a human, but an angel who appeared suddenly in a form of a man. That is why Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And if We had made him an angel, We would certainly have made him a man, and We would certainly have made confused to them what they make confused.' (*al-An'am*: 9) They asked for an angel, yet if He *the Almighty* had fulfilled their request and sent an angel, He would have made him in the form of a man, and still they would have kept disbelieving and rejecting.

Thus, if Allah *the Almighty* wanted to send an angel, He would make him in the form of a man because they cannot see an angel in his real form. They might die out of horror then. Even Prophet Abraham *peace be upon him* was terrified when he saw the angels, although they were in human form. In this regard, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And certainly Our messengers came to Abraham with good news. They said: Peace. Peace, said he, and he made no delay in bringing a roasted calf. But when he saw that their hands were not extended towards it, he deemed them strange and conceived fear of them. They said: Fear not, surely we are sent to Lut's people.' (*Hud*: 69-70)

The same happened to Mary *peace be upon her* when she saw the archangel Gabriel *peace be upon him* in the form of a man, while she was in her prayer chamber. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And mention Mary in the Book when she drew aside from her family to an eastern place; So she took a veil (to screen herself) from them; then We sent to her Our spirit, and there appeared to her a well-made man.' (*Maryam*: 16-17) She was frightened although he came in a form of a well-proportioned man in order that she feels secure and not to be afraid. She said: 'Surely I fly for refuge from you to the Beneficent if you are one guarding (against evil).' (*Maryam*: 18) She sought refuge in Allah *the Almighty* because she was afraid that he would attack or harm her, and she is weak.

That is why Allah *the Almighty* chose to send Messengers from humans, not from angels, and He *Glorified is He* supported them, i.e. His Messengers with proofs and miracles to prove their veracity and truthfulness. In the verse in question, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'That is because their Messengers came to them

with clear signs...' (*at-Taghabun*: 6). They came with clear signs to prove the truthfulness of their Messages. The word 'signs' may refer to drawing their, i.e. the disbelievers' attention to the cosmic signs around them, or to the miracles that prove the truthfulness of the Messengers. All the Messengers came with the clear signs that proved their truthfulness, whether they were miracles or verses that contained clear rules organising their life and making them happy. However, most of their people rejected and disbelieved in these clear signs.

All Messengers came with clear signs to their people, as Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'But if they reject you, so indeed were rejected before you Messengers who came with clear arguments and scriptures and the illuminating book.' (*Al-Imran*: 184)

Moses *peace be upon him* came to his people with clear signs, as Allah says: 'And most certainly Moses came to you with clear arguments, then you took the calf (for a god) in his absence and you were unjust.' (*al-Baqara*: 92) He *the Almighty* also says: 'And certainly We gave Moses nine clear signs; so ask the children of Israel. When he came to them, Pharaoh said to him: Most surely I deem you, O Moses, to be a man deprived of reason.' (*al-Isra'*: 101) Those clear signs Moses *peace be upon him* showed to his people include the stick that turned to a snake; his hand that he took out of his pocket shining in a white colour; the years of famine; and deficiency in property, souls and fruits. Then when they rejected those signs, Allah *the Almighty* sent upon them the flood, locusts, lice, frogs, and blood.

Moreover, there are some other signs directed to the children of Israel, like striking the stone with the staff, and there gushed forth from it twelve springs; raising the mountain above them as if it was a dark cloud; and sending down to them manna and quails. Despite all these signs, they disbelieved and turned away. Allah *the Almighty* says: 'They disbelieved and turned away.' (*at-Taghabun*: 6) The same was done by the people of Hud, Saleh, Shu'aib, Lut, etc. They turned away on purpose, and disbelieved in the clear signs with which their Prophet was sent.

The *ummah* of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* must avoid acting like those deniers. That is why Allah *Glorified be He* says: 'O you who believe! Obey Allah and His Messenger and do not turn back from Him

while you hear.’ (*al-Anfal*: 20) Yet, if they do misdeeds, tell them, O Muhammad, that you fear for them the punishment of the Last Day. He *the Almighty* says: ‘But if they turn away, [say], ‘I have already conveyed that with which I was sent to you.’ (*Hud*: 57) If they turn away, they have no excuse because he *peace and blessings be upon him* has showed them the Way of Guidance with which he was sent, as Allah *the Almighty* does not punish those who are unaware.

The people of previous nations turned away in many ways; let us take the example of the people of Prophet Noah *peace be upon him* to illustrate the point. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘And whenever I have called them that You may forgive them, they put their fingers in their ears, cover themselves with their garments, and persist and are puffed up with pride.’ (*Nuh*: 7) They put their fingers in their ears in order not to hear the Truth. Moreover, they covered their heads and ears with their garments out of their hatred to the Message of Allah *the Almighty* and to the calling for Allah’s Oneness that Prophet Noah *peace be upon him* came with; so they could not hear the Truth.

Another way of turning away from the Divine Message is that of the Jews. They said: ‘Our hearts are wrapped...’ (*al-Baqara*: 88). It is as if their hearts are covered with a wrap, thus nothing can go out of them or even enter into them.

Likewise, the people of Shu‘aib said: ‘O Shu‘ayb, we do not understand much of what you say...’ (*Hud*: 91) This is in fact a turning away from understanding the Truth, even though they could comprehend what Prophet Shu‘aib *peace be upon him* was saying.

In the verse in question, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘But Allah had no need for them...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 6). In fact, people’s belief or disbelief will not affect Allah by any means, for He has the Perfect Attributes of Divinity and Lordship. He *the Almighty* is free of need; if some of His creatures turned away from belief and chose to disbelieve, He *the Almighty* helps them to turn away, and never help them to believe. He *the Almighty* does not need any partner, nor does He need those who associate partners with Him. That is why He blamed Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying: ‘As for him who considers himself free from need (of you), To him do you address yourself. And no blame is on you if he would not purify himself.’ (*Abasa*: 5-7) This man thought that he does not need to believe in Allah *the Almighty* in Prophet

Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and in the Divine Way of Guidance. Instead, he was content with the pre-Islamic lustful way of life which is represented in having dominance and power. So, it is as if Allah *the Almighty* was telling him: 'Why do you, O Prophet Muhammad, give attention to those who do not want to believe? I do not need them.'

In this regard, Anas ibn Malik *Allah be pleased with him* narrated that once Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was preaching to his Companions, then three men came. The first one came and sat with the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*; the second one sat behind; while the third went away, whereupon he *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Shall I not inform you about these three people? One of them sought refuge with Allah and Allah gave him refuge; the second one felt shy and Allah showed kindness to his shyness (and so he was accommodated in that meeting), and the last one averted, and so Allah turned away from him.'⁽¹⁾

In the verse in question, Allah *Glorified is He* then says: 'He is All Sufficient, worthy of all praise.' (*at-Taghabun*: 6) He *Glorified is He* is free of need, and deserves to be praised for having this Attribute. His Richness is beneficial for His servants. Evidently, the rich person is not praised unless his/her richness is beneficial for others. In fact, the believer is the only one who benefits from his/her belief, a fact which is crystal clear in the saying of Allah *Glorified is He*: 'And whoever is grateful, he is only grateful for his own soul; and whoever is ungrateful, then surely Allah is Self-Sufficient, Praised.' (*Luqman*: 12)

(1) This Hadith is narrated by Al-Bazzar on the authority of Anas ibn Malik *Allah be pleased with him*. It is also narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim on the authority of Abu Waqid Al-Laythi *Allah be pleased with him*. Their narration reads: 'While Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was sitting in the mosque (with some people), three men came, two of them came in front of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the third one went away, and then one of them found a place in the circle and sat there, while the second man sat behind the gathering, and the third one went away. When Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* finished his preaching, he said, 'Shall I tell you about these three persons? One of them betook himself to Allah and so Allah accepted him and accommodated him; the second felt shy before Allah, so Allah did the same for him and sheltered him in His Mercy (and did not punish him), while the third turned his face from Allah, and went away, so Allah turned away from him likewise.' See Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 66 and 474; Muslim, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 5810; and Al-Bazzar, *Musnad*, Hadith no. 7243

So, Allah *Glorified is He* is not in need of anyone of His servants, a fact which is clearly manifested in His saying: ‘And say: “The truth is from your Lord, so whoever wills - let him believe; and whoever wills-let him disbelieve.’ (*al-Kahf*: 29) He *the Almighty* also says: ‘...and Allah is Self-Sufficient and you have need (of Him), and if you turn back He will bring in your place another people, then they will not be like you.’ (*Muhammad*: 38) If the people turned away from Allah’s Way of Guidance, He *Glorified is He* will replace them with other different people.

In fact, Allah *the Almighty* had revealed His Way of Guidance for the benefit of people. He *the Almighty* had created them by the means of all His Perfect Attributes. None of His creation can add to or remove any of these Attributes.

Allah *Glorified is He* is Praiseworthy, whether you praised Him or not. He *the Almighty* deserves to be praised even if there is no one to praise Him, for His Attributes are eternal. Thus, Allah *the Almighty* is free of need, and deserves to be praised by all the creation due to His Generosity and Graces bestowed on them.

Allah *Glorified is He* subsequently says:

زَعَمَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنْ لَنْ يُعْزَأَ قُلُوبُنَا وَلَنْ يَنْبَغُ لَنَا أَنْ نُنَبِّئَ
بِمَا عَمَلْتُمْ وَذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ ﴿٧﴾

**The disbelievers claim they will not be raised from the dead.
Say [Prophet], ‘Yes indeed! I swear by my Lord! You will be
raised and then you will be informed about everything you
have done: an easy matter for God’ [7]
(The Quran, *at-Taghabun*: 7)**

The disbelievers of the previous nations were arrogant to believe in and follow the Messengers of Allah *the Almighty*. They considered sending a human Messenger to guide them something which is far-fetched. This was out of their arrogance and envy to those Messengers. In this connection, Allah *the Almighty* tells us that they, i.e. those deniers of the Truth, said: ‘Has the reminder been revealed to him from among us?’ (*Sad*: 8) After objecting to the humanity of the Messenger, they left this point and moved to the personality of the Messenger himself. They said: ‘Has the reminder been revealed to him from

among us?’ (*Sad*: 8) In another verse, Allah *the Almighty* relates that they said: ‘Has the reminder been made to light upon him from among us? Nay! He is an insolent liar! Tomorrow shall they know who the liar is, the insolent one.’ (*al-Qamar*: 26-27)

All of these are lame excuses and pretexts, but the truth will be revealed to them when Allah *the Almighty* gathers them on the Day of Resurrection and punishes them for their disbelief.

The problem with those disbelievers is that they do not believe in the Resurrection or the Reckoning. They do not believe that they will return to Allah *the Almighty* because they do not want to stop their evils deeds and transgression against others. They want to do whatever evils they like, without being restricted to a Messenger, a Book, a moral principle, or any ethics.

In the verse under discussion, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘The disbelievers claim...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 7). ‘To claim’ is to say something which is not true. It is another way of lying. In another verse, Allah *the Almighty* says to these disbelievers: ‘Nay, you thought that We had not appointed to you a time of the fulfilment of the promise.’ (*al-Kahf*: 48) This discourse is directed to the disbelievers who do not believe in Resurrection and Reckoning.

Thus, with regard to the saying of Allah *Glorified is He*: ‘The disbelievers claim...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 7) the word ‘claim’ means that they are liars in denying the reality of being resurrected and held accountable after death. Their claim stems from their wrong thoughts and illusions which have no relation with the reality. In this connection, He *the Almighty* says: ‘And they say: There is nothing but our life in this world; we live and die and nothing destroys us but time, and they have no knowledge of that; they only conjecture.’ (*al-Jathiya*: 24)

In fact, the one who transgressed against him/herself by disbelief or disobedience does not hope to be resurrected and held accountable because s/he cannot discipline him/herself and control his/her behaviour. S/he thinks that by denying Resurrection, s/he will not be exposed to his/her evil destiny in the Hereafter. That is why you find them questioning Resurrection, not knowing that they will be resurrected for sure, whether or not they believed in the Day of Resurrection, as the One Who created them out of nothing has the Power to resurrect them; even Resurrection is easier for Him *Glorified is He*.

The One Who created them is the One Who sent Messengers to warn them against the Day of Resurrection. He *the Almighty* is the One Who revealed the Books to guide them, and He *the Almighty* is the Owner of the heavens and the earth.

In the verse in question, Allah *the Almighty* tells us that the disbelievers claimed that: ‘...they will not be raised from the dead.’ (*at-Taghabun*: 7) Nowadays, the disbelievers, atheists, and some materialistic philosophers deny the issue of Resurrection. This is not a novel claim, for they are following the steps of the former ignorant disbelievers of the pre-Islamic era about whom He *the Almighty* says: ‘And they say: What! When we have become lost in the earth, shall we then certainly be in a new creation? Nay! They are disbelievers in the meeting of their Lord.’ (*as-Sajda*: 10) So, the disbelievers are asking, ‘Will we be resurrected after our bodies’ decay?’ They ask in astonishment, ‘Will we be raised from the death after our bodies have been dissolved into the earth?!’ Thus, they do not believe that the One Who created them from nothing has the Power to resurrect them.

Allah *the Almighty* tells us in the Quran that the disbelievers said: ‘What! When we are dead and have become dust? That is afar (from probable) return.’ (*Qaf*: 3) He *the Almighty* refutes their claim, saying: ‘To Him is your return, of all (of you); the promise of Allah (made) in truth; surely He begins the creation in the first instance, then He reproduces it, that He may with justice recompense those who believe and do good; and (as for) those who disbelieve, they shall have a drink of hot water and painful punishment because they disbelieved.’ (*Yunus*: 4)

In the same connection, Ibn ‘Abbas *Allah be pleased with him* narrated that Ubay ibn Khalaf came to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with crumbled particles and said, ‘Do you claim, O Muhammad, that Allah will resurrect us as new creation after our bones turn to crumbled particles like these?’ Then he smashed the bones and threw them into the wind, saying, ‘Who will recreate this, Muhammad?’ Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘Allah will do that; He will make you die, then resurrect you, then throw you into the Hellfire.’ Subsequently, He *the Almighty* revealed this verse: ‘And he strikes out a likeness for Us and forgets his own creation. Says he: Who will give life to the bones when they are rotten? Say: He will give

life to them Who brought them into existence at first, and He is cognisant of all creation.' (*Ya Sin*: 78-79)

Ubay ibn Khalaf was a bitter enemy of Islam. He came to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with old bones and smashed them between his fingers and said, 'Do you claim, O Muhammad, that we will be resurrected after our bones turn to crumbled particles like these?' He kept throwing them into the air and saying, 'Who will resurrect this?!' Due to the arrogance and the toughness of that man, Prophet Muhammad's reply was strong and decisive; he said, 'Allah will do that; He will make you die, then resurrect you, then throw you into the Hellfire.'

This arrogant man said once to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'I feed my horse a big amount of corn daily to kill you one day while riding on it.' Thereupon, he *peace and blessings be upon him* said with a complete trust in His Lord, 'It is me who will kill you, if Allah wills.'⁽¹⁾

This arrogant man wanted to fulfil his oath when he saw Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in a weak position at the battle of Uhud, for he *peace and blessings be upon him* was wounded, his teeth were broken, and he was bleeding. At that moment, Ubay ibn Khalaf came to kill him *peace and blessings be upon him*, but he *peace and blessings be upon him* stabbed him with his bayonet. So, he fell down off his horse and kept screaming. His companions said to him, 'Why are you so terrified? It is just a small wound!' He said, 'I am sure that Muhammad will kill me! He promised to do so by the will of Allah! That is why I am sure he will kill me even by a spit!' Indeed, he died on their way back to Mecca.⁽²⁾

The One Who created us out of nothing, Allah *the Almighty* will make us die and resurrect us on the Day of Judgment. As the disbelievers could not deny the creation, they turned to denying Resurrection. In this regard, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '*Q-a-f*. I swear by the glorious Quran. Nay! They wonder that there has come to them a warner from among themselves, so the

(1) See *Al-Baghawi, Ma'alim At-Tanzil*, 2/114; and *Al-Bayhaqi, Dala'il An-Nubuwwa*, 3/211

(2) See *Al-Qurtubi, Jame' Ahkam Al-Quran*, 7/385; *As-Samarqandi, Bahr Al-Ulum*, 1/318; and *Ibn 'Ashur, At-Tahrir Wa At-Tanwir*, 20/25.

unbelievers say: This is a wonderful thing: What! When we are dead and have become dust? That is afar (from probable) return.’ (*al-Mu’minun*: 15-16)

They think it is unlikely that they will be resurrected after death and the decay of their bodies, but Allah *the Almighty* decisively says: ‘Then after that you will most surely die. Then surely on the day of resurrection you shall be raised.’ (*al-Mu’minun*: 15-16) As He *the Almighty* says: ‘To Him is your return.’ (*Yunus*: 4) Then His Promise must be fulfilled because He *the Almighty* has the Power to fulfil it and is far removed from lying or cheating, a fact which is crystal clear in His saying: ‘And who is more truthful than Allah in statement.’ (*an-Nisa*: 87)

It is as if Allah *the Almighty* is saying to these disbelievers, ‘Do not think that you gained the worldly life and enjoyed it and that is all! Rather, you will be resurrected and held accountable. Why do you think it is impossible?’ In the same connection, He *the Almighty* says: ‘...surely He begins the creation in the first instance, then He reproduces it...’ (*Yunus*: 4). Is He *the Almighty* Who created out of nothing not Able to create out of something? Further, He *the Almighty* says: ‘...for I created you before, while you were nothing.’ (*Maryam*: 9) So, they should not ask, ‘How will Allah resurrect us?’, for their atoms are there. Moreover, He *Glorified is He* says: ‘Were We then fatigued with the first creation? Yet are they in doubt with regard to a new creation?’ (*Qaf*: 15) By referring to the first creation, He *the Almighty* proves Resurrection. If you wonder about being resurrected while your atoms are there, think about the first creation that was out of nothing. Thus, the One Who created you out of nothing is fully Able to resurrect you out of something.

The disbelievers mocked at the reality of Resurrection, Accountability, and Punishment that await them. In this regard, the Quran tells us that they said: ‘What! When we are dead and have become dust and bones, shall we then certainly be raised, Or our fathers of yore?’ (*as-Saffat*: 16-17) Their mocking intensified to the extent that they asked for the punishment to come soon; they said: ‘So bring us what you threaten us, if you should be of the truthful?’ (*Hud*: 32) They also said: ‘Or you make the heaven fall upon us in fragments as you have claimed.’ (*al-Isra*: 92) Does anyone ask his/her enemy to bring him/her the punishment except in ridicule? They laugh at the

idea of being resurrected after being decayed and dissolved in the earth. Their denial of Resurrection is not meant in itself; rather, it is a disbelief in meeting with Allah *the Almighty* and being held accountable. As they hate to meet with Him *the Almighty* they deny the whole process, starting with Resurrection, from the very beginning.

In fact, they were liars when they said: 'And they say: What! When we have become lost in the earth, shall we then certainly be in a new creation?' (*as-Sajda*: 10) They were not truthful in their denial of Resurrection, a fact which is clearly stated by the Quran: 'Nay! They are disbelievers in the meeting of their Lord.' (*as-Sajda*: 10) The word 'nay' refutes their words, and establishes the fact that they deny Resurrection out of fear and terror of facing their Lord.

Furthermore, Allah *the Almighty* relates that they said: 'And they say: What! When we shall have become bones and decayed particles, shall we then certainly be raised up, being a new creation?' (*al-Isra'*: 49) They mentioned bones then crumbled particles because the human body decays and nothing is left of it except the bones. By time, the bones turn to crumbled particles. So, they do not accept the idea of being resurrected after they turn to bones and crumbled particles.

As for their saying: '...shall we then certainly be raised up, being a new creation?' (*al-Isra'*: 49) It is a rhetorical question that carries the meaning of denial. But why do they deny Resurrection? The disbeliever is confused and denying Resurrection because this is better for his/her desires. S/he thinks that even if the Resurrection occurred, s/he would be a master there as s/he was in this worldly life.

In the same vein, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And he strikes out a likeness for Us and forgets his own creation. Says he: Who will give life to the bones when they are rotten? Say: He will give life to them Who brought them into existence at first, and He is cognisant of all creation.' (*Ya Sin*: 78-79)

Some disbelievers said, 'After we die we turn to dust and mix with the soil. This soil may be planted, thus our elements will mix with the trees, vegetables and fruits that are planted. Then a child may eat from these fruits that are nurtured by our elements. This means that we will be part of this child. How will Allah then collect our bodies and resurrect us?'

Allah *the Almighty* replies on this question decisively, saying: ‘Say: He will give life to them Who brought them into existence at first.’ (*Ya Sin*: 79) If the human being remembered his/her first creation, s/he would not give such example. The One Who created them the first time out of nothing will give them life again. That is why He *the Almighty* says: ‘And He it is Who originates the creation, then reproduces it, and it is easy to Him; and His are the most exalted attributes in the heavens and the earth, and He is the Mighty, the Wise.’ (*ar-Rum*: 27)

He *Glorified is He* is fully Able to start creation without a previous example, and to resurrect it after death. As a matter of fact, recreation is easier than creating according to human understanding. He *the Almighty* is Omnipotent over His creation, Predominant in His Dominion, and Wise in His Actions and Determination. Creating is out of nothing, while recreating is out of something, and that is why the latter is easier than the former.

Back to the verse in question: Allah *Glorified is He* orders Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to say: ‘Yes indeed! I swear by my Lord! You will be raised...’ (*al-Mulk*: 7). He *the Almighty* commands him to assure the disbelievers that they will, for certain, be resurrected. Not only does He *the Almighty* affirm the fact of Resurrection by using the expression, ‘Yes indeed,’ but also by ordering him *peace and blessings be upon him* to swear by His Lord *Glorified is He*. He *the Almighty* is Truthful for sure; He does not need to swear, so what if He swears? This further emphasises that fact.

The Arabic word *Bala* (Yes indeed!) has the same meaning of ‘yes,’ but the difference is that it comes after the sentence to negate it. Let us offer some Quranic examples to illustrate this point. The people of the Book said: ‘Never will the Fire touch us, except for a few days.’ (*al-Baqara*: 80) The answer then was: ‘Yes indeed, whoever earns evil and his sin has encompassed him- those are the companions of the fire; they will abide therein eternally.’ (*al-Baqara*: 81) The expression, ‘Yes indeed,’ here negates their belief of not being touched by fire except for a few days; it then affirms that the hellfire is the destiny of those who were encompassed by their sins and disobeyed Allah *the Almighty*.

Another example is what Allah *the Almighty* says in this verse: ‘And they say, “None will enter Paradise except one who is a Jew or a Christian.”’

(*al-Baqara*: 111) Then He *the Almighty* refutes their claim, saying: 'Yes Indeed, [on the contrary], whoever submits his face in Islam to Allah while being a doer of good will have his reward with his Lord. And no fear there will be concerning them, nor will they grieve.' (*al-Baqara*: 112) The expression, 'Yes indeed,' here refutes their saying, and affirms that another people will enter paradise. So, when the Arabic word '*Bala*' (Yes indeed) comes after a negated issue, it negates it and affirms its opposite.

Strangely enough, disbelievers assure that there is no Resurrection, Gathering, or Account, as if they were given a pledge by this, but who gave it to them? Nobody knows! So, Allah *the Almighty* says that these are mere wishes that will never be fulfilled because they have no relation with reality.

In the same connection, Allah *Glorified is He* says about them: 'And they swear by Allah with the most energetic of their oaths: Allah will not raise up him who dies.' (*an-Nahl*: 38) They assured their claim with their strongest oaths, so He *the Almighty* replied to them, saying: 'Yea! It is a promise binding on Him, quite true, but most people do not know.' (*an-Nahl*: 38)

So, Allah *the Almighty* says in the verse in question: 'Say [Prophet], "Yes indeed! I swear by my Lord! You will be raised."' (*at-Taghabun*: 7) Although the issue of Resurrection does not need any emphasis, He *the Almighty* emphasises, through many styles of emphasis, that the people will be resurrected on a Day that nobody knows its timing but Him *the Almighty*.

Then He *the Almighty* says in the verse in question: '...and then you will be informed about everything you have done...' (*at-Taghabun*: 7). Not only will you be resurrected, but you will also be informed of what you did in this worldly life, be it good or bad.

The Arabic word *Naba'* (announcement) describes the important, strange, and great events. Being informed of what they did will be a very strange and important event for them, as they did not expect that this Day will be a reality, or that what their Messengers told them will really occur. But all of a sudden, they find themselves being resurrected. Not only that, but they will also be informed of what they have done in a way that inwardly shakes them. Allah *the Almighty* says about them: 'And (as for) those who disbelieve, their deeds

are like the mirage in a desert which the thirsty man deems to be water until when he comes to it he finds it to be naught, and there he finds Allah, so He pays back to him his reckoning in full; and Allah is quick in reckoning.’ (*an-Nur*: 39)

The disbeliever will be surprised in the Hereafter when s/he meets Allah *the Almighty*. When s/he committed misdeeds, s/he was not thinking that He *the Almighty* will hold him/her accountable for them. They knew that if they are resurrected, they will be punished for what they did, which is difficult for them. It is better for them, therefore, that the Hereafter is not true. The poet Abu-Al-‘Ala’ Al-Ma‘arri speaks the truth when he says:

Both the doctor and the astrologer claimed
that the bodies will not be resurrected.

I said to them:

If you are right, I am not loser,
but if I am right, you will be losers’.

This means that if the one who believes in Resurrection does not win for holding this belief, s/he will not lose. As for the one who denies it, s/he will be the loser. The human being should realise that s/he will be resurrected, and thus should prepare him/herself for it. Suppose that one person believed in Resurrection, whilst another did not believe in it; if there is no Resurrection, the believer will lose nothing, but if there is Resurrection, who will lose? Of course, it is the disbeliever. If the disbelievers were saying the truth (this is not true for sure), the believer would not lose anything, because s/he does good deeds. However, if there is Resurrection (and there will be for sure), the believer will be rewarded in paradise. In this sense, the believer is a winner and not a loser anyway. As for the disbelievers, they will be losers because they committed misdeeds. The philosophic rule here says, ‘If I do not win, I will not lose, and if you do not lose, you will not win’.

With regard to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...everything you have done...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 7), it means that He *the Almighty* has recorded every single action. This is another surprise for the disbelievers. In another

verse, He *the Almighty* says: 'Allah has recorded it while they have forgotten it...' (*al-Mujadala*: 6).

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...an easy matter for Allah.' (*at-Taghabun*: 7) Every action is easy for Him *the Almighty* a fact which is crystal clear in His saying: 'What! Do they not consider how Allah originates the creation, then reproduces it? Surely that is easy to Allah.' (*al-'Ankabut*: 19) Which one is easier: creation out of nothing or Resurrection from something?! Which is easier according to the human standards?! That is why Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And He it is Who originates the creation, then reproduces it, and it is easy to Him...' (*ar-Rum*: 27). Although it is not accepted to say this thing is 'easier than' with regard to Allah *Glorified is He* He addresses us according to our understanding. Evidently, resurrecting what was previously existent is easier than creating out of nothing. Thus, Resurrection, according to our understanding, is easier for Allah *the Almighty* than creation. However, with regard to Him *the Almighty* there is nothing easy and another easier because He *the Almighty* just says for what He wills 'Be' and it is. The word 'Be' is the shortest formula for order, but our minds cannot grasp the reality of His Order.

Allah *Glorified is He* subsequently says:

فَآمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَالنُّورِ الَّذِي أَنْزَلْنَا وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ ﴿٨﴾

So believe in God, in His Messenger, and in the light
We have sent down: God is fully aware of what you do [8]
(The Quran, *at-Taghabun*: 8)

Belief is a practical way of life that combines the mind and the heart, the sayings of the tongue and the deeds of the limbs. Thus, belief is not just a reasonable theory that mind and heart believe in; rather, it must be consistent with one's sayings and deeds. That is why Allah *the Almighty* does not conclude the previous verse with saying: 'Allah is fully aware of what you believe'; rather, He *the Almighty* says: 'Allah is fully Aware of what you do.' (*at-Taghabun*: 8)

In this way, He *the Almighty* turns our attention from the theoretical belief to the practical one. The believer should adhere to the good morals that are consistent with his/her belief in Allah *the Almighty*; Messenger Muhammad

peace and blessings be upon him and the Quran. S/He should not do what contradicts this belief. Such a believer should apply what the Quran and Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came with. S/He is not allowed to work on or call for ignoring the Law of Allah *the Almighty* deviating from it or even following another law.

Allah *Glorified is He* reproaches them for following the steps of the previous disbelievers. That is to say that they did not accept a human Messenger. In this regard, He *the Almighty* relates that they said: ‘Should we take guidance from mere mortals?’ (*at-Taghabun*: 6) Moreover, they disbelieved in Resurrection, a fact which is clear in His saying: ‘The disbelievers claim they will not be raised from the dead...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 8). They did not want to believe, so they tried to find excuses and justifications and put many obstacles in the way of belief. Disbelieving in the Messengers is in fact tantamount to disbelieving in Allah *the Almighty* as disbelieving in them means disbelieving in the One Who sent them.

They should have believed in those whom Allah *the Almighty* sent, be they humans or non-humans. He *the Almighty* according to His Wisdom chose the Messengers from among the humans to be able to make contact easily with people, and to be good examples for them. If they were angels, disbelievers would argue that they cannot do what angels could.

Others accepted the Messengers to be humans, but they wanted to choose the Messenger themselves! In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* tells us that they said: ‘And they say: Why was not this Quran revealed to a man of importance in the two towns?’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 31) They wanted the Messenger to be one of the masters of Quraysh. Their problem was not with the Quran; it was rather, with the fact that it was revealed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Those ignorant people said, ‘Why was the Quran not revealed to one of the masters of Mecca or At-Ta’if?’ So, they were trying to degrade and look down on Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. They wanted the Quran to descend on a rich man from one of the two cities, in order to keep the mastership and to keep humiliating others, while the Quran came to make all humans equal before Allah *the Almighty*. They saw that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was unworthy of receiving

the Glorious Quran. This was a test for him, and he passed it and persevered, delivering the Message with no consideration of what they said. Moreover, he took this as evidence for the strength of the miracle of the Quran that proves the veracity of his Message.

Allah *Glorified is He* calls them to believe in Him first, saying: 'So believe in Allah...' (*at-Taghabun*: 8). As a matter of fact, believing in Allah *the Almighty* is the core of our belief, and the top of it. It is not confined to acknowledging His Existence, as we should also believe that He *the Almighty* is the only One Who deserves to be worshipped, given the fact that it is He *the Almighty* Who created the whole universe: the sky, the land, humans, animals, plants, etc.

So, believing in Allah *the Almighty* does not only mean to reject atheism and believe in His Existence because the disbelievers of Quraysh to whom Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent believed in this as well, a fact which is crystal clear in His saying: 'And if you ask them, Who created the heavens and the earth and made the sun and the moon subservient, they will certainly say, Allah. Whence are they then turned away?' (*al-'Ankabut*: 61); 'And if you ask them Who is it that sends down water from the clouds, then gives life to the earth with it after its death, they will certainly say, Allah. Say: All praise is due to Allah. Nay, most of them do not understand.' (*al-'Ankabut*: 63) They even admitted that He *the Almighty* created them as well: 'And if you should ask them who created them, they would certainly say: Allah. Whence are they then turned back?' (*az-Zukhruf*: 87)

The essence of their disbelief was that they were worshipping idols and images along with Allah *the Almighty* and taking them as mediators between them and Allah *Glorified is He*. In this regard, they said as mentioned in the Quran: 'We only worship them that they may bring us nearer to Allah in position.' (*az-Zumar*: 3) They affirmed that they do worship the idols and, thus, there is no outlet for them. They admitted that they want to be nearer to Allah *the Almighty* but, He *the Almighty* clearly says to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'Say: I do not bear witness. Say: He is only one God, and surely I am clear of that which you set up (with Him).' (*al-An'am*: 19) He *peace and blessings be upon him* does not testify that there is a god other than Allah *the Almighty*.

Moreover, all the people testified that Allah *the Almighty* is their Lord when they were first created. In this regard, He *Glorified is He* says: ‘And when your Lord brought forth from the children of Adam, from their backs, their descendants, and made them bear witness against their own souls: Am I not your Lord? They said: Yes! We bear witness.’ (*al-A‘raf*: 172) Thus, they admitted that He *the Almighty* is their Lord at the first moment of their creation and gave the oath on this, but later on, they rejected this admission and associated partners with Him. They put idols around the *Ka‘ba*, and claimed: ‘We only worship them that they may bring us nearer to Allah in position.’ (*az-Zumar*: 3)

Belief in Allah *the Almighty* entails believing in both His Divinity and Lordship. This means that He *the Almighty* is the Lawgiver Who prescribes the Divine Way of Guidance revealed to the Messengers to convey it to the people. The creature is not allowed to disobey the Creator or to seek a way of reformation other than His *Glorified is He* or to try to reform him/herself apart from this Divine Way.

Allah *Glorified is He* did not send Messengers and reveal Books uselessly; rather, He *the Almighty* sent them with the True Message, and revealed the Books to guide people to the true way of life. In this vein, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Does He not know, Who created? And He is the Knower of the subtleties, the Aware.’ (*al-Mulk*: 14) This universe will not be reformed except by Allah’s Way of Guidance because He *the Almighty* is the Creator Who knows best what is good and what is bad for His creation, given the fact that the one who makes something knows best its secrets.

Some people have great hatred towards belief; Allah *the Almighty* says about them: ‘And when it is said to them: Believe as the people believe they say: Shall we believe as the fools believe? Now surely they themselves are the fools, but they do not know.’ (*al-Baqara*: 13) Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the believers call such people to believe, but they accused them of being fools, that is, they were poor and in low positions. The masters of Quraysh saw themselves as wise and rich, and thus ought not to believe!

Out of their excessive hatred to Allah’s Oneness and Divinity, Allah *the Almighty* says about them: ‘And when Allah Alone is mentioned, the hearts of those who do not believe in the hereafter shrink, and when those besides Him are

mentioned, lo! They are joyful.' (*az-Zumar*: 45) When a person hears something s/he does not like, his/her heart shrinks with aversion, and this appears on his/her face, then s/he gets away from it. That is what happened to those disbelievers; when Allah *the Almighty* is mentioned Alone, their souls get away from believing in His Oneness. So, what is the reason for this? This is because belief entails believing in Resurrection, Gathering, Facing their Lord and being punished for what they did. This is what is mentioned here in the chapter of *at-Taghabun*: 'The disbelievers claim they will not be raised from the dead. Say [Prophet], "Yes indeed! I swear by my Lord! You will be raised and then you will be informed about everything you have done: an easy matter for Allah."' (*at-Taghabun*: 7)

Their idols issue no commandments or prohibitions. They do not promise them with Resurrection or Account, and that is why they feel happy when the idols are mentioned, thinking that the idols will intercede for them. In fact, they will not, for they will be thrown in the fire before them, a fact which is crystal clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Surely, you and what you worship besides Allah are the firewood of hell; to it you shall come.' (*al-Anbiya*': 98) Those idols and stones that they worshipped with Allah *the Almighty* will be the firewood of hell. Thus, all the wishes of disbelievers to be saved by their idols will vanish.

In this verse, the Arabic word *Hasab* (firewood) refers to anything that the fire is kindled with, be it wood, straw, petrol, or electricity. The fuel of the hellfire will be those worshippers and their objects of worship that will not be able to protect them from hellfire.

In this chapter of *at-Taghabun*, Allah *the Almighty* orders the disbelievers to believe in Him as the Creator of the heavens, the earth, and the human beings in the best form. They should believe that the Dominion belongs to Him, and He *the Almighty*: '...has power over everything.' (*at-Taghabun*: 1) He knows everything in the heavens and the earth, and knows what we conceal and what we reveal. He *the Almighty* is free of need of any of His creation, a fact which is clear in the following Sacred Hadith: 'O My servants, even if the first amongst you and the last amongst you and even the whole of human race of yours, and that of Jinn even, become (equal in) conscious of

Allah like the heart of a single person amongst you, nothing would add to My Power. O My servants, even if the first amongst you and the last amongst you and the whole human race of yours and that of the Jinn too in unison become the most wicked (all beating) like the heart of a single person, it would cause no loss to My Power.’⁽¹⁾

The problem with these disbelievers is that they did not estimate Allah *the Almighty* His Measure; they mistakenly thought that He *the Almighty* just wants to punish them. But this is not true because He *the Almighty* clearly states: ‘Why should Allah chastise you if you are grateful and believe? And Allah is the Multiplier of rewards, Knowing.’ (*an-Nisa*: 147) One of the manifestations of the Greatness of Allah *the Almighty* is that no good deed benefits Him, nor does any bad deed harm Him *the Almighty*.

Then, He *the Almighty* gathers between believing in Him and believing in Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying: ‘So believe in Allah, in His Messenger...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 8). Imam Ash-Shafi‘i says, ‘Allah *the Almighty* ranked Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in a high position; He made him a leader to His Religion by giving him the right to be obeyed and not to be disobeyed. He *the Almighty* gathered between obeying Him and obeying His Prophet, and this is one of his merits. In this regard, He *the Almighty* says: ‘So believe in Allah, in His Messenger...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 8).

After ordering disbelievers to believe in Him, Allah *Glorified is He* orders them to believe in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* because believing in Him *the Almighty* requires believing in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who was sent to deliver His Message represented in His Orders and Prohibitions. Or do they think that they were created uselessly?!

In many verses of the Quran, Allah *the Almighty* connects between believing in Him *Glorified is He* and believing in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. In this connection, He *Glorified is He* says: ‘Say: O people! Surely I am the Messenger of Allah to you all, of Him Whose is the kingdom

(1) This Hadith is narrated by Muslim, Ahmad, Al-Bazzar, Al-Bayhaqi and Al-Bukhari on the authority of Abu Dharr Al-Ghifari Allah be pleased with him. See Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 6737; Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 21458; Al-Bazzar, Musnad, Hadith no. 4053; Al-Bayhaqi, As-Sunnan Al-Kubra; and Al-Bukhari, Al-Adab Al-Mufrad, Hadith no. 490

of the heavens and the earth there is no god but He; He brings to life and causes to die therefore believe in Allah and His Messenger, the unlettered Prophet who believes in Allah and His words, and follow him so that you may walk in the right way.' (*al-A'raf*: 158)

This verse shows the nature of believing in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* he is a Prophet to all mankind, and his Message is universal, that is, it is not confined only for Arabs, but for all men and jinn, Arabs and non-Arabs.

All the previous Messages before Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* were revealed to specified people in a specified time to cure the spiritual diseases of those particular people, whereas he *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent to the whole world; that is why he was given all merits and light.

As a matter of fact, the Message of Islam is the last Message, and believing in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* entails believing that he is the last Prophet. In this vein, he *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'The similitude of mine and that of the Messengers before me is that of a person who built a house quite imposing and beautiful, but for one brick in one of its corners. People would go round it, appreciating the building, but saying, 'Why has the brick not been fixed here?' He said, 'I am that brick and I am the last of the Prophets.'⁽¹⁾ Thus, he *peace and blessings be upon him* is the last Prophet and Messenger, a fact which is clear in the saying of Allah *Glorified is He*: 'Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the Last of the Prophets; and Allah is cognisant of all things.' (*al-Ahzab*: 40)

Some of the misled people believe in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* but in a way that differs from what Allah *the Almighty* prescribed. They believe that he is the last Prophet, but not the last Messenger. They believe that there is a Messenger after him and there is a Book after the Glorious Quran. Such false creeds exist among the Bahais and the Qadianis. They tend to forget that every Messenger is a Prophet, but not every Prophet

(1) *This Hadith is narrated by Al-Bukhari, Al-Bazzar and At-Tabarani on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him. See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 3535; Al-Bazzar, Musnad, Hadith no. 8233; and At-Tabarani, Musnad, Hadith no. 130.*

is a Messenger. The difference is that the Messenger, unlike the Prophet, comes with a new Legislation.

In the same connection, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘And We did not send before you any Messenger or Prophet except that...’ (*al-Hajj*: 52). Thus, both the Prophets and Messengers are sent by Allah *the Almighty* but the difference is that the Messenger comes with a new Legislation and rules that did not exist in the previous Message, while the Prophet is chosen by Him *the Almighty* just to call people to apply the Legislation of the previous Messages. Therefore, the Prophets were sent to be examples in applying the previous Divine Legislation, without bringing a new one. On the other hand, the Messenger was sent with a new Legislation, and was ordered to apply and work according to it.

Believing in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* entails believing that he was unlettered, which is an honour for him, for it proves the veracity of the Quran about which Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘So believe...in the light...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 8). In fact, the Quran is a revelation from Allah *the Almighty* and Prophet Muhammad’s role is confined to conveying it. That is why he *peace and blessings be upon him* must be unlettered. This is a clear fact, but the disbelievers in the past and the present claimed that he *peace and blessings be upon him* contrived the Quran and that it is not a revelation but rather taken from the previous Books. How could that be possible while he *peace and blessings be upon him* is unlettered? He could not read or write! He was not known as a poet or an orator amongst his people. How can he say such miraculous words that great eloquent Arabic poets could not say even one verse like it?! That is why Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘And if you are in doubt about what We have sent down upon Our servant [Muhammad], then produce a chapter like thereof and call upon your witnesses other than Allah, if you should be truthful.’ (*al-Baqara*: 23)

The third point that Allah *the Almighty* calls the disbelievers to believe in is the Light that He revealed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that is, the Quran. But here He *the Almighty* uses the word ‘Light’ to refer to the Quran. This indicates that they are in complete darkness and that the belief will take them out of that darkness into the Light that was revealed to him *peace and blessings be upon him*. He *Glorified is He* identifies the role of this Book,

saying: '*Alif Lam Ra*. (This is) a Book which We have revealed to you that you may bring forth men, by their Lord's permission from utter darkness into light— to the way of the Mighty, the Praised One.' (*Ibrahim*: 1) This Book shows the peak of our creed, that is, believing that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is His Messenger. By following this creed, He *the Almighty* brings them out of the darkness of Polytheism and disbelief into the Light of His Oneness and Belief.

The Holy Quran also draws their attention to the signs of the universe, and tells them that there is a Hereafter wherein there is either eternal bliss or suffering. It sets the proofs in front of them and discusses their arguments with regard to the One Who revealed and the one who received the Revelation. This Book proves its authenticity and replies to those who doubt it.

After this Light was revealed, the disbelievers ran away from it rather than running towards it. They deviated from everything that may guide them to the Way of Allah *the Almighty*. If they had believed, the light of belief and Islam would have illuminated their way. However, their hearts are actually full of the darkness of disbelief, so they could not see the Way of Light.

The Quran shows the believers the Way of Guidance and the Obligations with which He *the Almighty* assigned them. It also guides those who choose to be guided. By this Book, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* called them to the Straight Path.

Thus, belief in Islam is a gradual process that starts with belief in Allah *the Almighty* which is the summit of belief, and then in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who delivered the Message. He *peace and blessings be upon him* came with the Light, that is, the Quran. In another verse, He *Glorified is He* says: 'So they who have believed in him, honoured him, supported him and followed the light which was sent down with him - it is those who will be the successful.' (*al-A'raf*: 157) The Light is attached to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. So, you should not think that you can separate between believing in Allah *the Almighty*; believing in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the Light revealed to him.

With regard to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Allah is Fully Aware of what you do,' (*at-Taghabun*: 8) it draws our attention to an important issue;

the beginning of the verse speaks about the topic of faith which is internal and abstract, whereas its end speaks about the practical side of faith: ‘Allah is fully Aware of what you do.’ (*at-Taghabun*: 8) Al-Hasan Al-Basri said, ‘Belief is not achieved by looking like believers or wishing to be like them; rather, it is something that is established inside the heart and followed by good deeds that prove its existence.’

So, the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘Allah is Fully Aware of what you do,’ (*at-Taghabun*: 8) includes the deeds and sayings because speaking is the action of the tongue, while the deeds are the actions of the hand, leg, eye, etc. All of that is known by Allah *the Almighty*. He *Glorified is He* is fully Aware of one’s belief in Him, in Messenger Muhammad, in His Book, and how strong his/her belief is. He *the Almighty* knows your intentions behind your actions or sayings, even if nobody sees you. Moreover, He *the Almighty* knows the intention of the one who gives charity or strove in His cause, and will reward him/her according to his/her intention.

Allah says:

يَوْمَ يَجْمَعُكُمْ لِيَوْمِ الْجَمْعِ ذَلِكَ يَوْمُ التَّغَابُنِ وَمَنْ يُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ وَعَمِلْ
صَالِحًا يَكْفُرْ عَنْهُ سَيَأْتِيهِ سِتْرٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِ وَيُدْخِلُهُ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ
خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ

When He gathers you for the Day of Gathering, the Day of mutual neglect, He will cancel the sins of those who believed in Him and acted righteously: He will admit them into Gardens graced with flowing streams, there to remain for ever – the supreme triumph [9] (The Quran, *at-Taghabun*: 9)

In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* tells those who deny Resurrection and Account that they will have no way out; they will not be able to run away from facing that Day when they will be gathered. He *the Almighty* nullifies their previous claim of not being resurrected, which is clearly stated in His saying: ‘The disbelievers claim they will not be raised from the dead. Say [Prophet], “Yes indeed! I swear by my Lord! You will be raised and then you will be informed about everything you have done”...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 7).

In the verse in question, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'When He gathers you...' (*at-Taghabun*: 9). On that Day, they will be informed about what they have done in this worldly life. It is as if He *the Almighty* is saying: 'Allah will inform you about what you have done and punish you for that on the Day of Resurrection.' Another possible meaning is that they will be surprised on that Day to find out that Allah *the Almighty* knows all what they have done. They were thinking that nothing of their deeds will be recorded, but they will find themselves being held accountable and punished for them.

In another verse, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'On the Day that every soul shall find present what it has done of good and what it has done of evil, it shall wish that between it and that (evil) there were a long duration of time; and Allah makes you to be cautious of (retribution from) Himself; and Allah is Compassionate to the servants.' (*Al-Imran*: 30) Thus, everyone will find the result of his/her deeds, be they good or bad. The one with good deeds will be rewarded for them, but everyone will wish that there was a great distance between him/herself and his/her bad deeds.

The meaning of the verse in question may also be as follows: 'You will be distinguished and divided in the Day on which He will assemble you', or it may also be: 'Remember the Day when He will assemble you'. All these meanings are accepted and possible.

Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent to warn the people against that Day, a fact which is crystal clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'And thus have We revealed to you an Arabic Quran, that you may warn the mother city and those around it, and that you may give warning of the day of gathering together wherein is no doubt; a party shall be in the garden and (another) party in the burning fire.' (*ash-Shura*: 7) He calls them to pay attention to the Day on which the earliest and latest people will all be gathered. In this regard, He *the Almighty* says: 'This is the Day of Decision: We have gathered you and those of yore.' (*al-Mursalat*: 38) This is the Day on which all the people will be gathered. Allah *the Almighty* then says: 'So if you have a plan, plan against Me (now).' (*al-Mursalat*: 39) So, He *the Almighty* will fulfil His Promise; on that Day, He *the Almighty* will punish whoever disbelieved in Him, and if they have any means to save them from His Punishment, let them do their best.

On that Day, the disbelievers' lies will be disclosed; it will be the Day of Disclosure. Every liar, cheater, and caller to anything other than the Truth will be disclosed. In this regard, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Then how will it be when We shall gather them together on a Day about which there is no doubt, and every soul shall be fully paid what it has earned, and they shall not be dealt with unjustly?' (*Al- 'Imran*: 25) How will their condition be when He *the Almighty* gathers them for Account on a Day about which there is no doubt? This Day is coming for sure, for there are many proofs that substantiate this fact. Despite their antagonism, He *the Almighty* will not wrong them; rather, He *Glorified is He* will treat them according to His Justice. In the same connection, He *Glorified is He* says: 'Allah, there is no god but He— He will most certainly gather you together on the Resurrection Day, there is no doubt in it; and who is more true in word than Allah?' (*an-Nisa*': 87)

Allah *the Almighty* is fully Able to gather and resurrect people on the Day of Resurrection; He *the Almighty* emphasised this by two Arabic letters of emphasis: 'Lam' and 'Nun'. No one is more Truthful than Allah *the Almighty*. He *the Almighty* puts it in the form of a question, saying: '...and who is more true in word than Allah?' (*an-Nisa*': 87) When a piece of information comes in a form of a question and the answer is left to you, this means that He *Glorified is He* knows that you can say nothing but agree with what He said. He *the Almighty* gives you a chance to search and be convinced that no one is more Truthful than Him *Glorified is He*. So, you should not deceive yourself, for you will surely find what Allah *the Almighty* has promised you. In this vein, He *Glorified is He* says: 'And the dwellers of the garden will call out to the inmates of the fire: Surely we have found what our Lord promised us to be true; have you too found what your Lord promised to be true? They will say: Yes. Then a crier will cry out among them that the curse of Allah is on the unjust.' (*al-A 'raf*: 44)

In the same connection, Anas ibn Malik *Allah be pleased with him* narrated that the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* called the disbelievers who were killed in the battle of Badr saying, 'O Abu Jahli ibn Hisham, O 'Utba ibn Rabi'a, O Umayya ibn Khalaf, have you found that what your Lord has promised you is true? I found it true.' The Companions

said to him, 'Are you calling dead people, O Messenger of Allah?' He said, 'They hear me better than you, but they could not reply.'⁽¹⁾

In addition to gathering the earlier and the latest people, Allah *the Almighty* will also gather the leaders and their followers, a fact which is clear in His saying: 'When those who were followed shall renounce those who followed (them), and they see the chastisement and their ties are cut asunder. And those who followed shall say: Had there been for us a return, then we would renounce them as they have renounced us. Thus will Allah show them their deeds to be intense regret to them, and they shall not come forth from the fire.' (*al-Baqara*: 166-167)

In the same connection, Allah *the Almighty* orders Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in the Quran to address his people, saying: 'Say: Who gives you the sustenance from the heavens and the earth? Say: Allah. And most surely we or you are on a right way or in manifest error. Say: You will not be questioned as to what we are guilty of, nor shall we be questioned as to what you do.' (*Saba*': 24-25) Then, He *the Almighty* says: 'Say: Our Lord will gather us together, then will He judge between us with the truth; and He is the greatest Judge, the All Knowing.' (*Saba*': 26) It is as if Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to them, 'We will not argue with you anymore because we are telling you the truth and you just argue with falsehood. At the end, Allah *the Almighty* will judge between us in His Divine Court on the Last Day.'

In the same connection, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'So to that [religion of Allah] invite, [O Muhammad], and remain on a right course as you are commanded and do not follow their inclinations but say, "I have believed in what Allah, has revealed of the Quran, and I have been commanded to do justice among you. Allah is our Lord and your Lord. For us, are our deeds, and for you, your deeds. There is no [need for] argument between us and you. Allah will bring us together, and to Him is the [final] destination."' (*ash-Shura*: 15)

(1) This Hadith is narrated by An-Nasa'i, Ahmad, Abu Ya'la and Ibn Abu 'Asim on the authority of Anas ibn Malik Allah be pleased with him. It was authenticated by Al-Albani. See An-Nasa'i, Sunnan, Hadith no. 2075; Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 182, 12039 and 12896; Abu Ya'la, Musnad, Hadith no. 2808; and Ibn Abu 'Asim, As-Sunna, Hadith no. 2878

As we disagreed in this worldly life over the Truth, Allah *the Almighty* will gather us in the Last Day, and every one of us will be asked about his/her deeds and will take his/her full right. So, the believer submits his/her case to the Decree of the All-Just Judge *Glorified is He* because s/he is sure that s/he is right, and He *the Almighty* is All-Sufficient as Judge.

As a matter of fact, humans leave this life gradually; death is collecting the souls from the time of Adam *peace be upon him*. One day, all people will be gathered, even though they left the world in different successive times. No one will be away from the scene, a fact which is clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘We will gather them and not leave behind from them anyone...’ (*al-Kahf*: 47); ‘...and the trumpet will be blown, so We will gather them all together.’ (*al-Kahf*: 99) The Blow in the last verse refers to the second one, which is the Blow of resurrecting and gathering people from their graves. In this regard, He *Glorified is He* says: ‘And the trumpet shall be blown, when lo! From their graves they shall hasten on to their Lord.’ (*Ya Sin*: 51) They will come out from their graves like yarn coming out of the cloth.

When they come out of the graves and see the truth that they denied, they will say: ‘Oh woe to us! Who has made us rise again from our sleeping-place?’ (*Ya Sin*: 52) It is strange to say this, for they forgot that Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Our Lord! Surely You are the Gatherer of men on a Day about which there is no doubt; surely Allah will not fail (His) Promise.’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 9) The human being may break his/her promise because something stronger than him/her might have prevented him/her from fulfilling it. By contrast, with regard to Allah *the Almighty* there is no power over Him; He will never change His Words or change in Himself because changing is not One of His Eternal Attributes. So, the disbeliever and the hypocrite must be sure that nothing will save him/her on that Day.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...the Day of mutual neglect...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 9). *At-Taghabun* which means ‘mutual neglect’ is one of the names of the Last Day. It is the Day when the people of paradise will win over those of hell, as the people of hell will exchange hell with paradise, and that is why they will be losers.

We see this in our daily life when we buy and sell. We say in some cases that the one who sells his/her property is a loser, whereas the one who buys is a winner. Although the one who sells takes money in exchange for his/her property, the value of this money is likely to decrease. As for the buyer, s/he bought something that will increase in value by time, even if s/he pays a lot of money for it.

Similarly, those disbelievers sell their houses, homes and places in paradise that Allah *the Almighty* prepared for them at the beginning of their creation, and buy instead of that the enjoyment of this worldly life. Thus, their property in paradise went to the people of paradise that would have much enjoyment therein. Conversely, the people of paradise left their places in hellfire for those who deserve them. That is the meaning of the saying of Allah *the Almighty* regarding the believers: 'Those are the inheritors.' (*al-Mu'minun*: 10)

When Allah *Glorified is He* created mankind, He gave them the freedom of choice, either to believe or disbelieve, or to obey or disobey. Accordingly, He *the Almighty* made for every one of them a place in paradise in case they all believe and a place in hellfire in case they all disbelieve. Consequently, when the people of paradise enter it, they leave their places in hellfire empty, and thus the people of hell inherit them; and, conversely, the people of paradise inherit the empty places of paradise.

In fact, the loss on that Day will be endless. There is also a loss in this worldly life, as Al-Hasan and Qatada said that there are three forms of loss in this worldly life, which are:

- A person learned useful branches of knowledge and taught them to others, but s/he did not adhere to what s/he said and, consequently, s/he lost, while others who learned from him/her adhered to what they learned from him/her and thus became winners.
- A person who is keen on earning money from everywhere, but this money made him/her turn away from obeying Allah *the Almighty* and s/he did nothing good with his/her money. Then, s/he died and left the money to the inheritor, who used that money in charity work.

- A master and his slave; the master disobeyed Allah *the Almighty* and thus became a loser, whilst the slave obeyed Him *the Almighty* and became a winner.

It was narrated that Allah *the Almighty* will make a husband and his wife stand in front of Him on the Last Day and ask them about their money. The man says, 'O my Lord, you ordered me to spend upon her, so I collected money from different sources, both legal and illegal. Now those people whom I wronged are asking for their rights, and I have nothing to give them!' The wife, on her part, will say, 'O my Lord, he earned money from illegal sources. It was unlawful for him, but lawful for me; he disobeyed you to satisfy me, but I did not accept that, so let him be far away from me!' Whereupon, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'You said the truth,' and then orders the angels to take him to Hell, and to take her to Paradise. She then looks at him and says, 'What a loser you are; we enjoyed with what made you wretched.'⁽¹⁾

Thus, the loser on that Day is the one who loses his/her family and houses in paradise. The disbeliever will be a loser because of his/her disbelief, and even the believer will be partly a loser because of what s/he missed of good deeds.

On the Day of Judgment, the people will be divided into two parties: one in paradise, and the other one in the hell. With regard to the people of paradise, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'He will cancel the sins of those who believed in Him and acted righteously: He will admit them into gardens graced with flowing streams, there to remain forever –the supreme triumph.' (*at-Taghabun*: 9)

The saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...those who believed in Him...' (*at-Taghabun*: 9) refers to those who sincerely believe in Him *Glorified is He* as a Creator, Provider and Owner of the heavens and earth, and that He created man in the best form and will resurrect and gather all people and recompense them according to their deeds, be they good or bad. In addition to this, such a believer should work according to the Way that He *the Almighty* revealed in

(1) In his *Tafsir*, Al-Qurtubi narrates this Hadith with a formula indicating its weakness. He does not ascribe it to anyone or name its narrator. That is why Ibn 'Adil ascribed it to Al-Qurtubi. See Al-Qurtubi, *Jame' Ahkam Al-Quran*, 18/137; and Ibn 'Adil, *Al-Lubab*, 1/4942.

His Book. That is to say that his/her internal belief should be accompanied with deeds that prove it.

In fact, when someone does good deeds, this benefit will return to him/her. You should not think that the benefit of your good deed will not return to you, for, indeed, it will.

The good deeds are the outcome of our belief which is meant to straighten our life. Man will not do good deeds unless s/he is a believer, and that is why Allah *the Almighty* says: '...and whoever does good, they prepare (good) for their own souls.' (*ar-Rum*: 44) This verse is expressed in the plural form, because the one who does good deeds in this worldly life does not only benefit him/herself, but rather, the whole community. If every one of us does good deeds and avoids causing mischief, good will prevail, and Muslims will save their energy from being wasted in committing misdeeds.

So, the good doer will find good fruits, and the bad doer will find bad results. That is why the good doer feels happy to return to Allah *the Almighty* whereas the disobedient disbeliever feels sad and afraid of returning to Him *Glorified is He* and tries to avoid returning, but s/he cannot.

The believer, however, may commit some sins, and the Creator *Glorified is He* knows His creation best; that is why He *the Almighty* says directly after this: 'He will cancel the sins of those who believed...' (*at-Taghabun*: 9) Here, He *Glorified is He* mentions the reward of belief and good deeds. In the same connection, He *the Almighty* says: 'And (as for) those who believe and do good, We will most certainly do away with their evil deeds and We will most certainly reward them the best of what they did.' (*al-'Ankabut*: 7) How Great our Lord is! He mentions removing sins before giving merits — 'cleanness before decorating'. He *the Almighty* wipes out the sins of the believer first and then gives him/her the reward and admits him/her to paradise. It is as if He *the Almighty* says to his/her servant, 'Do not be afraid, I will omit your sins before I give you merits because the human being naturally inclines to do misdeeds more than doing good ones.'

Furthermore, Allah *the Almighty* will give them what is even greater. In another verse, He *Glorified is He* says: 'Except him who repents and believes and does a good deed; so these are they of whom Allah changes the evil deeds

to good ones; and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.’ (*al-Furqan*: 70) Not only will He *the Almighty* omit the sins and purify the believer, but He may also change their sins into good deeds! Further, in another verse He *the Almighty* says: ‘Indeed, good deeds do away with misdeeds.’ (*Hud*: 114) In the same connection, the Hadith reads: ‘Do good deeds if you committed bad ones; the former will wipe out the latter.’⁽¹⁾

Allah *the Almighty* bestows His endless Favours on you as long as you have believed in Him, in Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and in the Book revealed to him. He *the Almighty* will forgive your sins, purify you from them, turn them into good deeds, and then reward you for your good deeds. It is as if He *Glorified is He* is purifying you from sins, to make you ready for receiving the reward and being admitted into paradise. In this way, you will enter paradise honourably with His Grace.

Allah *Glorified is He* will also purify the believers’ hearts from any ill feelings or any diseases of the heart. In this regard, He *the Almighty* says: ‘And We will remove whatever of ill-feeling is in their breasts; the rivers shall flow beneath them and they shall say: All praise is due to Allah...’ (*al-A‘raf*: 43). Believers in the Hereafter will be purified from all the defects and hardships of this worldly life, including resentment or ill feelings.

The reward of those believers who did good deeds and were purified from bad deeds and sins will be great. Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘He will admit them into Gardens graced with flowing streams, there to remain forever...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 9). He *the Almighty* says ‘To admit’ not ‘to live’ which indicates that mere entering paradise is in itself a great triumph, nothing is compared to it. He *the Almighty* also says: ‘And whoever is removed away from the Fire and admitted to Paradise, he indeed is successful.’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 185) Being

(1) Abu Dharr Allah be pleased with him narrated that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘Fear Allah wherever you are, do good deeds after doing bad ones, the former will wipe out the latter, and behave decently towards people.’ This Hadith is narrated by At-Tirmidhi, Ahmad and Al-Hakim who said, ‘This is an authentic Hadith according to the conditions stipulated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim, but they did not narrate it in their books.’ Adh-Dhahabi agreed with him. See At-Tirmidhi, Sunnan, Hadith no. 1987; Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 21392 and 21441; and Al-Hakim, Mustadrak, Hadith no. 178

removed away from the fire even to a place between Hell and Paradise is a great triumph; this is the first degree of triumph. Imagine that a person is standing in terror looking at the fire blazing and burning people. For him/her, being removed away from the fire is a great triumph, but Allah *the Almighty* will also admit him/her to paradise. He *the Almighty* says: 'He will admit them into Gardens...' (*at-Taghabun*: 9). This shows that there is not only one garden, but many gardens; some are special for the believer, while others are shared by all the people of paradise. In the same connection, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'A place in Paradise equal to the size of a lash is better than the whole worldly life and whatever is in it.'⁽¹⁾

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Gardens graced with flowing streams...' (*at-Taghabun*: 9). Not only one stream, but rather so many streams run beneath these gardens. In another verse, He *the Almighty* tells us more details about these rivers, saying: 'A parable of the garden which those guarding (against evil) are promised: Therein are rivers of water that does not alter, and rivers of milk the taste whereof does not change, and rivers of drink delicious to those who drink, and rivers of honey clarified...' (*Muhammad*: 15). The believers will be graced with rivers of water, milk, wine, and honey. Not only that, but also '...they will have from all kinds of fruits...' (*Muhammad*: 15). They will stay in these gardens forever; no one will ever drive them out. Besides, the enjoyment will be everlasting; it will neither change, nor decrease, nor vanish.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says: 'That is the supreme triumph.' (*at-Taghabun*: 9) The success that you gain in this worldly life out of your belief and good deeds is not the greatest one; what is greater than that is Allah's Reward for you on the Day of Judgment. Every enjoyment in this life is fleeting, and any reward or success here will vanish, whereas the achievement on the Day of Judgment will be the greatest, as it will never be followed by any kind of loss.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

(1) See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 3250 and 6415.*

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ
النَّارِ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَبَشَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿١٠﴾

But those who disbelieved and rejected Our signs will be the inhabitants of the Fire, there to remain – a miserable destination [10] (The Quran, *at-Taghabun*: 10)

In the previous verse, Allah *the Almighty* tells us about the reward of the one who believes and does righteous deeds, saying: ‘He will cancel the sins of those who believed in Him and acted righteously: He will admit them into Gardens graced with flowing streams, there to remain forever – the supreme triumph!’ (*at-Taghabun*: 9) Conversely, He *the Almighty* says in the verse in question: ‘But those who disbelieved and rejected Our signs will be the inhabitants of the Fire, there to remain – a miserable destination.’ (*at-Taghabun*: 10) Here, He *Glorified is He* speaks about the destiny of the disbelievers, affirming that they will be the people of the hell wherein they will accompany each other.

The people are either believers or disbelievers. This is how Allah *the Almighty* created them, a fact which is crystal clear in His saying: ‘It is He who created you, yet some of you disbelieve, and some believe.’ (*at-Taghabun*: 2) That is why the Quran always speaks about the two parties, saying: ‘...a party shall be in the garden and (another) party in the burning fire.’ (*ash-Shura*: 7)

We have spoken about the reward of those who have believed and done righteous deeds. Then, Allah *the Almighty* speaks about the disbelievers, saying: ‘But those who disbelieved and rejected Our Signs...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 10). Disbelief means to try to hide the fact of the Existence of Allah *the Almighty*. This trial is in itself a confession of His Existence because you do not try to hide something that does not exist. Thus, disbelief in itself proves the reality of belief. Thus, how do you disbelieve in Allah *the Almighty* while everything in this world and inside yourself proves His Existence?!

There are two kinds of disbelievers: the first kind disbelieved in the Existence of Allah *Glorified is He* but when they received the guidance and employed their minds, they arrived at the truth and belief. The other kind includes those people who benefit from their disbelief, and that is why they adhere to it, regardless of any proofs or signs that come to them. They want to

keep their worldly power that is based on injustice and tyranny. They do not accept to be deprived of it by any means. This kind is what Allah *the Almighty* refers to by saying: 'Indeed, those who disbelieve - it is all the same for them whether you warn them or do not warn them - they will not believe.' (*al-Baqara*: 6) They did not believe because no revelation, Messenger or Prophet came to guide them to Allah's Way of Guidance, but rather because they consider disbelief, which makes them masters and falsely distinguished, their way of life. Furthermore, belief makes all people equal and prohibits injustice, thus this will not make them distinguished over others. They are not punished only because of their disbelief, but also because of their rejection of Allah's signs. He *the Almighty* describes those who disbelieve, saying: '...deaf and dumb within darkness...' (*al-An'am*: 39). They cannot see the guidance, nor can they hear or say the truth. Moreover, they live in darkness that prevents them from attaining belief.

They rejected the signs (miracles) that prove the veracity of the Prophet, or the signs of Allah *the Almighty* in the Quran. Those who reject Allah's signs arrogantly refuse to follow Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. For such people, the doors of the heavens will not be open, a fact which is clear in His saying: 'Surely (as for) those who reject Our communications and turn away from them haughtily, the doors of heaven shall not be opened for them, nor shall they enter the garden until the camel can pass through the eye of the needle; and thus do We reward the guilty.' (*al-A'raf*: 40) This verse shows the kind of people for whom the door of the heavens will not be opened and thus shows that the opposite kind of people, the believers, are the ones for whom the doors of the Heavens will be opened. When their souls ascend to Allah *the Almighty* their good deeds will raise them up; yet, the deniers of the Truth do not rise, instead, they descend and do not enter paradise.

Further, Allah *the Almighty* stipulates a logically, normally, and naturally impossible condition for allowing them to enter the paradise which is: '...until the camel can pass through the eye of the needle; and thus do We reward the guilty.' (*al-A'raf*: 40) The eye of the needle is the place where the thread enters. The thread never enters unless the diameter of the thread is smaller than the diameter of the eye of the needle and unless the thread is so firm and uncut since it does not enter if it was cut and its parts are straight. So,

the tailor sharpens the thread in order to enter it into the eye of the needle. Thus, if you bring a camel and order it to enter in the eye of the needle, can it enter? Of course not; so it is clear that He *the Almighty* stipulates an impossible condition for having them enter paradise.

Those who denied and disregarded the universal signs of Allah *the Almighty* did not deduce from them the Existence of a Mighty, Omnipotent and All-Wise God. They also denied the miraculous signs of the truthfulness of the Prophethood and denied the verses of the Quran, refraining from adhering to their decrees. Allah *the Almighty* will punish such people and deprive them of paradise. If the disbelievers of Quraysh rejected Allah's Verses and Signs, why do the people of the Book also disbelieve? He *the Almighty* commands Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to say: 'Say, O People of the Book, why do you disbelieve in the verses of Allah, while Allah is Witness over what you do?' (*Al-Imran*: 98) Their disbelief in Allah's Verses is not due to their premier concealing of them; instead, they believed in Allah and in His Verses which carry good news about the advent of Islam and Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* – such verses were inscribed in the Torah and the Bible – yet, when Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did come, they disbelieved in him, which is tantamount to disbelieving in such verses. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* revealed His saying: 'And when there came to them a Book from Allah, confirming that which was with them – although before they used to pray for victory ⁽¹⁾ against those who disbelieved – but [then] when there came to them that which they recognised, they disbelieved in it; so the Curse of Allah will be upon the disbelievers.' (*al-Baqara*: 89) In

(1) In his *Tafsir*, As-Suyuti says that Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Jarir, Ibn Al-Mundir, Abu Na'yim and Al-Bayhaqi narrated on the authority of 'Asim ibn 'Amr ibn Qatada Al-Ansari that he said, 'Some elderly people among us told us that no one among the Arabs knew about Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* more than we did. There were Jews, people of the Book, among us, and we worshiped idols; when we attacked them, they used to say: "A Messenger will be sent soon whom we will follow and will kill you with him like the people of 'Ad and Iram." However, when Allah sent Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* we followed him and they disbelieved in him; thus, Allah *the Almighty* revealed about them and us: '...although before they used to pray for victory against those who disbelieved – but [then] when there came to them that which they recognised, they disbelieved in it; so the Curse of Allah will be upon the disbelievers.' (*al-Baqara*: 89) See As-Suyuti, *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur*, I/ 456.

another verse, He *the Almighty* says: 'O People of the Book, why do you disbelieve in the Verses of Allah while you witness [to their truth]?' (*Al-Imran*: 70) It is as if Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was asking them on behalf of Allah *the Almighty* 'Why do you disbelieve in the verses while you testify to their truth? You used to pray for the coming of the new Messenger to defeat your enemies.' They used to pray, saying, 'We ask you, by the unlettered Messenger whom You promised to send by the end of time, to grant us victory'; thus, they defeated their enemies. However, when Allah *the Almighty* sent Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* they disbelieved in him out of their rebellion and envy. They disbelieved because they wanted to keep the temporal authority they had. In fact, they did not only resort to mere falsification, but they also distorted all their available Books that prove the truthfulness of Messenger Muhammad's Prophethood.

Another kind of people denied the Resurrection, the Gathering, the Account, and the Recompense of the Day of Judgment and denied the universal signs of Allah *the Almighty* which are proof in and of themselves for Allah's Power to resurrect the people. Such kind of people are mentioned in the chapter in question. He *the Almighty* says: 'The disbelievers claim they will not be raised from the dead...' (*at-Taghabun*: 7) yet, He *the Almighty* emphatically states: 'Say: [Prophet], "Yes indeed! I swear by my Lord! You will be raised and then you will be informed about everything you have done..."' (*at-Taghabun*: 7) These will not only enter the fire, but will also be its dwellers. It is a home of fire, blaze, *zaqqum*, lamenting, crying, purulence, chains, restrictions and burning bodies. In this connection, He *the Almighty* says: '(As for) those who disbelieve in Our communications, We shall make them enter fire; so oft as their skins are thoroughly burned, We will change them for other skins, that they may taste the chastisement; surely Allah is Mighty, Wise.' (*an-Nisa*: 56)

Allah *the Almighty* will eternalise their lives so that their punishment continues endlessly; they will taste an everlasting punishment by a Decree of Allah *the Almighty*. Science proved that the human being's sensitivity to pain resulting from beating by the lash decreases after the first twenty lashes; yet, man forgets that the punishment of the Hereafter is completely different. He *the Almighty* creates for the punished ones new sensors in order to feel the

punishment constantly, a fact which is clear in His saying: ‘Abiding eternally therein. The punishment will not be lightened for them, nor will they be reprieved.’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 88) Thus, the punishment continues by maintaining their skins and replacing them with others. It is known that the normal fire eats what is in it, and then it ends. Yet, the fire in the Hereafter has no end; whenever they are roasted in it, they are replaced with other skins and thus the fire remains blazing and does not get quenched.

In the verse in question, Allah *the Almighty* says that those who disbelieved and denied His verses and signs: ‘...are the companions of the Fire...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 10). The companion is the one who is pleased with his/her companion and likes to sit with him/her and spend his/her best time with him/her. Thus, the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...the companions of the Fire...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 10) implies that fire loves them; it rejoices when they enter it, like when a Companion rejoices at his/her friend and does not want to leave them ever. In the same connection, He *the Almighty* says: ‘On the Day We will say to Hell, “Have you been filled?” and it will say, “Are there some more?”’ (*Qaf*: 30) Thus, the love of the fire for the disbelievers is clear; it will accompany them everywhere. It is not a noble company for the fire, but it loves it, for when it burns every disbeliever, sinner, and hypocrite, it becomes happy as it punishes those who disbelieved in Allah’s Way of Guidance and denied His signs in the worldly life.

Similarly, paradise loves the company of those who believed in Allah *the Almighty* those who dedicated themselves to worship Him and who applied His Way of Guidance. In this regard, He *Glorified is He* says: ‘Indeed, they who have believed and done righteous deeds and humbled themselves ⁽¹⁾ to their Lord – those are the companions of paradise; they will abide therein.’ (*Hud*: 23) This means that paradise befriends, loves and accompanies the believers, just as the fire accompanies the disbelievers and the deniers of Allah’s signs. Like the fire when it rejoices while burning the disbeliever, paradise rejoices when

(1) In his *Tafsir*, Ibn Al-Jawzi mentions that there are seven meanings for ‘Humbled themselves’, as follows: they feared their Lord; repented and turned back to Him; are content with and faithful to Him; and yield and submit to Him. See Ibn Al-Jawzi, *Zad Al-Masir*, 3/333.

it pleases the believer. So, the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘the companions of the Fire...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 10) means that the sinner befriends and accompanies the fire, exactly like a person who befriends and accompanies his/her friend because the fire communicates with the disobedient people, wondering: ‘Are there some more?’ (*Qaf*: 30) Companionship requires a kind of association and attraction between the companions; thus, there will be attraction between the disbelievers and the fire. Further, the word ‘companion’ is attributed to someone who you know very closely. There is a distinction between someone whom you accompany, someone whom you befriend, another whom you establish brotherhood relations with and others whom you are acquainted with yet do not have a close relationship with them. Acquaintance has degrees, while companionship means connection and attraction between two people.

There are also the companions of hellfire, a fact which is clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘But those who disbelieve and deny Our Signs – those are the companions of Hellfire.’ (*al-Ma‘ida*: 10) When we hear Allah’s saying: ‘companions of Hellfire,’ (*al-Ma‘ida*: 10) our souls are shaken by such undesired companionship. As mentioned previously, companionship implies accompaniment and association – as if the hellfire does not leave them and they do not either. Even though, the hellfire longs for them. On the Day of Judgment, it has two missions: the first one is the companionship which the disbeliever cannot avoid; and the second is restricting the disbeliever in order not to have an opportunity to leave it. As the fire loves and longs for these disbelievers, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘And those who disbelieved will be driven to hell in groups until when they reach it, its gates have been opened...’ (*az-Zumar*: 71). On the contrary, He *the Almighty* says about the people and companions of the paradise: ‘But those who feared their Lord will be driven to Paradise in groups until when they reach it, its gates are being opened...’ (*az-Zumar*: 73). The fire opens its gates as soon as the disbelievers are driven to it in groups; meanwhile, the people of paradise receive a welcome party, honouring them at the gates of paradise. It is worth noting that Allah’s saying: ‘are being opened’ (*az-Zumar*: 73) suggests that the gates of paradise are being opened slowly and leisurely in order to celebrate the newcomers of the obedient people who are received by the angels at the gates of paradise. On the other hand, those who disbelieve and deny Allah’s Verses

and Signs and who are the companions of the fire are taken out of the mighty woeful situation into immediate execution of the punishment – they are pushed and driven to such punishment.

In this vein, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘The Day they are thrust toward the Fire of Hell with [violent] thrust...’ (*at-Tur*: 13) This means that the disbelievers on that Day will be pushed violently, shoved roughly, and pulled, while on their faces into the fire of hell. In addition, they will be rebuked by the angels who will say: ‘This is the Fire which you used to deny.’ (*at-Tur*: 14) Thus, on the Day of Judgment, they will taste the eternal punishment which is unmatched and ineffable. ‘Thrust’ means to push suddenly and violently, namely, they are pushed violently, forcibly and powerfully into the fire. In this regard, Muqatil said, ‘Their hands are chained to their necks and their foreheads are tied to their feet, then they are pushed violently and dragged into the fire on their faces.’

Further, Allah *the Almighty* says in the verse in question: ‘...there to remain...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 10). This indicates that it is impossible for those who disbelieved and denied the Verses of Allah *the Almighty* to escape from this punishment, for it is eternal; the punished one does not leave it, nor does it leave him/her. They are the companions of the fire. It accompanies them and they connect with it, so it does not leave them and they do not move away from it. Yet, does ‘remaining’ mean staying for a long time or eternally? If the meaning of ‘remaining’ signifies eternity, Allah *the Almighty* would not have described staying in the fire as: ‘...there will abide therein...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 88) and in another instance: ‘they will abide therein forever.’ (*an-Nisa*: 169) This indicates that ‘forever’ implies magnifying the meaning of ‘abide’ without the adverb ‘forever’. Thus, if both verses showed that ‘abide’ suggests perpetuation, then the adverb ‘forever’ would not add extra meaning. However, the Quran is the Speech of Allah *the Almighty* which is free of redundancy and repetition. So, it is necessary to note that ‘abiding’ here indicates staying for long; yet, ‘abiding forever’ means staying for so long that staying has no end since each word in the Quran is clear and meaningful. Allah *the Almighty* says about the eternality of the disbelievers’ dwelling in the fire: ‘The Day it comes no soul will speak except by His Permission. And among them will be the wretched and the prosperous. As for those who were [destined to be] wretched, they

will be in the fire. For them therein is [violent] exhaling and inhaling. [They will be] abiding therein as long as the heavens and the earth endure, except what your Lord should will. Indeed, your Lord is an effecter of what He intends.' (*Hud*: 105-107) Allah *the Almighty* mentions abiding forever in the fire in only three verses of the Quran: 'Except the path of Hell; they will abide therein forever. And that, for Allah, is [always] easy.' (*an-Nisa*': 169); 'Indeed, Allah has cursed the disbelievers and prepared for them a Blaze. Abiding therein forever, they will not find a protector or a helper.' (*al-Ahzab*: 64-65); 'And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger – then indeed, for him is the fire of Hell; they will abide therein forever.' (*al-Jinn*: 23)

In the same vein, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'Death will be brought forward in the shape of a black and white ram. Then a call-maker will call: "O people of Paradise!" Thereupon, they will stretch their necks and look carefully. The caller will say, "Do you know this?" They will say, "Yes, this is death." By then all of them will have seen it. Then it will be announced again, "O people of Hell!" They will stretch their necks and look carefully. The caller will say: "Do you know this?" They will say, "Yes, this is death." By then all of them will have seen it. Then it (that ram) will be slaughtered and the caller will say, "O people of Paradise! Eternity for you and no death! O people of the Fire! Eternity for you and no death!"⁽¹⁾ Then, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* recited: "And warn them [O Muhammad] of the Day of Regret when the matter has been concluded, and [yet] they are in [a state of] heedlessness and they do not believe.'" (*Maryam*: 39)

Depicting death as a white and black ram suggests that death has an entity. Allah *the Almighty* teaches us that He slaughters death so that we live eternally without death. The people of paradise and also the people of the fire will recognise death and stretch their necks and look carefully. Slaughtering death before them is meant to disappoint the disbelievers because there will be no hope for ending their punishment since death would cease to exist.

(1) See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 4730; Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 7360; At-Tabarani, Al-Mu'jam Al-Kabir, Hadith no. 13165.*

As Allah *the Almighty* emphasises eternity in the fire for the disbelievers who denied His Verses and Signs, He *Glorified is He* makes them lose hope in the mitigation of their punishment or reconsideration of their case in hope for mercy. In this regard, He *the Almighty* says: ‘Abiding eternally therein. The punishment will not be lightened for them, nor will they be reprieved.’ (*al-Baqara*: 162) They should not think that punishment in the Hereafter will be mitigated, decreased in degree or period, or that it will be discontinuous. When punishment is repeated, the human being may get adapted to it. Yet, in reality, the punishment of the Hereafter becomes more severe as its mitigation is not possible. It remains perpetually painful. People might mistakenly think that as long as the disbeliever enters the fire and is burned, s/he will perish and come to an end. Yet, they forget an issue while remembering another. The disbeliever pretends to have forgotten the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘Indeed, those who disbelieve in Our Verses – We will drive them into a Fire. Every time their skins are roasted through We will replace them with other skins so they may taste the punishment. Indeed, Allah is ever Exalted in Might and Wise.’ (*an-Nisa*: 56) The punishment of the disbelievers is inevitable and He *the Almighty* does not relieve them for a break; He *the Almighty* says: ‘And those in the Fire will say to the keepers of Hell, “Supplicate your Lord to lighten for us a day from the punishment, ”’ (*Ghafir*: 49) and ‘Those are the ones who have bought the life of this world [in exchange] for the Hereafter, so the punishment will not be lightened for them, nor will they be aided.’ (*al-Baqara*: 86) Further, no one can lighten the punishment for them.

In the same connection, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘And they will call, “O Malik, let your Lord put an end to us!” He will say, “Indeed, you will remain.”’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 77) They wish to perish by death in order to rest from the permanent punishment which has no end.

Afterwards, Malik says to them: ‘Indeed, you will remain.’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 77) Thus, the disbelievers will remain in the Fire forever because they have no excuse for their disbelief. Thus, Allah *the Almighty* has decreed the matter in order to disappoint the disbelievers who might mistakenly think that death will end their punishment and thus relieve them. This is impossible since He *the Almighty* brings death and slaughters it before their eyes. Hence, there will

be no death, since death is dead. That is why He *the Almighty* describes their fate as: 'a miserable destination.' (*at-Taghabun*: 10) This shows the evil fate of the disbelievers. The word 'miserable' suggests condemnation and disapproval. So, when the fire becomes the last and permanent dwelling, is not this the wretched destination? They did not find resort except in hell which is naturally a miserable destination.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says:

مَا أَصَابَ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ يُؤْمِنْ
بِاللَّهِ يَهْدِ قَلْبَهُ، وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١١﴾

**Misfortunes can only happen with God's permission — He
will guide the heart of anyone who believes in Him:
God knows all things [11] (The Quran, *at-Taghabun*: 11)**

Nothing runs counter to Allah's Predestination for it is inevitable; no one can oppose Him *Glorified is He* if He wills to make him/her sick, poor, or dead. So, nothing in the universe can avert His Will. As long as you cannot, you should yield pleasantly and be patient regarding His Predestination for you in order to taste and enjoy the belief in His Comprehensive Knowledge, Wisdom and Omnipotence. In this connection, 'Ubada ibn As-Samit said to his son, 'O son! You will not get the taste of reality in faith until you know that what has come to you could not miss you and that what has missed you could not come to you. I heard Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* say, "The first thing Allah created is the pen. He said to it: 'Write.' It asked: 'What should I write, my Lord?' He said: 'Write what was decreed about everything till the last Hour comes.' Son, I heard Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* say, 'He who dies on something other than this does not belong to me.'"⁽¹⁾

Here, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Misfortunes can only happen with Allah's permission—He will guide the heart of anyone who believes in Him: Allah

(1) See Abu Dawud, *Sunnan*, Hadith no. 4702; see also Al-Bayhaqi, *As-Sunnan Al-Kubra*, Hadith no. 21400; At-Tabarani, *Musnad*, Hadith no. 59; Al-Bayhaqi, *Al-Qada' Wa Al-Qadar*, Hadith no. 8; and Abu Nu 'aym, *Hilyat Al-Awliya'*, 5/248

knows all things.’ (*at-Taghabun*: 11) He *the Almighty* mentions the reward of the believers, saying: ‘He will cancel the sins of those who believed in Him and acted righteously: He will admit them into Gardens graced with flowing streams, there to remain forever – the supreme triumph.’ (*at-Taghabun*: 9) Then, He *the Almighty* mentions the punishment of the disbelievers, saying: ‘But those who disbelieved and rejected Our Signs will be the inhabitants of the Fire there to remain—a miserable destination.’ (*at-Taghabun*: 10) In the chapter in question, He *the Almighty* states the elements of faith required from people, saying: ‘So believe in Allah, in His Messenger, and in the light We have sent down...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 8). Thus, the elements of faith are as follows: Belief in Allah, in His Messenger, in the Quran and in the Divine Predestination. So, He *the Almighty* says here: ‘Misfortunes can only happen with Allah’s permission...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 11).

‘Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* said: ‘Once we were sitting in the company of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* when there appeared a man dressed in very white clothes with extraordinary black hair. No signs of fatigue of journey appeared on him and he was known to none of us. He sat down facing Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* leaning his knees against the knees of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and placing both his palms over his two thighs and said, “O Muhammad, tell about faith.” Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: “It is to believe in Allah, His angels, His Books, His Messengers and the Last Day and that you believe in preordainment, its bad and good consequences.” He said: “You have spoken the Truth.”’⁽¹⁾

There are times when the human being does not have choices, such as sickness and death, so s/he cannot say, ‘I will not get sick,’ or ‘I will not die.’ S/he may lose his/her wealth or have his/her home burned, so s/he cannot prevent the Predestination. The calamities are destined by Allah *the Almighty* in

(1) This Hadith is narrated by Ahmad, An-Nasa’i, At-Tayalisi, and Al-Bayhaqi on the authority of ‘Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him*. It is the Hadith of Gabriel who was asking about Islam, Iman and Perfection while in the shape of a man. See Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 367; An-Nasa’i, Sunnan, Hadith no. 4990; At-Tayalisi, Musnad, Hadith no. 21; and Al-Bayhaqi, As-Sunnan Al-Kubra, Hadith no. 21393

order to benefit the believer for when s/he faces a calamity, it either removes a misdeed for him/her or raises him/her one degree. If the believer receives the calamity with satisfaction and recognises that Allah *the Almighty* Who decreed it, is All-Wise and only destines for him/her what He knows for sure to be good, even if it is unknown by him/her, then s/he is rewarded for his/her patience and satisfaction. Thus, s/he quits the circle of severe pain.

So, the true believer receives all Allah's Predestinations with satisfaction. Allah's Predestinations, as long as unchosen, have wisdom behind them since He *the Almighty* only destines what is good for the believer. After the soul is satisfied with its destiny, the person will ultimately know the wisdom behind it. If you receive your various destines well, you will find out that your failure in any incident destined for you is a result of your deeds. As for the destinies which you have no control over, they are destinies for a good reason which might be unknown to you.

Thus, if receiving the destiny has been out of your control, it is in your interest; if it has been resulting from you, it is against you. Besides, if you count the destinies which benefit you, you will find them much more than the bad ones. So, the believer needs to be connected with Allah *the Almighty* and put his/her trust in Him, taking into consideration that putting trust in Him *Glorified is He* means that the limbs act while the hearts trust Him, since trust in Allah *the Almighty* is the mission of the hearts, not the limbs. Each one of us should beware that Allah *the Almighty* may constrain our means of sustenance in order not to tempt us. In this way, your faith in Him as well as that of the people will be straightened. Hence, you should thank Allah *the Almighty* and submit to His Preordainment and Destiny. In this regard, He *the Almighty* says: 'But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.' (*al-Baqara*: 216) Whoever accepts His Predestination and remembers that s/he has a Lord Who bestows beyond all reasons, s/he will be endowed with a heart filled with reassurance before any incident. When the Muslim accepts and submits to Allah's Predestination, s/he will reap the fruits of this submission. The period of tribulation lingers for people because they do not accept it as Allah's Predestination; however, He *the Almighty* cannot be forced by anyone, and His Predestination is inevitable whether you accept it or not.

When you submit to Allah *the Almighty* and accept His Predestination, He removes your tribulations or shows you the goodness embodied in them. So, you have to respect and accept His Predestination because it is decided by your Lord, the Creator, and the All-Wise. His Predestination is not removed until people accept it. More often than not, we see people rejecting the Predestination, especially when a young child dies. You see his/her family crying and wailing so much over him/her to the extent that we might hear someone saying, ‘S/he did not enjoy his/her youth.’ These acts of ignorance are absurd; what youth?! What pleasure is this? S/he left a futile and mortal worldly life and a temporary pleasure, moving into the everlasting dwelling and permanent pleasure. How is this? S/he stopped living with the creatures and went to the Creator *Glorified is He*.

When you face a painful destiny, you should be patient because you should know it is decreed with the Wisdom of Allah *the Almighty*. The person afflicted with such destiny should believe that: ‘Misfortunes can only happen with Allah’s Permission...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 11). S/he must return to Allah *the Almighty* and recall His saying: ‘Who, when disaster strikes them, say, ‘Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return.’’ (*al-Baqara*: 156)

The disaster is the thing which causes hardship and pain to the human being. The believer shall receive the disaster trusting that s/he will be rewarded proportional to the inflection. When the believer says: ‘Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return,’ (*al-Baqara*: 156) it means that even if s/he is afflicted by the calamities of the worldly life, including oppression by a human being, s/he will be rewarded for it when we return to Allah *the Almighty*.

We belong to Allah *the Almighty* in the first place, and we are His Possession in the final destination as well; He *the Almighty* is the Owner of our beginning and end. So, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* taught us to say when we suffer from a calamity: ‘Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return.’ (*al-Baqara*: 156); and: ‘O Allah, reward me for my affliction and give me something better than it in exchange for it.’⁽¹⁾ If you say

(1) In his book, Imam Muslim mentions that Um Salama Allah be pleased with her said, ‘I heard Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* say, “There is no Muslim who is stricken with a calamity and reacts by saying as Allah has commanded: Indeed =

so when you suffer from any calamity, then Allah *the Almighty* will compensate you with something better in exchange. The believer may suffer the calamity of the death of someone dear to him/her, yet, s/he receives the calamity with faith and says, 'My grieving will not get him/her back; it is better to win paradise by being patient and accepting this predestination. The reward I gain out of this is a sufficient condolence for me; I would not gain from him/her the reward I have gained when I endure the calamity of losing him/her.' When the human being suffers a calamity, s/he should be satisfied and say, 'As long as I have no interference in the calamity which Allah *the Almighty* destined for me, then it is a test and He *the Almighty* will reward me for it.'

When a father is inflicted by the death of a son, he may grieve for a long time and the deceased's mother may wail whenever she sees a child at his age. However, if they want Allah *the Almighty* to remove their calamity, then they need to close the door of grieving by acceptance and submission to His Predestination. Each believer should know that s/he will be compensated for the death of someone dear to him/her by a reward better than what s/he lost, and that the dead one will be compensated with a reward better than the worldly life. As a result, it is said, 'The inflicted one is not one who is stricken with a calamity of losing his/her dear ones, but it is s/he who loses the reward of bearing this calamity and accepting Allah's Predestination.'⁽¹⁾ It is as if the inflicted one, who was deprived of the reward, had sold his/her calamity with a cheap value. When people stricken with the calamity recall its reward, this helps them live in pleasure. No wonder some people praise and thank Allah

= *we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return. O Allah, reward me for my affliction and give me something better than it in exchange for it," but Allah will compensate him with something better than it.'* It is also narrated by Ahmad and Al-Bayhaqi. See Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 2165; Ahmad, Sunnan, Hadith no. 26677, 16388; and Al-Bayhaqi, As-Sunnan Al-Kubra, Hadith no. 7376

(1) Al-Bayhaqi mentions that Ja'far Ibn Mohamad said: 'When Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him died and condolences came, they heard someone saying: "There is in Allah a condolence for every calamity, a compensation for every loss and attainment for every missing issue." So, trust and ask Allah; the infected one is the one who is deprived of the reward.' It is also mentioned by Al-Hakim who authenticated it, and Adh-Dhahabi agreed with him. See Al-Bayhaqi, As-Sunnan Al-Kubra, 7342; Al-Hakim, Mustadrak, Hadith no. 4391.

the Almighty for the calamities since they may be provided with a greater reward than what they lost. So, you have to receive the calamity with satisfaction and beware of separating the calamity from the One Who decreed it; rather, you should examine the goodness that follows it and should never despair. Despair upon the calamity is futile. If you associate the calamity with the One Who decreed it, you will know that He is All-Wise and decreed it for an unseen wisdom. So, if you deeply thought about it, you will reach the same conclusion.

The calamity does not strike anyone except by the permission of Allah *the Almighty* since nothing occurs in His Dominion without His Will. In this regard, He *the Almighty* says: ‘Say, “Never will we be struck except by what Allah has decreed for us...”’ (*at-Tawba*: 51) Thus, nothing will happen to us except what He *the Almighty* has decreed for us. It is worth noting that He *the Almighty* says: ‘...what Allah *the Almighty* has decreed for us...”’ (*at-Tawba*: 51) and does not say ‘what was decreed against us.’ When we examine the matter of being stricken by a calamity, we will find it in our interest, as He *the Almighty* will reward us for it. He *the Almighty* does not say: ‘what was decreed against us’ because it will suggest that it is a punishment by Him. So, the true believer receives each calamity while expecting goodness out of it. Besides, as long as we cannot prevent calamities and incidents, then we should accept them as what the true believer should do. As it is Allah’s Decree for us, this makes us feel that the calamity is in the interest of whoever is stricken by it. So, if you saw a calamity striking us and thought it would harm us, you need to know that we trust the One Who decreed it; it bears a piece of wisdom as everything is decreed in our interest, not against it. Thus, all what Allah *the Almighty* has decreed for the believer is in his/her interest in order to rectify or reward him/her or improve his/her position in life; that is why it is in our interest.

With regard to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...only happen with Allah’s Permission...”’ (*at-Taghabun*: 11) it emphasises that the calamities do not befall except by His permission. This is one of His favours because it saves the human being from humbling him/herself before others as those people cannot cause him/her harm unless it has been decreed by Allah *the Almighty*. This proves what Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said in a Hadith: ‘If you ask, ask from Him [alone]; if you seek help, then seek help

from Allah. And remember that if all people gather to benefit you, they will not be able to benefit you except that which Allah *the Almighty* had decreed for you; and if all of them gather to do harm to you, they will not be able to afflict you with anything other than which Allah *the Almighty* had pre-destined against you. The pens had been lifted and the ink had dried up.'⁽¹⁾

Then, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'He will guide the heart of anyone who believes in Him...' (*at-Taghabun*: 11) The greatness of faith is manifested when the sincere believer is stricken by an undesirable destiny. His/her sincere faith guides his/her heart. 'Guide' here means to show, indicate, clarify, and manifest; this is the Guidance of natural disposition. The other kind of Guidance is that of guiding to the Straight Path and Support. Guidance of Natural Disposition is the closest meaning for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'He will guide the heart of anyone who believes in Him...' (*at-Taghabun*: 11) It means to direct his/her heart and help it accept Allah's Predestination and Decree when s/he is stricken with calamities. It is Allah *the Almighty* Who guide us to the Straight Path. Guidance is realised only through adhering to Allah's Way of Guidance and His Straight Path, which makes people patient, content and satisfied when they are inflicted with a calamity.

'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas, one of the greatest scholar of the *ummah* and the Interpreter of the Quran, explained the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'He will guide the heart of anyone who believes in Him...' (*at-Taghabun*: 11) saying, 'Guide his/her heart to certainty in order to recognise that what has stricken you could not miss you and that what has missed you could not inflict you.' Abu Al-'Aliya⁽²⁾ says, 'Allah *the Almighty* has committed that He guides whoever believes in Him; He suffices whoever puts his/her trust in Him; He rewards

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- (1) *This Hadith is narrated by At-Tirmidhi, Ahmad and Abu Ya'la on the authority of Ibn 'Abass Allah be pleased with him. It was authenticated by Husayn Salim Asad. See At-Tirmidhi, Sunnan, Hadith no. 2516; Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 2763; Abu Ya'la, Musnad, Hadith no. 2556*
- (2) *Abu Al-'Aliya Rafi' ibn Mahran, an Imam, reciter, memoriser and interpreter of Quran, is a figure from Bani Rayyah, Al-Basra. He was a slave for a woman from Bani Rayyah ibn yarbu' then Bani Tamim. He witnessed the era of Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him when he was a young man. He declared his Islam when Abu Bakr As-Sidiq was Caliph. He used to listen to 'Umar, 'Ali and Abu-Dharr among other Companions before he died in 93 A.H.*

whoever gives charity for His sake; He saves whoever trusts Him; He responds to whoever prays to Him.’⁽¹⁾

In the same vein, Muqatil ibn Sulaiman⁽²⁾ said, ‘Whoever believes in Allah in the event of a calamity and recognises that the calamity is the Destiny of Allah, and submits to Him, Allah *the Almighty* guides him/her to say: ‘Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return.’ (*al-Baqara*: 156) So, Allah’s saying: ‘He will guide his heart...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 11) means that He *the Almighty* guides his/her heart to submission to His Decree and contentment with His Predestination, as s/he recognises it is a decree by Allah *the Almighty*. At that time, He *the Almighty* guides his/her heart, which makes him/her reassured, content, enduring patiently the calamities; and thus s/he gains an immediate reward along with the reward saved for him/her on the Day of Judgment. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Indeed, the patient will be given their reward without account [i.e. limit]’ (*az-Zumar*: 10). On the contrary, those who despair and panic do not settle down before calamities related to the self, wealth, children or dear ones. When Allah *the Almighty* guides one’s heart, s/he does not panic; instead, s/he endures the calamity pleasantly and does not complain, despair or fear. When the human being is stricken with a calamity beyond his/her endurance and has no way out, s/he has two options: first, to receive the calamity with despair and complaint; secondly, to receive

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- (1) Abu Al-‘Aliya said, ‘Allah has committed Himself that He guides whoever believes in Him; the proof is: ‘And whoever believes in Allah – He will guide his heart...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 11); He suffices whoever puts his trust in Him; He rewards whoever lends Him; the proof is the saying of Allah: ‘Whoever that would loan Allah a goodly loan so He may multiply it for him many times over.’ (*al-Baqara*: 245); He saves whoever trusts Him; the proof is His saying: ‘And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all-together.’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 103) Holding to Allah is Trust. He responds to whoever prays for Him; the proof is His saying: ‘And when My servants ask you, [O Muhammad], concerning Me – Indeed I am near. I respond to the invocation of the supplicant when he calls upon Me...’ (*al-Baqara*: 186). See Adh-Dhahabi, *Siyar A‘lam Al-Nubala’*, 4/211; and Abu Na‘yam, *Hilyat Al-Awliya’*, 2/ 221
- (2) Muqatil ibn Sulayman ibn Bashir Al-Uzdi Al-Balkhi, Abu Al-Hasan, a figure among the interpreters of *Quran*, originated from Balkh, moved to Basra and entered Baghdad. He died in 150 AH. His narrations of *Hadiths* were avoided. His books include *At-Tafsir Al-Kabir*, *Nawadir At-Tafsir*, *Ar-Radd ‘Ala Al-Qadariyya*, and *Mutashabih Al-Quran*. See, Az-Zirikli, *Al-‘Alam*, 7/ 281.

it with endurance and patience. Allah *the Almighty* frequently inflicts the believers with hardships. However, these hardships are favours from Him *the Almighty* since the mere hardship is not evil in itself; instead, the real evil is to fall in the event of hardships by not enduring them and accepting His Predestination. So, each hardship is a test and a trial.

In this connection, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And He will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth, lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient.' (*al-Baqara*: 155) The first hardship of these is fear, since your fear helps its source to overwhelm you. So, do not live in fear and panic before their actual time comes. The plight of people is that they live in calamities before they strike them; thus, they extend the period of the calamities. The calamity might come after a month, for instance, so why do you extend the period of the calamity by fearing and worrying about facing it? You need to know that when the calamity befalls you, Allah, the Most Merciful, accompanies it with relief. So, if you lived in the calamity before it struck you, you would undergo it without the relief accompanying it; yet, if you remained patient, content and able to face any hardship, then you would not experience the calamity without relief. The second hardship is hunger, the third is the decrease of wealth, the fourth is the loss of lives, and the fifth is the loss of fruits.

Most importantly, the human being should manage these hardships in order to face life with endurance and strength. The hardship is not evil in itself; it is a test which the person might pass while another one might fail in it. So, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'He will guide the heart of anyone who believes in Him...' (*at-Taghabun*: 11). The one who succeeds is the one who believes in Allah *the Almighty* truly, tastes the sweetness of Faith that all the destinies are decreed by Allah. Such a believer has his/her heart guided by Him *Glorified is He*.

Then, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Allah knows all things.' (*at-Taghabun*: 11) Allah *the Almighty* has All Encompassing Knowledge about everything whether in the past, the present, or the future. He *Glorified is He* knows the events before they come to pass. Moreover, He knows the submission of those who yielded and accepted His Predestination and rewards them, and He knows the rejection of those who rejected it. He *the Almighty* is All Knowing; no secret can be

concealed from Him and nothing may occur in the universe without His Knowledge and Permission. He *the Almighty* knows what we conceal and what we declare. No atom of His universe is hidden from Him. Further, He knows people's conditions, speeches, acts, and secrets. Thus, His Knowledge is comprehensive; He knows your intent, the extent of your patience over what has stricken you, as well as your degree of certainty and submission to Him.

In this regard, a father advises his son before his death; he is about to leave the worldly life and meet Allah *the Almighty*. Al-Walid ibn 'Ubada As-Samit entered upon his father, 'Ubada, while he was sick and dying. Al-Walid says, 'I said, "O Father, advise me to the best of your ability." He said, "Help me sit down," and added, "O son you will not taste faith and will not realise the true reality of knowledge about Allah until you believe in predestination; whether good or evil." I said, "O father, how do I know the good predestination and the evil one?" He said, "What has struck you could not miss you and that what has missed you could not come to you. O son, I heard Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying, 'The first thing created is the pen. Then, he said: Write. By this hour, everything until the Day of Judgement was decreed' O son, if I died while not on this, I would enter the fire⁽¹⁾.

On the other hand, sometimes the calamities are destined because of the people themselves, a fact which is clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'And when We let the people taste mercy, they rejoice therein, but if evil afflicts them for what their hands have put forth, immediately they despair.' (*ar-Rum*: 36) If you associate the mercy or calamity with the One Who decreed them, you will know that He *the Almighty* is Wise in both conditions. Yet, if you look at the calamity only, you will grieve and despair. However, if you consider the Mercy of the One Who decreed such calamity, you will be content and reassured.

The calamity is meant to be the thing which strikes you and it does not miss you because it is decreed by your Lord, the Wise. If He *the Almighty* decreed something good for you, it will come so do not worry about it or compete with people for it. If it was bad, you should never say, 'I will be

(1) See Ahmad, *Musnad*, Hadith no. 22757; and At-Tabarani, *Musnad*, Hadith no. 949.

cautious in order to avoid it,' because there is no escape for you from it. Further, why do you despair and become disappointed if you are stricken with a calamity? Why do you not wait and see; it should have wisdom behind it. Maybe there is unseen goodness out of it and perhaps it is a hardship which will be relieved soon. Allah *the Almighty* then says:

وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ فَإِن تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَإِنَّمَا عَلَى رَسُولِنَا الْبَلْغُ الْمُبِينُ ﴿١٢﴾

So obey God and the Messenger. If you turn away, remember that Our Messenger's duty is only to make plain his message [12] (The Quran, *at-Taghabun*: 12)

Here, Allah *the Almighty* commands the Muslims to obey Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* because it is part of their obedience to Him *Glorified is He*. In this regard, He *the Almighty* says: 'He who obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah; but those who turn away – We have not sent you over them as a guardian.' (*an-Nisa*': 80) So, whoever refrains from obeying him *peace and blessings be upon him* will be punished in the Hereafter. Furthermore, Allah *the Almighty* says about those who rebel against his obedience: 'Say, "Obey Allah, and the Messenger." But if they turn away – then indeed, Allah does not like the disbelievers.' (*Al- 'Imran*: 32)

In the same vein, it is narrated that 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* said, 'I was sitting with Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and some of his Companions when he *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Do you not know that I am the Messenger of Allah who has been sent for you?' They said, 'We testify that you are the Messenger of Allah.' He said, 'Do you not know that Allah *the Almighty* has revealed in His Book that whoever obeys me has obeyed Allah?' They said, 'We testify that whoever obeys you obeys Allah. Allah orders us to obey you.' He said, 'Obey Allah and the Messenger; the obedience of Allah is my obedience. My obedience requires obedience of your Imams; if the Imam performed the prayers while sitting down; perform your prayers while sitting.'⁽¹⁾

(1) See Ahmad, *Musnad*, Hadith no. 5679; Al-Bazzar, *Musnad*, Hadith no. 6093; At-Tabarani, *Mu'jam*, Hadith no. 13060; Abu Ja'far At-Tahawi, *Sharh Mushkil Al-Athar*, Hadith no. 5644, and Ibn 'Asakir, *Mu'jam Sheikh*, Ibn 'Asakir, Hadith no. 732.

Obedience involves complying with the commands and avoiding the prohibition; this is the obedience in the religion. If you examined the Quran, you will find that the verses regarding the matter of obedience required from those who believe in Allah's Way of Guidance and testify that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, is represented in orders and prohibitions. If you read the Quran, you will find He *the Almighty* says regarding obedience: 'Say, "Obey Allah, and the Messenger."' (*Al-Imran*: 32) Here, He *the Almighty* does not repeat 'obey' and only repeats the ones to be obeyed: Allah *the Almighty* and His Messenger. However, He *Glorified is He* repeats the verb 'obey' saying in another verse: 'Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger...' (*an-Nisa*': 59). In a third instance, He *the Almighty* says: 'And obey the Messenger that you may receive mercy.' (*an-Nur*: 56); and in a fourth instance: 'Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you.' (*an-Nisa*': 59) Here, those in authority are added. So, when Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Obey Allah, and the Messenger,' (*Al-Imran*: 32) it includes the rulings ordained by Allah *the Almighty* and Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Therefore, you must obey both of them with regard to these rulings. If He *the Almighty* has provided a general ruling, while Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has provided a detailed one, such as prayers, *zakat* and pilgrimage, then, you must also obey both of them.

In addition, if there is a ruling not decreed by Allah *the Almighty* but by Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* we must obey him according to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'And whatever the Messenger has given you – take; and what he has forbidden you – refrain from.' (*al-Hashr*: 7) We obey him in such a ruling since Allah *the Almighty* also says in another verse: 'He who obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah...' (*an-Nisa*': 80). This is because Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has acted by the authority that Allah *Glorified is He* granted to him: 'And whatever the Messenger has given you – take; and what he has forbidden you – refrain from.' (*al-Hashr*: 7)

Thus, obeying Allah *the Almighty* requires obedience to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. There are kinds of rulings decreed by Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: First, he decrees what Allah *the Almighty*

has decreed in order to emphasise it; secondly, he elaborates on what Allah *the Almighty* has decreed generally. For example, He *the Almighty* has decreed prayer and *zakat*. These are general obligations which were elaborated on by Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. For instance, he *peace and blessings be upon him* has clarified the prescribed minimum amount liable to *zakat*. Therefore, we obey Allah *the Almighty* in His general Decree and obey Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* regarding its details.

Sometimes Allah *the Almighty* does not issue a ruling regarding a matter; yet Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* issues one by the authority granted to him. So, if anyone argued about any ruling and needed a proof from the Quran, yet you cannot find one, and can only provide a proof from what Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, then you should quote Allah's saying: 'And whatever the Messenger has given you – take; and what he has forbidden you – refrain from.' (*al-Hashr*: 7) So, Allah *the Almighty* commands the Muslims to obey Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* since his obedience is derived from obedience to Allah *Glorified is He* Who says: 'He who obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah; but those who turn away – We have not sent you over them as a guardian.' (*an-Nisa*': 80) Thus, obedience to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is obedience to Allah, and whoever refrains from his obedience is punished in the Hereafter. So, He *the Almighty* stresses the importance of obeying both Him and His Messenger, for the former entails the latter.

Obedience to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is related to all kinds of rulings and obligations. Sometimes Allah *the Almighty* decrees a ruling that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* confirms it by his Hadith or a practice; so when the believer obeys this decree, s/he obeys both Allah *the Almighty* and His Messenger. Other times, the decree is revealed by Allah *the Almighty* generally; then, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* elaborates on it. For instance, He *the Almighty* says: 'And establish prayer and give *zakat* and obey the Messenger – that you may receive mercy.' (*an-Nur*: 56) One would not have been able to know the number of daily prayers or the number of their units or the way of praying if Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had not explained them.

So, the believer obeys Allah *the Almighty* with regard to the general commandments and obeys Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with regard to their details. In fact, we should take into consideration that obedience here is divided into two types: obedience to Allah *the Almighty* and obedience to His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. As for the commandments issued by both of them, they must all be obeyed. This is because they all are of the same nature.

Concerning Allah's Commandments that carry general religious obligations, He *the Almighty* leaves the task of their explanation to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Thus, the true believer obeys Allah *the Almighty* regarding general commandments, such as the establishment of obligatory prayers, and obeys Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with respect to the detailed rules and procedures of prayers. Sometimes, the religious injunctions are issued by Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* on account of the authority that Allah *the Almighty* granted to him.

He *the Almighty* entrusts him *peace and blessings be upon him* with making legislations that ensure the sound and correct life of believers. Further, He grants him *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* the general authority to make legislations. As long as it is so, a believer's obedience to Messenger Muhammad includes what he commanded independently, even if it is not issued by Allah *Glorified is He*.

Let us offer an example to illustrate this point; we find no textual evidence in the Quran that indicates that the Dawn Prayer consists of two units. But it is Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who provided the details of prayer for us and taught us that the Dawn Prayer comprises two units; the Noon Prayer is composed of four units; the Afternoon Prayer consists of four units; the Sunset Prayer consists of three units, whilst the Evening Prayer is made up of four units.⁽¹⁾

(1) *Ibn Mas'ud Allah be pleased with him narrated that Jibril (Gabriel) came to Messenger Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him and said to him, 'Rise and perform prayer.' This was at the time when the sun reached the meridian. He indeed observed the Noon Prayer as four units. Then Jibril (Gabriel) came to him again at the moment when his shadow was double its size and said, 'Rise and perform the Afternoon Prayer as four units.' When the sun set, Jibril (Gabriel) came to him peace and blessings be upon him=*

Obedience is obligatory on all the believers, a fact which is clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'O you, who have believed, obey Allah and obey the Messenger...' (*an-Nisa*': 59).

Once you have believed in Allah *the Almighty* as the Wise Creator Who charges you with certain obligations, then you must obey and listen eagerly to what He *the Almighty* says to you. He *the Almighty* does not order all people to obey Him from the beginning; rather, He orders them first to believe in Him. As soon as one believes in Him *the Almighty* He thus commands him to obey His Commands.

Obedience to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is based on belief in Allah *the Almighty* and His Messenger. This is entirely fair because Allah *the Almighty* only commands those who believe in Him to fulfil the obligations. As for those who disbelieve, He *the Almighty* commands them to believe in Him first before charging them with any obligations. So, after the person believes in Allah *the Almighty* He says to him, 'Obey me'. That is why we note that His Commands always begin with His Saying: 'O you who have believed....' (*an-Nisa*': 59).

You should beware of delving into or arguing over the Injunctions of Allah *the Almighty* mistakenly thinking that if you are convinced of them, you will adopt them; but if not, you will neglect them! This is unacceptable altogether, since it indicates that you have doubted these injunctions. What you are bound to do is to hasten to implement these injunctions as long as you believe that they are issued by Allah *the Almighty*.

He *the Almighty* warns us against not obeying Him and His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying: 'And obey Allah and obey the Messenger and beware...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 92). So, why does He *the Almighty* give this warning? It is meant to teach us that Satan will attempt to prevent us

= and said to him, 'Rise and perform the Sunset Prayer as three units.' When the twilight disappeared, Jibril (Gabriel) came to him *peace and blessings be upon him* and said, 'Rise and observe Evening Prayer as four units.' When the dawn broke, Jibril (Gabriel) came to him and said, 'Rise and observe the Dawn Prayer as two units.' Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* rose and performed the Dawn Prayer as two units. See *At-Tabarani, Al-Mu'jam Al-Kabir, Hadith no. 14143*

from obeying Him *Glorified is He* and Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and that he will also try his best to plunge us into confusion.

The moment Satan knows that a person has an inclination towards any kind of physical pleasure; he tries to attract him to disobedience through this door. However, if a person closes all doors to Satan, he cannot beguile him into stealing or drinking alcohol, for example. So, Satan does not leave the human being alone, for he attacks him through acts of obedience. He, for example, comes to a person when he performs ablution and makes him forget to wash of his hands or makes him wonder if he has performed ablution properly or not. Satan can also come to a believer when he prays and makes him forget how many units he prayed or how many prostrations he made. Thus, Satan can attack a believer through obedience. That is why Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...and beware...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 92).

Allah *the Almighty* informs us that Satan said threateningly: ‘I will certainly lie in wait for them in Your Straight Path’ (*al-A’raf*: 16). He swears to lie in wait for Allah’s servants in the Straight Path, not the crooked one, and to sit in wait for them in the way of obedience to discourage them from it.

In fact, Allah *the Almighty* does not force the believer to obey Him. He gives him freedom of choice so that the final Reckoning in the Hereafter will be on a fair basis. Likewise, if one opts for disbelief, He *the Almighty* does not coerce one to believe. Similarly, if one opts for transgression, He *the Almighty* does not force one into obeying Him. Thus, He *the Almighty* respects one’s own choice because it is He Who grants one this choice in order to hold one accountable on the Day of Judgement.

Allah *the Almighty* gives us the choice to believe, obey, or disobey, to know who obeys Him out of love and who does so compulsorily. Then, He *the Almighty* says: ‘...If you turn away...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 12). Turning away here means diverting from Allah’s Way of Guidance and refusing to obey Him *the Almighty* and Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. He *the Almighty* forbids the believers from turning away from His Obedience, saying: ‘O you who believe! Obey Allah and His Messenger and do not turn back from Him while you hear’ (*al-Anfal*: 20). As long as you have believed, you are not allowed to give up what you have believed in. It is worth noting

that He *the Almighty* does not say: 'and do not turn back from them,' according to the human style. But He *the Almighty* rather says: '...and do not turn back from Him...' (*al-Anfal*: 20). This signifies that He *the Almighty* regards obedience to Him and to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as one thing. As he *peace and blessings be upon him* communicates Allah's Commands, there is thus no difference between the two types of obedience. Another possible interpretation is that turning away from Allah *the Almighty* is unimaginable, for He *the Almighty* seizes anyone who tries to turn away at any time.

So, with regard to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'If you turn away remember that Our Messenger's duty is only to make plain his Message' (*at-Taghabun*: 12), it means that if they shun the religious obligations, this will not do any harm to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* because he is only required to communicate the Message of Islam clearly. As a matter of fact, they cause harm to themselves when they turn away from the religious duties. Allah *the Almighty* has known since time immemorial that some people will argue, 'This ruling does not exist in the Quran.' So, obedience to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is mentioned together with that of Allah *the Almighty*.

Thus, obedience to Messenger Muhammad is independent, and He *the Almighty* wills it to be so, to respond in advance to those who look for all the religious details. So, it is as if He *the Almighty* was saying to them, 'What you will search is found in the *Sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad.' He *the Almighty* has known since time immemorial that some people will say that they will obey Allah *the Almighty* according to the Quranic texts only. In this respect, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* says, 'The time will come when a man sits on a couch and relates my Hadiths and says, "What adjudicates between me and you is the Scripture of Allah. If we find in it something unlawful, we will regard it as such, and if we find therein something unlawful, we will deem it so." [He *peace and blessings be upon him* continues,] Indeed, what Allah's Messenger declares unlawful is the same as what Allah forbids.'⁽¹⁾

(1) This Hadith is narrated by Abu Dawud, Ibn Maja, Ahmad and Ad-Daraqutni on the authority of Al-Miqdam ibn Ma'di Yakrib. See Abu Dawud, *Sunnan, Hadith no. 1406*; At-Tirmidhi, *Sunnan, Hadith no. 2664*; Ibn Maja, *Sunnan, Hadith no. 12*; Ahmad, *Musnad, Hadith no. 17213 and 17233*; and Ad-Daraqutni, *Sunnan, Hadith no. 4767*.

Needless to say, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* communicates the Message of Islam on behalf of Allah *the Almighty*.

So, we should beware of Satan when he tempts us through obedience. But why does Allah *the Almighty* say: ‘If you turn away...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 12)? What are the things from which are turned away? He *the Almighty* explains to us that the human being has a choice between obedience and disobedience. Even if a person inclines towards disobedience and turns away from belief which Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* conveyed from Allah *the Almighty* and persists in disbelief, such a person must know that he *peace and blessings be upon him* has actually fulfilled his mission in the most optimal way.

It is only required of him *peace and blessings be upon him* to communicate the Islamic Way of Guidance, and he indeed clarified everything connected with all the aspects of life. He *peace and blessings be upon him* informed us about what Allah *the Almighty* wants from us. For example, he taught us to believe in One Omnipotent and Wise God Who has all the Perfect Attributes, and to avoid all the practices of Pre-Islamic Arabs, such as slaughtering animals on stone altars and idolatry.

The communication of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* obliges us to believe and to do certain actions. The actions are divided into two types: positive actions and negative ones. The first type revolves around firmly committing to doing the commands if you do not already do them, whereas the second is pertinent to refraining from what Allah *the Almighty* and Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* forbid.

We must keep in mind that Allah *the Almighty* does not want Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to be overburdened with guiding people into belief. His mission is only to convey Allah’s Message so that the final Reckoning will be based on sound and fair foundations. As for Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* he is not responsible for those who throw themselves into hell and torment, nor is he accountable for their being rightly guided; rather, he is only responsible for conveying the Message of his Lord. Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Surely We have sent you with the truth as a bearer of good news and as a warner, and you shall not be called upon to answer for the companions of the flaming fire’ (*al-Baqara*: 119).

Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* hopes that each member of his *ummah* is rightly guided. However, He *the Almighty* says: 'You have no concern in the affair whether He turns to them (mercifully) or chastises them, for surely they are unjust' (*Al-Imran*: 128). This verse means that he *peace and blessings be upon him* has nothing to do with the matter of Allah's pardoning or punishing of those who disobey. Their punishment should not grieve him, for they are unfair people. In other words, he *peace and blessings be upon him* is commissioned to convey the Message only. As far as those who disbelieve are concerned, it is they who have wronged themselves with their disbelief. It is as if Allah *the Almighty* was saying to him, 'Do not upset yourself, Muhammad! Only the communication of the Message is incumbent upon you.' Thus, He *the Almighty* facilitates Messenger Muhammad's mission.

That is why He *the Almighty* says: 'Whoever obeys the Messenger, he indeed obeys Allah, and whoever turns back, so We have not sent you as a guardian over them' (*an-Nisa*': 8). The word 'guardian' here refers to the one who guards those to whom he conveys the Commands of Allah *the Almighty* and sets them straight when they deviate from the Right Path. But Allah *the Almighty* makes it clear, 'I have not sent you, Muhammad, as a guardian over them. I just sent you to communicate the Message to them. They have the choice to follow the religious duties or to neglect them.'

When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* declares a ruling, the believers must receive it on the basis that it primarily comes from Allah *the Almighty* Who knows best that he *peace and blessings be upon him* would never conceal the Message, and so he is not to be blamed by anyone.

Thus, the main duty of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is to convey the Message, a fact which is crystal clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Nothing is (incumbent) on the Apostle but to deliver (the Message)...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 99). Concerning the implementation of the Message, it falls on the shoulders of those who believe in it. If they carry it out, their reward will be paradise, but if they do not, they will deserve punishment.

In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Indeed there have come to you clear proofs from your Lord; whoever will therefore see, it is for his own soul and whoever will be blind, it shall be against himself and I am not a keeper

over you' (*al-An'am*: 04). Here, He *the Almighty* states that the enlightening proofs have reached us, and that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has communicated the Message clearly. Thus, He *the Almighty* revealed His Laws and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* imparted them to us. What remains is that we put them into practice. So, we will not be excused by the Supreme Lawgiver, Allah *the Almighty* the Creator, or by the infallible communicator, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Delivering the Message must be carried out in a gentle, tender manner. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* relates that Prophet Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* said: 'I deliver to you the Messages of my Lord, and I offer you good advice and I know from Allah what you do not know' (*al-A'raf*: 62). So, delivering the Message requires Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* to inform his people about the Way of Allah *the Almighty* first and then to call them to follow that Way by winning over their hearts by means of addressing and counselling them in a gentle manner. The Quranic wording is miraculous; he *peace be upon him* says: '...I offer you good advice...' (*al-A'raf*: 62). This indicates that he seeks no benefit from them for giving the advice; rather, it is for the good of the one who receives it.

Thus, the disbelievers should not think that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* gets any benefit from them if they believe. In fact, their disbelief will not scale down his reward, for he *peace and blessings be upon him* will obtain no advantage from them whether they believe or disbelieve. Their turning away from what he communicates to them, neither benefits and nor harms him, as he does not receive any reward from them, but rather from Allah *the Almighty*.

With respect to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...Our Messenger's duty...' (*at-Taghabun*: 12), it refers to the obligation which Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is required to fulfil. This obligation is confined to conveying the Message as he received it without adding or omitting anything.

In this vein, he *peace and blessings be upon him* is not permitted to make additions to the Quranic verses which he receives from Allah *the Almighty*. That is why, He *the Almighty* says: 'Nor does he speak out of desire [3] It is

naught but revelation that is revealed [4]' (*an-Najm*: 3-4) so, we should have confidence in his *peace and blessings be upon him* judgements since he does not speak according to his own desires; rather, he only delivers the Call to mankind and teaches them the Quran. Allah *the Almighty* also tells us that he *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'I only follow what is revealed to me...' (*al-An'am*: 50). Thus, Messenger Muhammad's statements are not based on his personal inclinations; rather, he imparts the Divine Revelation exactly as it was revealed to him.

He *peace and blessings be upon him* is but a human who conveys Allah's Message to the people and obeys His commands. To this effect Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Say, [O Muhammad], "It is not for me to change it on my own accord. I only follow what is revealed to me. Indeed I fear, if I should disobey my Lord, the punishment of a tremendous Day"' (*Yunus*: 15).

In a related context, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* adds for us another aspect of obedience to him, saying: 'Obedience to me also includes obeying your Imams. If an Imam performs prayer while sitting, observe prayer while you are sitting as well.' He *peace and blessings be upon him* talks to us about leading others in prayer and tells us that Imams must be imitated regarding some procedures and body positions linked with prayer. If the Imam performs prayer while sitting, we should do the same.

In this connection, Jabir ibn 'Abdullah *Allah be pleased with him* said, 'Allah's Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* got ill. So we performed prayer standing while he was sitting. Abu Bakr uttered the *Takbirs* aloud so that people [praying behind] could hear. Then the Messenger turned towards us and saw us standing. He signalled to us, and we sat down [while we were performing prayer]. After uttering salutation he said, "You were at this time about to do an act like that of the Persians and the Romans. They stand before their kings while they sit, so do not do that; follow your Imams. If they perform prayer standing, you should also do so, and if they perform prayer sitting, you should also do prayer sitting."'"⁽¹⁾


(1) See Muslim, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 955; see also Ibn Maja, *Sunnan*, Hadith no.1240; Ahmad, *Musnad*, Hadith no. 14630; and Ibn Khuzayma, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 486

Conveying the Message from Allah *the Almighty* must be clearly and unequivocally done, and that is why He *the Almighty* says: ‘Our Messenger’s duty is only to make plain his Message’ (*at-Taghabun*: 12). This entails explaining everything needed for the life of the human being who is a vicegerent on earth. It must embrace all the features and fields of life. Thus, the Divine Way of Guidance encompasses all the aspects of life, starting from the declaration that there is no god but Allah and ending with removing harmful objects from roads.⁽¹⁾ This clear impartment of the Message should include all the interests of people. One should not contend, ‘Allah left such-and-such a thing unsettled.’ On the contrary, Allah’s Way of Guidance is perfect and comprehensive.

The conveyance of the Message should clarify Allah’s Way of Guidance. Here, we should take into account that Allah *the Almighty* facilitates the impartment of His Message to all people, including those with limited understanding and those who are cultured, intellectual, and meditative. Thus, no one is deprived of the goodness of the Message on the grounds of his lack of ability to understand the Quran. Quite the opposite, everyone can comprehend the Quran, a fact which is clear in His saying: ‘So, [O Muhammad], We have only made Quran easy in the Arabic language that you may give good tidings thereby to the righteous and warn thereby a hostile people’ (*Maryam*: 97). Therefore, He *the Almighty* facilitated the Quran and made it easy for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to learn by heart and to comprehensively understand its meanings. He employed it in the task for which it is revealed, that is to say, delivering the Message of Allah *the Almighty*.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says:

(1) *This Hadith is narrated by Muslim, At-Tirmidhi, An-Nasa’i, Ibn Maja and Ahmad on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him. The version of Muslim reads, ‘Belief consists of about seventy-two or sixty-two branches. The uppermost branch is to declare that there is no god but Allah, and the least branch is to remove harmful objects from roads. And modesty is a branch of belief.’ See Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 162; see also At-Tirmidhi, Sunnan, Hadith no. 26614; An-Nasa’i, Sunnan, Hadith no. 5005; Ibn Maja, Sunnan, Hadith no. 57; and Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 8913*


 اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ

God! There is no god but Him, so let the faithful put their trust in Him [13] (The Quran, *at-Taghabun*: 13)

When we say ‘Allah’, we refer to the Creator of everything. Allah *the Almighty* acquaints us with His Name ‘Allah,’ and informs us that He challenges anyone to give the same name to someone other than Him. Though there are atheists and disbelievers, none of them ever dares to call himself ‘Allah’. No one of them had the nerve to do this. They could have said, ‘We will call someone by this name and see what will happen as a result.’ But this did not occur. The word ‘Allah’ is the Name that Allah *the Almighty* selected for Himself and about which He informed us. It encompasses all His Perfect Attributes. As for His Attributes, we call them ‘the Lofty Names’, like the Omnipotent, the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing, the Ever-Living, the Sustainer of existence and *the Almighty*; even though these are all Attributes, they are regarded as Names. This is due to the fact that these Attributes in their absolute sense refer only to Allah *the Almighty*.

When these attributes are referred to in their absolute senses, they belong to Allah *the Almighty*. It is allowed to describe anyone other than Him with any of these Attributes in their limited sense. By contrast, the Name ‘Allah’ refers to Allah *the Almighty* alone.

The moment you hear the word ‘Allah,’ you must take it together with the grandest and best Attributes it implies, regardless of what you know thereof and what you do not. This is because Allah *the Almighty* created the whole universe and He is its Lord. Creation and sustaining entail numerous Attributes, such as Omnipotence, Wisdom, Omniscience, Mercy and so on. To combine His Lofty Attributes into a single word, Allah *the Almighty* calls Himself ‘Allah’ to refer to all of His Attributes.

When you commence any action, you say: ‘In the Name of Allah.’ This sums up what this action needs. That is to say that any action requires an ability, knowledge, wisdom, or might; so you should say, ‘In the Name of the Omnipotent,’ ‘In the Name of the Omniscient,’ ‘In the Name of the Wise,’ and ‘In the Name of the Almighty.’ Sometimes you need to defeat your

enemies when you go to war against them, and thus you say, ‘In the Name of the Almighty.’ It is thus clear that any action needs a set of perfect and grand attributes to serve it. So, instead of saying ‘In the Name of the Omnipotent, the Omniscient, or the Withholder,’ Allah spares you the saying of all these words as you can say only, ‘In the Name of Allah’ as this very Name embodies all His Perfect Attributes.

Thus, when you say, ‘In the Name of Allah,’ this is sufficient for you. If you are in need of power or richness, you will obtain it. The moment you utter ‘Allah,’ it is as if you said, ‘The Omnipotent, the Harmer, the Bringer of benefit, the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing, the Benefactor and so on.’ Hence, the word ‘Allah’ is a proper noun that connotes all His Perfect Attributes, not a specific one.

Allah *the Almighty* confirms for Himself all the Perfect Attributes in His Name ‘Allah’. Then, He declares the fundamental fact that there is no god but Him. It means there is no god worthy of being worshipped but Him *the Almighty*. He *the Almighty* made this clause a slogan for the believers. The slogan is a mark that distinguishes a group of people or a specific religious ritual. For example, the slogan of the calling for prayer is ‘Allah is the Greatest,’ whilst the slogan of every believer who is going through a misfortune should be ‘there is no misfortune greater than You, Allah, while You are the Lord.’ The purport of this slogan is that as long as you have a Lord, you should not worry or despair, for all problems are surmounted through Allah *the Almighty*. But the real problem is when a person has no Lord to turn to for help.

In the same connection, when the confederates gathered and besieged Medina, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* uttered this spiritual statement, ‘There is no god but Allah, the Only God. He fulfilled His Promise; He supported His servant; He conferred might upon His soldiers; and He alone vanquished the confederates.’⁽¹⁾

Also, when the believers are resurrected from their graves, their motto will be, ‘There is no god but Allah. And upon Allah let the believers rely.’

(1) *This Hadith is narrated by Al-Bazzar on the authority of Abu Hurayra who said that Messenger Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said, ‘There is no god but Allah, the Only One who supported His servant and defeated the confederates. There is nothing like Him.’ See Al-Bazzar, Musnad, Hadith no. 8438.*

The believers' slogan is monotheism, and He *the Almighty* will resurrect them while they are monotheists and reliant upon Him. In this respect 'A'isha *Allah be pleased with her* related that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'The moment when believers are resurrected from their graves, their motto will be, "There is no god but Allah. And upon Allah let the believers rely."' The believers live in this worldly life adopting monotheism and relying upon Allah *the Almighty* and, therefore, when they get out of their graves, they will do the same and hope for Allah's Mercy.

The clause 'there is no god but Allah' contains a negative part and an affirmative one. The negative part is the words 'there is no god' and the affirmative part is the words 'but Allah'. What is more, the clause 'there is no god but Allah' contains the evidence of veracity. Suppose that this is untrue; have we ever heard of any person who claimed to be a god?

Allah *the Almighty* casts more light on this issue in His saying: ' Say: If there were with Him gods as they say, then certainly they would have been able to seek a way to the Lord of power [42] Glory be to Him and exalted be He in high exaltation above what they say [43]' (*al-Isra'*: 42-43). If those alleged gods had any manifestations of power, they would go to Allah *the Almighty* and deny His Divinity. Moreover, if there was a god besides Him, a conflict would arise between them. But all of this did not happen. Thus, the clause 'there is no god but Allah' is veracious in itself even from the viewpoint of those who refute it. This is corroborated by the fact that none disputed this truth. As there is no one to dispute this truth, it is proven that there is no god but Him *the Almighty*. Suppose that there is a disputing god; where is he?

Allah *the Almighty* is the only God to whom worship and obedience are to be dedicated. Worship connotes obedience which in turn implies obeying the commands and refraining from the prohibitions. He *the Almighty* testifies for Himself that there is no god but Him, a fact which is crystal clear in His saying: 'Allah bears witness that there is no god but He, and (so do) the angels and those possessed of knowledge, maintaining His creation with justice; there is no god but He, the Mighty, the Wise' (*Al-'Imran*: 18).

He *the Almighty* bears witness for Himself that there is no god but Him, and Messenger Muhammad also testifies that there is no god but Allah, and so do

the angels. In addition to the angels, scientists can easily derive conclusive proofs of Allah's Oneness and Divinity from this vast universe.

Allah *the Almighty* bore witness that there is no god but Him even before the existence of any creature that could attest to His Oneness. He did so even before the creation of the angels who would be eyewitnesses for His Oneness.

He *the Almighty* declares: '...there is no god but He...' (*Al-Imran*: 18). He made these Words 'the declaration of Monotheism' and thus made it as easy as possible for the people. He *the Almighty* did not wish the evidence of belief in the Supreme Power to be complicated, philosophic, or only accessible to those highly cultured ones. Religion is required for all – from the shepherd to the philosopher and from the street sweeper to the professor. So, this matter should be extremely simple and intelligible to everyone.

Allah *the Almighty* attests to His Oneness from the very beginning. Among His Lofty Names is the Believer. We also believe in His Oneness, but He *the Almighty* attested to His Oneness before He ordered us to do so. If someone argues, 'How does Allah testify for Himself?' We will reply to him, saying, 'Yes, He bears witness for Himself because there is no other god but Him. Allah's Testifying for Himself is normal. It seems as if He *the Almighty* says, "there is no deity but Me, and if there should be another deity, let him show himself and disclose his whereabouts."'

If the alleged deities knew about this testimony, their silence about it and the absence of their objection to it is certainly a token of powerlessness. If they did not know about it, they would be heedless and unaware. In both cases, they cannot be true deities. What are these deities that are unfamiliar with what is happening around them or that lack the courage to confront their adversaries?

As there is no god but Allah *the Almighty* let your reliance be upon Him alone. You should know well that when you depend upon Him, alone, you count on the All-Powerful, Almighty God. In this vein, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* says, 'If you beg, beg of Him alone; and if you need assistance, supplicate to Allah alone for help. And remember that if all the people gather to benefit you, they will not be able to benefit you except that which Allah had foreordained (for you); and if all of them gather

to do harm to you, they will not be able to afflict you with anything other than that which Allah had predestined against you. The pens have been lifted and the ink has dried up.’⁽¹⁾

You take refuge with the Greatest Creator Who has Power and Control over everything. The statement ‘there is no god but Allah’ makes you dispense with others’ service. You should thus rely on and worship the only God whom nothing can overwhelm or subdue. As a matter of fact, when you turn to Allah *the Almighty* alone for help and take refuge with Him, you free yourself from the humiliation of this worldly life through the Ever-Living, the All-Powerful and *the Almighty* Lord. Once you appeal for Allah’s Help, He will give you His Support and Care. He alone is fully able to turn your powerlessness into power and your humbleness into honour. Therefore, the motto of those who believe in Allah *the Almighty* as only One God is: ‘there is no god but Allah.’ This short clause is one of the distinguishing features of Islam.

Religious rituals are also among the distinguishing features of Islam. They are all included in the order ‘do’ and the prohibition ‘do not do’. They also include matters relating to creed and religious injunctions. Here, we should pay attention to the point that ‘the religious rituals’ is predominantly used today to refer to the rites of Pilgrimage. Among the slogans of believers is reliance on Allah *the Almighty* alone. As long as we believe that there is no god but Allah, why do some of us count on anyone other than Him? Why do we place our hopes, wishes and trust in anyone other than Him?

Then Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...so let the faithful put their trust in Him’ (*at-Taghabun*: 13). Those who truly and duly believe in Allah *the Almighty* should rely on Him. The value of belief is that our body parts work while our hearts have confidence in Allah *the Almighty*. The role of our body parts, for example, is to plant, plough, bring good seeds, irrigate the soil, and spread fertilisers. Suppose that frost might come and we fear that it would damage the plants, so we bring straw and cover the plants to protect them. All of this falls into the work of the body parts. As regards our hearts, they should have

(1) This Hadith is narrated on the authority of ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abbas Allah be pleased with him. See Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith 2763; see also At-Tirmidhi, Sunnan, Hadith no. 2516; Abu Ya’ala, Musnad, Hadith no. 2556; and Al-Bayhaqi, Shu‘ab Al-Iman, Hadith no. 1043.

confidence in Allah *the Almighty*. So, you should beware of saying, ‘The crop will surely be good because I have exerted all my efforts very well.’ Instead you should not depend wholly on the physical causes because Allah’s Power transcends them.

The value of belief is that the believer is fully convinced of the Omnipotent God. Allah *the Almighty* has the full ability to create things both with and without causes. So, it is up to you to adopt the physical causes, but as for what is beyond these causes, it is controlled by Allah *the Almighty*. So when you work, you act according to the physical causes, and when you rely on Allah *the Almighty* you ensure His Help as He is the Establisher of causes.

You should beware of assuming that ‘reliance’ means stopping your body parts from working or keeping them idle, for this in fact amounts to indolence or false reliance. This is proved by the fact that those people (who do this) like to rely on Allah regarding what is difficult, yet carry out what is easy without relying on Him *the Almighty*.

One who does not rely on Allah *the Almighty* must check his faith. So, each body part has a particular function to do; the heart is to believe and place trust in Allah *the Almighty*. We should also remember that walking is the function of the feet while doing things is the function of the hands. So do not replace the function of the heart with that of the feet or hands. True reliance is to let your body parts work and let your heart trust Allah *the Almighty*. Sometimes a person works without reliance on Allah *the Almighty* and so the final outcome is loss and disappointment. So, you should beware of neglecting the physical causes or being infatuated with them since when you abandon physical causes, you are indolent, not truly reliant on Allah *the Almighty* and you thus exchange the function of the heart for those of the body parts.

If a person says to you, ‘I do not work, but I rely on Allah *the Almighty*’ you can say to him, ‘Let us learn how you consider reliance!’ Then, bring him a dish full of food s/he likes most, and when he stretches out his hands towards the food, say to him, ‘Leave the food and allow it to jump into your mouth.’ Those who do not employ their body parts and announce that they depend upon Allah *the Almighty* are liars, as reliance is not the function of the body parts responsible for the physical work; it is rather the function of the

heart. Therefore, the body parts should work while the hearts have full confidence in Allah *the Almighty*.

Here arises the question, 'Upon whom should we rely?' The answer is offered in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'So let the faithful put their trust in Allah' (*at-Taghabun*: 13). When you rely upon Allah *the Almighty* you put your trust in the Ever-Living God Who never lets your effort go in vain. But if you count upon a person like you – even if he is more powerful – his power may vanish; he may hate or humiliate you; or a calamity may befall him and claim his life. The believers must rely upon Allah *the Almighty* alone and submit themselves to His Will. In this connection, He *the Almighty* tells us that the true believers say: 'And why should we not rely upon Allah while He has guided us to our [good] ways. And we will surely be patient against whatever harm you should cause us. And upon Allah let those who would rely [indeed] rely' (*Ibrahim*: 12). He *the Almighty* orders us to count upon Him as He is the Ever-Living. So, you should not depend upon anybody else, for this person may forsake you overnight. By contrast, if He *the Almighty* is your Patron, He will never abandon you. If you take anybody else as a patron besides Him, such a person who is currently strong and influential enough to depend upon him may die at any time. So, he cannot really be a patron as he might lose his influence and authority, or become helpless and weak, thus unable to help others.

The true Patron whom we must rely upon and hold fast to is Allah *the Almighty* Who is Unchangeable since He is Ever-Existent, Ever-Living and Ever-Powerful. He *the Almighty* is the true Patron in whom you must place your trust. Therefore, He clarifies for us why we must place our faith and hopes in Him alone, saying: 'And rely upon the Ever-Living Who does not die...' (*al-Furqan*: 58). Never ever rely upon anyone other than Him *the Almighty* as He is unchangeable; He is the Ever-Powerful, the Ever-Subduing, the Ever-Living, the Ever-Supporting, and the Ever-Lasting. You should not count upon anybody who suddenly dies; rather, rely upon the Ever-Living, the Ever-Existent the Almighty and the Powerful One. A poet once put it as follows:

Do receive your esteem from your Lord so that it will remain and last.

If you seek honour from a person who eventually dies, your honour will surely die.

A truly wise person should rely only upon the One Who is Trustworthy and Helpful. So, what is the point of depending on a person to serve your temporary interest and suddenly you hear about his death? In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘And rely upon the Ever-Living who does not die...’ (*al-Furqan*: 58). This means that He *the Almighty* instructs His servants, ‘If you really want to be reliant, rely upon the One Who benefits and supports you; the One Who always fulfils His Promise, and Who is All-Powerful over anything on earth and in the heavens.’ This is the climax of wisdom; what is the point of relying upon the one who eventually dies? Even if such a person should live forever, do you ensure that he will not hate you one day?

Similarly, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘So rely upon Allah; indeed, you are upon the clear truth’ (*an-Naml*: 79). So, the believer should rely upon Allah *the Almighty* follow the truth, and obey Him tenaciously. As you count upon and obey Him, He *Glorified is He* must be your Supporter and Helper.

Further, you should be satisfied with your reliance on Allah *the Almighty* alone, for He *the Almighty* says: ‘...and sufficient is Allah as Disposer of affairs’ (*al-Ahzab*: 3). In this vein, He *the Almighty* reassures His servants that He is the Disposer of affairs, saying: ‘And He is Disposer of all things’ (*al-An‘am*: 102). You should know that Allah *the Almighty* is your Guardian Who manages your affairs. This is like a person who takes care of a minor and orders him to do such-and-such. So, Allah *the Almighty* is our Guardian.

The believers depend only on Allah as their Disposer of affairs. Reliance means to believe that you have a manager who disposes all your matters. For example, when you face something you cannot accomplish, you say, ‘I authorise so-and-so to do that thing to the full.’ Hence, the believers count on their Lord and submit themselves to Him.

Thus, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘And We gave Moses the Scripture and made it a guidance for the Children of Israel that you not take other than Me as Disposer of affairs’ (*al-Isra’*: 2). This means that we must not take anyone other than Allah *the Almighty* as a manager and disposer of our affairs. Even if there is someone in whom you trust and to whom you can entrust your

interests, what do you think if your Disposer is Allah *the Almighty*? Undoubtedly, if He *the Almighty* is your Disposer of affairs, He will support you and never let you be in dire need of anyone other than Him. It suffices that He *the Almighty* is your Disposer of affairs, given the fact that nothing is difficult or impossible for Him. He *the Almighty* is not in need of physical means and nothing can challenge His Will.

In the verse in question, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'So let the faithful put their trust in Him' (*at-Taghabun*: 13). In other verses, He says: 'And upon Allah should the reliant rely' (*Ibrahim*: 12); and also: 'The decision is only for Allah; upon Him I have relied, and upon Him should the reliant rely' (*Yusuf*: 67).

Thus, if you are a true believer, you should rely on Allah *the Almighty*. As belief is highlighted in the verse in question, 'So let the faithful put their trust in Him' (*at-Taghabun*: 13). We note here that your reliance must be true, not a claim. The true reliance of your body parts is to let them work. So, you should work and adopt the physical means while simultaneously relying on Allah *the Almighty* with your heart. As for idleness, it is to neglect the physical means which He *the Almighty* creates for you and to stop adopting them, claiming that you are depending on Him *the Almighty* which is not true. You should first exhaust your available physical means. If they are inaccessible, do not despair because your Lord's Power transcends these physical potentials which He creates for you.

Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* gives us an illustrative example by the birds. He says, 'If you rely upon Allah as duly as required, He will provide for you as He does for the birds: they go early in the morning hungry and return in the evening full.'⁽¹⁾

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

(1) 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab narrated that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'If you actually count on Allah in the most optimal way, He will provide you with sustenance as He does for the birds; they go in the morning hungry and return at the end of the day full.' *At-Tirmidhi* said that it is a good, authentic Hadith. See *At-Tirmidhi, Sunnan, Hadith no. 2344*; see also *Ibn Maja, Sunnan, Hadith no. 4164*; and *Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 205, 370 and 373*.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ ءَامَنُوْا اِنَّ مِنْ اَزْوَاجِكُمْ وَاَوْلَادِكُمْ عَدُوّٰ لَكُمْ
فَاَحْذَرُوْهُمْ وَاِنْ تَعَفَوْا وَتَصَفَحُوْا وَتَغْفِرُوْا فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿١٤﴾

Believers, even among your spouses and your children you have some enemies – beware of them – but if you overlook their offences, forgive them, pardon them, then God is all forgiving, all merciful [14] (The Quran, *at-Taghabun*: 14)

Here, Allah *the Almighty* addresses the believers who are firmly convinced that there is no god but Him and who put their trust in Him. He *the Almighty* addresses those who obey Him and His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in order to pave the way for their accepting the warning against their wives and children.

The disbelievers are antagonistic towards themselves, so Allah *the Almighty* does not warn them against their wives and children, for they must be warned against their souls in the first place. With regard to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘Believers...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 14), it means that the address is limited to those who have believed in Allah *the Almighty* as the true God, Creator and Lord; those who entered into a Contract of Faith with Him. They are commanded to fulfil these subsequent commands which come from Him on the grounds of their belief in Him. In fact, faith here is the cause of the imposition of the religious obligations; He *the Almighty* does not enjoin religious obligations on the disbelievers, for this is only confined to the believers. Hence the responsibility of their daily lives resides in Allah *the Almighty*. He, as a result, provides them with a Divine Way of life. As regards the disbelievers, He *Glorified is He* does not impose upon them any religious obligations.

The verse in question begins with calling the believers to listen and obey Allah’s Commands. Thus, He *the Almighty* does not impose any religious obligations on those who do not believe in Him; He addresses only those who love and believe in Him. As long as they love Him, every believer must turn his attention to the One Whom he loves. By so doing, He *the Almighty* grants the believer what brings and achieves his happiness.

Here, Allah *the Almighty* draws the attention of those who believe in Him to an important matter, namely; a man’s relationship with his wife and

children and their influence on him regarding diverting his attention away from the religious requirements and obligations. So He *the Almighty* says: '...even among your spouses and your children you have some enemies...' (*at-Taghabun*: 14). He *the Almighty* specifies two kinds of people who are around us all the time, that is, the wives and the children. This is because they are in direct and close contact with the men. We should take into account that Allah *the Almighty* says: '...among your spouses...' (*at-Taghabun*: 14). This, in turn, means that only some wives and children are enemies to men, not all of them. This is what the Arabic preposition *min* (among) signifies here. A similar example is the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'But he who does of righteous deeds...' (*Ta Ha*: 112). The particle *min* (of) implies that it is sufficient to do some good deeds, for a person is unable to perform all righteous actions. You do the good deeds to the best of your ability; another person does the same, and so on and so forth. Ultimately, all these good deeds combine together to form a state of perfect righteousness in the society.

Another similar example is found in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Are there any of your "partners" who does anything of that?' (*ar-Rum*: 40) In this verse, the words 'anything of' denote that none of their alleged gods can do anything, be it related to creation, providing means of sustenance, Resurrection or causing death.

Allah *the Almighty* says: '...among your spouses...' (*at-Taghabun*: 14) since it is the spouses who take the lead in seduction and enticement. Furthermore, one of them, that is, the husband or the wife may be the wicked partner who paves the way for moral deviations. The Arabic word *azwaj* (spouses) refers to both the husband and the wife. It does not mean two things that exist together, as some people mistakenly think. Conversely, it means a thing or an individual that exists along with another of the same type. The word 'twin' is another example for this case, and it means one of two identical things. This is corroborated by the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'And of all things We created two mates...' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 49). The word 'mates' means males and females. The male alone is a mate, and the female alone is a mate. This division applies to creatures.

We note that the word ‘spouses’ comes in the masculine plural form to refer to the wives of Prophet Muhammad in Allah’s saying: ‘O Prophet, indeed We have made lawful to you your wives...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 50). This is because the word ‘spouse’ is linguistically used to refer to either the female or the male. Accordingly, we understand from the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘Believers....’ (*at-Taghabun*: 14) that it refers to male and female believers. A man can be faithful and righteous, while his wife turns him away from the Path of Belief. Likewise, the wife can be faithful and righteous, while the husband turns her away from that Path of Belief.

In this regard, we find that the Quran talks about some wives who were disbelievers though their husbands were Prophets and Messengers. There are also examples of husbands who were disbelievers although their wives were faithful. This point is crystal clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘Allah presents an example of those who disbelieved: the wife of Nuh (Noah) and the wife of Lut (Lot). They were under two of Our righteous servants but betrayed them, so those prophets did not avail them from Allah at all, and it was said, “Enter the Fire with those who enter”’ (*at-Tahrim*: 10).

Prophet Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* could not prevent the disbelief of his own wife, nor could Prophet Lut (Lot) *peace be upon him* do the same to his wife. Both the wives conspired against their husbands – who were Prophets – with their peoples. So, their fate was the hell. The wife of Lut (Lot) used to inform her people of the men who visited Lut (Lot) *peace be upon him* so that they would come and sodomise them. This happened to the delegation of the angels who visited Lut (Lot) *peace be upon him* in the form of smart and attractive young men. In this respect, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘And when Our messengers, [the angels], came to Lut (Lot), he was anguished for them and felt for them great discomfort and said, “This is a trying day”; And his people came hastening to him, and before [this] they had been doing evil deeds. He said, “O my people, these are my daughters; they are purer for you. So fear Allah and do not disgrace me concerning my guests. Is there not among you a man of reason?”’ (*Hud*: 77-78)

Prophet Lut (Lot) *peace be upon him* knows that the crime of his people is sodomy, and so does his wife. But their stands on it differ greatly. She

welcomes it, while Lut (Lot) *peace be upon him* does not. The following is related, 'As soon as the wife of Prophet Lut (Lot) saw some handsome young men (who were in fact the angels of punishment), she climbed the roof of her house and clapped her hands to attract the attention of her fellow tribesmen. But none noticed her. She then made a fire, and the people saw her. She gestured for them that some good-looking guests came to Lut's (Lot's) house.'

In our daily life, we find that if the wife is not righteous, she can be an enemy of her own husband by causing problems to embitter her husband's life. The wife may even be sharp-tongued, quarrelsome, and heedless of her husband. She may even provoke his anger by making him doubt her chastity.

The husband can be modest, while the wife has a limitless craving for getting money in any way. Likewise, the wife can be virtuous and rejects the fact that her husband earns illegal property.

Relying on the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Believers, even among your spouses and your children you have some enemies – beware of them ...' (*at-Taghabun*: 14), we conclude that enmity comes from wives first. We also find that it is the wife who sometimes hates her husband and the children are consequently affected by this to the extent that they start imitating her. Very often, children become a great ordeal for their fathers. Their trial stems from the fact that fathers do everything they can to make their children lead a comfortable life. The financial capabilities can be limited, so the father may resort to ill-gotten money. So, a man's trial often comes from his wife or his children. This is because the wife and children may prompt the husband to overwork, steal, or take bribes to satisfy their needs.

In this respect, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* says, 'Your foe is not the person whom if you kill, you will be rewarded for, and if he kills you, you will be admitted into paradise, but rather, your mortal enemies can be your own children and your wealth which you possess.'⁽¹⁾

(1) This Hadith is narrated by At-Tabarani. In his *As-Silsila Ad-Da'ifa*, Al-Albani grades this Hadith as weak. In his book, Ibn Hajar Al-Haythami writes, 'Mohamad ibn Isma'il ibn 'Ayyash is part of the chain of narrators, and he is weak.' See At-Tabarani, *Al-Mu'ajam Al-Kabir*, Hadith no. 3367 and *Musnad Ash-Shamiyyin*, Hadith no. 332; Al-Albani, *As-Silsila Ad-Da'ifa*, Hadith no. 4375; and Al-Haythami, *Majma'a Az-Zawa'id*, Hadith no. 17799.

When one of us has a son or daughter, he becomes overjoyed, to the extent that he favours him or her over himself, does his best to make him or her lead a decent life and tries to secure a bright future for him or her. In this regard, a poet once said⁽¹⁾:

Our children are like our hearts that walk on earth

If wind blows over some of them, we do not sleep a wink.⁽²⁾

In many cases, a man's children can be the source of his hardship and enmity towards his relatives. The children can distract their fathers from acts of obedience or force them to earn unlawful money to meet their daily needs. Not only can children be a source of trouble for their fathers, but wives can also be so for their husbands. In this vein, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* says, 'But the bitterest enemies of you are your own self, your wife whom you have intimate relations with her and your own children.'⁽³⁾

In the Glorious Quran, we find the story of the righteous servant who killed a young boy whose parents were believers. The righteous servant feared that this young boy would grow up and overburden his parents by transgression and disbelief. So, the boy was an ordeal for his parents and he would drive them towards unlawful things and cause them troubles. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And as for the boy, his parents were believers, and we feared that he would overburden them by transgression and disbelief' (*al-Kahf*: 80). Very often, the children are a source of trials and hardship for their fathers. The essence of their trials arises from the fact that fathers strain every nerve to make their children lead a life of ease. But if the means are insufficient, they, that is fathers, may resort to ill-gotten gains. Allah *the Almighty*

(1) He is Habib ibn Aws At-Ta'i, Abu Tammam; he was born in Gasim, Syria in 188 A.H.; he visited Egypt and Baghdad; he was brown and tall; his poems are eloquent and powerful. He died in 231 A.H., the year when the Abbasid State emerged.

(2) *These two verses are mentioned by Ibn Abu 'Awn and Al-Basri who attribute them to Hattan ibn Al-Mu'alla. The poetical verse reads, 'Our children are but our hearts that walk on earth.' On the other hand, Ibn Al-'Adim narrates the two verses and ascribes them to Abu Tammam Habib ibn Aws at Ta'i. See Ibn 'Awn, At-Tashbihat; see also Al-Basri, Al-Hamasah Al-Basriyya; and Ibn Al-'Adim, Ad-Darari Fi Dhikr Adh-Dharari*

(3) *See Ad-Dailimi, Al-Firdaws Bi Ma'thur Al-Khitab, Hadith no. 5248; see also Al-Muttaqi Al-Hindi, Kanz Al-'Umal, Hadith no. 11264.*

knew best that the young boy would be a source of hardship for his faithful parents. So, He *the Almighty* did not want the parents of the boy to suffer, for He *the Almighty* decreed that they would die as believers. That is why He *the Almighty* says: ‘...and we feared that he would overburden them by transgression and disbelief’ (*al-Kahf*: 80).

Anyone of us can have a son who is the apple of his eye. Yet the son may be the cause of his father’s corruption, lying, taking bribes or stealing. So such a son can lead his father to hell. The son of Prophet Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* is a clear example of the son who disobeyed his father and opposed his Call. In this respect, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...and Nuh (Noah) called to his son who was apart [from them], “O my son, come aboard with us and be not with the disbelievers”’ (*Hud*: 42); the son refused to answer the demand of his father and said that he would resort to the mountain for protection, whereupon Nuh (Noah) replied, ‘There is no protector today from the Decree of Allah, except for whom He gives Mercy’ (*Hud*: 43).

When Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* ordered his son to come aboard with him, the son disobeyed his father, rejected belief and preferred to remain a disbeliever. This happened at the time when the disbelievers were surrounded by a devastating flood. The son of Nuh (Noah) thought that he would be able to take shelter on a mountain to protect him from the flood by its height. Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him*, however, knew for certain that no disbeliever would survive, for survival was only for the believers. So, he *peace be upon him* warned his son, saying: ‘There is no protector today from the Decree of Allah except for whom He gives Mercy’ (*Hud*: 43).

Thus, the son of Nuh (Noah) was an enemy of his father and of himself because he destroyed his own self. It is known that a person does injustice to someone else for his own good or for a certain reason. But how can one mistreat himself? Doing injustice to oneself is idiotic. How is it idiotic? As we know, if the enemy is from the outside, it is easy to withstand him/her, whereas if your enemy is your own self, it is more dangerous and difficult to resist and get rid of.

Your child, your soul and your wife, who are closer to your heart, may become your bitterest enemies. They have a strong grip on your heart and

mind and thus may direct you into what may cause your destruction and keep you away from the Path of Belief.

It is narrated that the verse in question was revealed concerning ‘Awf ibn Malik Al-Ashga‘i⁽¹⁾ who had a large family. Whenever he intended to strive in the Way of Allah *the Almighty* his family cried over him and entreated him to stay. So, he yielded to their wish and stayed with them.⁽²⁾ In this respect, Mujahid says, ‘A person’s intense love for his children and wife may lead him to sever good ties with his relatives and disobey Allah. So Allah forbids obeying them in this regard.’

The family’s temptations resemble the very words of Satan, the first enemy of the humans. Abu Hurayra *Allah be pleased with him* narrated that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: ‘Satan sits in the paths of the son of Adam. He sits waiting for him, in the path to Islam, and he says: “Will you accept Islam, and leave your religion, and the religion of your forefathers?” But he disobeys him and accepts Islam. Then he sits, waiting for him, on the path to Jihad, and he says: “Will you fight in *Jihad* when it will cost you your life and your wealth? You will fight and be killed, and your wife will remarry, and your wealth will be divided.” But he disobeys him and fights in *Jihad*.’ The Messenger of Allah said: ‘Whoever does that, then he has a right from Allah that He will admit him to Paradise.’⁽³⁾

Satan’s enmity towards humans is so ancient. He swore to mislead all humans, saying: ‘I will certainly lie in wait for them in Your Straight Path’ (*al-A‘raf*: 16); ‘Then by Your Might I will surely make them live an evil life, all, [82] Except Thy servants from among them, the purified ones [83]’

(1) He was nicknamed Abu ‘Abd Ar-Rahman. The first battle he participated in was Khaybar; he was in charge of the battle of Ashga‘a on the day of the opening of Mecca. He lived in Syria and died in Damascus in 73 A.H. He partook in the battles of Dhat As-Salasil, Mu‘ata and Tabuk. He was one of the noble Companions. See Ibn Al-Athir, *Usd Al-Ghaba*, 2/38

(2) This is mentioned by At-Tabari and Ibn ‘Ashur.

(3) This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Sabra ibn Abu Fakih *Allah be pleased with him*. See Ahmad, *Musnad*, Hadith no. 16000; see also An-Nasa‘i, *Sunnan*, Hadith no. 3134; Ibn Hibban, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 4593; Al-Baghawi, *Mu‘ajam As-Sahaba*, Hadith no. 1188; and At-Tabarani, *Al-Mu‘ajam Al-Kabir*, Hadith no. 6428.

(*Sad*: 82-83); and: 'I will most certainly cause his progeny to perish except a few' (*al-Isra'*: 62). Satan swore by the Might of Allah *the Almighty* to lead humankind astray. So he is the primary enemy of the human being and lies in wait for him/her on the Straight Path.

In this regard, Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* succeeded in the test that Allah *the Almighty* put him to regarding his son Ismail (Ishmael). The son helped his father to obey Allah *the Almighty*. Regarding this, He *the Almighty* relates that Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* said: 'O my son! Surely I have seen in a dream that I should sacrifice you; consider then what you see' (*as-Saffat*: 102). Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* replied to his father, saying: 'O my father! Do what you are commanded; if Allah please, you will find me of the patient ones' (*as-Saffat*: 102). So, Ismail (Ishmael) was very sure that this was a Divine Command, and thus he complied with it.

In the verse under discussion, Allah *the Almighty* says: '...but if you overlook their offences, forgive them, pardon them, then Allah is All Forgiving, All Merciful' (*at-Taghabun*: 14). Someone may argue, 'What is the relationship between pardoning and forgiving on the one hand, and the enmity of some wives and children on the other?' To know the answer to this question, we should learn the reason behind the revelation of this verse. This verse was revealed concerning the children of those who emigrated from Mecca to Medina. Their families, wives and children tried to dissuade them from emigration by saying entreatingly, 'To whom do you leave us?' Some responded by desisting from emigration and thus stayed with them instead. However, some others did not yield to their wishes and even stopped supporting them for their rejection to migrate in the Cause of Allah. They also said to them, 'If Allah brought us together, we would not do any good to you and we would do such-and-such.' Thus, Allah *the Almighty* revealed this verse.⁽¹⁾

For this reason, Allah's saying: '...but if you overlook their offences, pardon them, forgive them, then Allah is all forgiving, all merciful' (*at-Taghabun*: 14) comes after His saying: '...beware of them...' (*at-Taghabun*: 14). So the verse in question calls for handling the troubles caused by a believer's wife or children

(1) See *Muqatil, Tafsir*, 369; and *Abu Ishaq Ath-Tha'alabi, Al-Kashf Wa Al-Bayan Fi Tafsir Al-Quran*, 9/329.

gently and carefully. If the believer is to beware of the enemy who is closer to him, this enemy should be viewed from another perspective as a friend and that enmity, in this case, is accidental and can be addressed with wisdom and gentleness, but not at the expense of the religion. The act of pardoning, overlooking, and forgiving which a believer shows towards his wife or children, who are his enemy in terms of diverting him from the religion, is a kind of patience and forbearance meant to maintain the friendly family relations. At that point, we note that Allah *the Almighty* mentions three stages, which are: pardoning, overlooking and forgiving. In the verse in question, the coordinating particle ‘and’ denotes dissimilarity. This means that ‘pardoning’ is a stage unlike ‘overlooking’ and ‘forgiving’. You can excuse a person who offends you in a specific situation, but you do not pardon him because pardoning makes you overlook his subsequent mistakes, a matter that did not actually take place. Likewise, forgiving differs from pardoning. You can pardon a person, overlook his mistake, decide not to punish him and intend to pardon him in other situations.

As regards forgiving, it is a high-level act that is attainable by those who are distinguished by pardoning others. So, they attain the manners of forgiveness and adopt them in their daily lives. They overlook others’ offences even if they repeat them. They do not revenge against their offenders or wait for anyone to ask for pardon. They are lenient and gentle and have no desire to retaliate even by giving their offenders dirty looks. We find these gradual levels in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...and those who restrain (their) anger and pardon men; and Allah loves the doers of good (to others)’ (*Al-Imran*: 134). You suppress your anger in the first stage, pardon in the second and remove anger from your heart in the third which represents the apex of faith and benevolence.

If it is required to restrain your anger, it is better for you to pardon others. Pardon requires you to eliminate what makes you angry from your heart. What outclasses the two acts of suppressing anger and pardoning is to be kind towards your offender by speaking to him in a gentle way or even by giving him a gift.

Someone may argue that the verse we are discussing here begins with pardoning, not the suppressing of anger as Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...but if you overlook their offences, pardon them, forgive them, then Allah is All-Forgiving,

All-Merciful' (*at-Taghabun*: 14). Yes, pardoning here is the first stage, while it is the second stage in the chapter of *Al-Imran*, after suppressing anger. This is because the verse of *Al-Imran* talks about the harm done to one's self or his repute. So, suppressing anger is to be the first stage in that case. As for the verse in question, it is relating to disobeying the father regarding any of Allah's Commands. So, it needs gentle treatment to handle the errors of one's wife and children. The difference between pardoning and overlooking is that the former is to remove from yourself any trace of offence. As for overlooking, it means to let bygones be bygones and not to let what happened worry you anymore, which is different from overlooking the mistake even though its negative impact on you remains, to the extent that you continue to be infuriated and revengeful. So, Allah *the Almighty* instructs us to eliminate the trace of offence from our minds and hearts. After overlooking a mistake, its impact vanishes, as overlooking keeps you away from being worried by something you have pardoned. The third stage is an open chance for a believer who desires to reach the level of benevolence and the highest degree of belief. This is by being kind towards the person who insulted you, which is the rank of forgiveness. Ubay ibn Ka'b narrated, 'When Allah sent down the verse: 'Take to forgiveness and enjoin good and turn aside from the ignorant' (*al-A'raf*: 199), Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'What is this, Jibril (Gabriel)?' Jibril (Gabriel) said, 'Allah orders you to forgive those who wronged you, give [charity] to those who withhold [things] from you and maintain friendly ties with those who severed good relations with you.'⁽¹⁾


Your forgiveness makes you overlook any offences you suffer, be generous to those who deprive you and keep good relations with those who break off friendly ties with you.

Allah *the Almighty* concludes the verse With His saying: 'Allah is All Forgiving, All Merciful' (*at-Taghabun*: 14). 'All-Forgiving' is an exaggerated form as Allah *the Almighty* is Ever-Forgiving and He is the Lord Who forgives and

(1) In his *Tafsir*, As-Suyuti narrates this Hadith on the authority of Ash-Sha'abi. He ascribes it to Ibn Jarir, Ibn Al-Mundhir, Ibn Abu Hatim and Abu Ash-Sheikh Al-Asbahani. It is also narrated by Abu Nu'aym Al-Asbahani on the authority of Qays ibn Sa'd ibn 'Ubada. See As-Suyuti, *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur*, 6/708; see also Abu Nu'aym Al-Asbahani, *Ma'rifat As-Sahaba*, Hadith no. 5134.

pardons all the time. So, one should have these great qualities as well. In this connection, He *the Almighty* says: ‘And they should pardon and turn away. Do you not love that Allah should forgive you? And Allah is Forgiving, Merciful’ (*an-Nur*: 22). If you want Allah *the Almighty* to forgive you, you should pardon a person who has offended you. He *the Almighty* is All-Forgiving regarding the sins you have committed and for which you asked Him for forgiveness; and He *Glorified is He* is also All-Merciful towards you as He does not rush to punish you; of course this is out of His Compassion for you so that you may turn to Him in repentance.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:


 إِنَّمَا أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَأَوْلَادُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ

**Your wealth and your children are only a test for
you. There is great reward with God [15]
(The Quran, *at-Taghabun*: 15)**

In our life, some people enjoy wealth and children. But one does not bear in mind that wealth and children may be an instrument for punishment. Someone else may argue that Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Wealth and children are an adornment of the life of this world...’ (*al-Kahf*: 46). We respond to this argument by saying, ‘Complete the same verse you quote to its very end: ‘...and the ever-abiding, the good works, are better with your Lord in reward and better in expectation’ (*al-Kahf*: 46). No one should be beguiled by wealth or children, as Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Let not then their property and their children excite your admiration; Allah only wishes to chastise them with these in this world's life and (that) their souls may depart, while they are unbelievers’ (*at-Tawba*: 55). So when you see someone provided with wealth and children, you should not say, ‘How can they be punished in this worldly life, while they have wealth and children?’ Dazzled by wealth and children means ‘admiring them very greatly and thinking of them as absolutely propitious’. If one profoundly reflects on wealth, children, and other worldly possessions, he will discover that none of them deserves admiration. So, you should beware of being beguiled by something that will surely leave or may cause you hardship. Wealth and children may make a person entirely occupied

with the blessings, and thus distracts him from the Benefactor. Unless a person pays attention to the Benefactor *Glorified is He* he will not praise Him and will thus neglect His Way of Guidance. Wealth and children may lead you to fear to leave the worldly life. If a person is not firmly convinced of the pleasure prepared for him by Allah in the Hereafter, he will dread leaving wealth or children.

A person who does not believe in the Last Day is wholly engrossed in and enslaved by the worldly life. If he loses it, this will be distressing and catastrophic for him; and if he misses it, this will be grievous for him as well. But when one believes fully and firmly in Allah *the Almighty* and in the Day of Judgement, he will say, 'Even if I lose this worldly life, I will obtain what is better from Allah *the Almighty* in the Hereafter.' Allah *the Almighty* wants to protect the believers from being enslaved and captivated by the material possessions that distract their attention from the Way of Guidance. So He says: 'Let not then their property and their children excite your admiration...' (*at-Tawba*: 55). This indicates that wealth alone can be impressive and children alone can be so as well. One who has wealth or children gets impressed by either of them. He becomes more impressed if he has both of them. Thus, Allah *the Almighty* teaches us that wealth and children together should not impress us. Moreover, the context of the verse warns us against being impressed by either of them.

He *the Almighty* also teaches us that providing disbelievers and hypocrites with wealth and children does not mean that they are of high ranks in the sight of Allah, for He *the Almighty* does so to punish them through this worldly life and in the Hereafter. So, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Allah only wishes to chastise them with these...' (*at-Tawba*: 55). He *Glorified is He* gave them wealth and children in this worldly life, but ultimately they will be punished in the Hereafter.

Wealth and children do not avail anyone against the Punishment of Allah *the Almighty* a fact which is crystal clear in His saying: '(As for) those who disbelieve, surely neither their wealth nor their children shall avail them in the least against Allah...' (*Al-Imran*: 116). The disbelievers think that wealth and children can protect them against the Punishment of Allah *the Almighty* but

they are actually wrong, for wealth and children can be a source of trials and troubles. This is confirmed by the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘And know that your property and your children are a temptation, and that Allah is He with Whom there is a mighty reward’ (*al-Anfal*: 28). As long as wealth and children are a trial, we should understand the matter properly. The trial is not bad in itself because it is a test that a person can go through and in which he can eventually succeed. So, for example, if a person has wealth and children, he should not be beguiled by wealth but should use it in a good way. As for his children, they should not make him conceited. Besides, he should teach them to follow Allah’s Way of Guidance and the religious moral standards. So, the trial is not bad in itself; we should bear in mind that this trial is a test which we should pass. It actually does harm to the person who fails in it and who weakens when facing it.

The disbelievers fail in the trial of wealth and children, and the Day, that is, the Day of Resurrection when they do not have wealth or children will come. Even if they possess wealth in this worldly life, they will not buy with it anything in the Hereafter and each of their children will be preoccupied with his own affairs.

In fact, the disbeliever deceives himself, for he gets enticed by wealth and children and forgets that life is run by the Command of the One Who owns and controls the whole universe. He deals with life improperly. As a matter of fact, being impressed by wealth and children in this worldly life is delusive. After all, the human being can live without wealth or children. Whoever gets deceived by his wealth or children in this worldly life will be sorrowful and depressed on the Day of Judgement. What is the reason for this? This is because whenever a person remembers that wealth and children kept him away from being prepared for the Hereafter, he bitterly regrets his misdeeds.

As for those disbelievers who are lured by wealth and children, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...and those are the companions of the Fire; they will abide therein eternally’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 116). This is the fate of the one who deceives himself by wealth or children. Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘And know that your property and your children are a temptation, and that Allah is He with Whom there is a mighty reward’ (*al-Anfal*: 28). In this respect, it is related that once

Hudhayfa *Allah be pleased with him* visited Caliph 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him*; the latter asked, 'How are you, O Hudhayfa?' He replied, 'I like the "test" but dislike the "truth." I do pray without ablution and I have on earth what Allah does not in heaven.' 'Umar raged and if 'Ali ibn Abu Taleb *Allah be pleased with him* had not entered at this moment, he, that is 'Umar, would have punished Hudhayfa. 'Ali asked 'Umar, 'What has angered you, Commander of the Believers?' He said, 'I asked Hudhayfa how he was and he said such-and-such,' whereupon 'Ali said, 'Yes, Commander of the Believers. He likes the test, that is to say his wealth and children, as Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Your wealth and children are only a test for you...' (*at-Taghabun*: 15). He hates death which is the truth. And who loves death, Commander of the Believers? In addition, he asks Allah *the Almighty* to confer His Blessings upon Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* without performing ablution. Furthermore, he has a wife and children on earth but Allah *the Almighty* has neither a wife nor a child in the heaven.' Thereupon 'Umar said, 'It is intolerable to stay at a place where Abu Al-Hasan, that is 'Ali is not present.'⁽¹⁾

In the chapter of *al-Anfal*, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And know that your property and your children are a temptation...' (*al-Anfal*: 28); and in the chapter of *at-Taghabun*, He says: 'Your wealth and children are only a test for you...' (*at-Taghabun*: 15). Both of the two verses indicate that He *the Almighty* tells us about a natural fact, that is to say wealth and children are a test and trial. In the second verse, He *the Almighty* emphasises this fact by the restrictive particle *innama* (only).

Someone may ask, 'Why do these verses begin with wealth first and mention children second?' We reply by saying that when one looks at the Quranic verses, he discovers that they always mention wealth before children. For example, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Wealth and children are an adornment of the life of this world...' (*al-Kahf*: 46). Here, He *the Almighty* also mentions wealth before children. He also says to Satan: 'And incite [to senselessness]

(1) This Hadith is narrated by Ibn Sa'd on the authority of Sa'id ibn Al-Musayyib who also said, 'Umar used to take refuge with Allah from a problematic issue in which Abu Al-Hasan is not involved.' See Ibn Sa'd, *At-Tabaqat Al-Kubra*, 2/239; see also As-Suyuti, *Jame' Al-Hadith*, Hadith no. 30829.

whoever you can among them with your voice and assault them with your horses and foot soldiers and become a partner in their wealth and their children...' (*al-Isra'*: 64). He further says: '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). Thus, the Glorious Quran always mentions wealth before children. Here arises a question which is, 'Why does the Quran mention wealth first? Is wealth better for people than children?' Allah *the Almighty* mentions wealth first because it is common among the addressees in contrast with children. Everyone has a property even if it is little. As for having children, it is not common among all people, for there are some who have no children. Also, having children needs money for marriage and expenses. So, everyone can have money but may not have children.

Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Your wealth and children are only a test for you...' (*at-Taghabun*: 15). The Arabic word *fitna* (test) is the trial and the test by which Allah *the Almighty* examines people's belief. Some people mistakenly think that tribulation is evil in itself. In fact, tribulation is a mere test. So you may succeed or fail in it. The test is not something disagreeable or a calamity that befalls the person, but it is catastrophic for anyone who fails in it.

The Arabic term *fitna* is derived from a concrete meaning of 'refining gold and iron with the use of fire.' Refining gold means fusing it in a crucible so that impurities mixed with it will float and be removed. Iron is also melted so that the sticking atoms will separate and the dross will float. We know that the types of iron include cast iron and steel. The impurities of cast iron are visible and so it is fragile. As regards steel, it contains no dross. It is thus clear that refining gold and iron removes the strange metals mixed with them.

The word *fitna* (test) then transitioned from a concrete meaning to an abstract one. It here denotes a test in which a person passes or fails. Thus, the test is not harmful per se; rather, it is bad for the person who fails in it. The trials experienced by a person are tests; they are good for the one who passes them and bad for the one who does not.

In this connection, once Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* quoted the verse reading: 'Your wealth and your children are only a test...' (*at-Taghabun*: 15) 'Abdullah ibn Burayda narrated that his father Burayda

Al-Aslami⁽¹⁾ had said, 'I saw Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* delivering the sermon, whereupon Al-Hasan and Al-Husayn came, wearing red shirts, walking and tripping up. Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* descended from the pulpit and carried them. Then he said, "Allah says: 'Your wealth and your children are only a test...' (*at-Taghabun*: 15), but I found these two boys walking and stumbling, which I could not stand. So, I stopped my speech and steadied them."⁽²⁾ At last he resumed his sermon.'

In this Hadith, he *peace and blessings be upon him* explains the *fitna* of the children as 'being preoccupied with his two grandchildren'. It does not mean that the two grandsons would lead him *peace and blessings be upon him* towards a path other than that of belief. Rather, it means they *Allah be pleased with them both* diverted his attention away from his sermon for a short while.

Another Hadith narrated by Ibn Malik *Allah be pleased with him* reads, 'Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* once shortened the Dawn Prayer. When he was asked why he did so, he said, "I heard a little boy crying and thought that his mother was praying with us. So I desired to free up his mother for him."⁽³⁾ He *peace and blessings be upon him* was preoccupied with the crying of the little boy. So, what about the little boy's mother's heart? Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* wanted to have mercy on the mother and the little boy who cried in need of his mother. As we

(1) *Burayda Al-Aslami ibn Al-Khasib was the chieftain of Aslam tribe. During his Hijra, Messenger Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him passed by Kira' Al-Ghamim where Burayda lived and he peace and blessings be upon him called him and his fellow tribesmen to embrace Islam. They indeed adopted Islam and then Burayda left for Medina, while Messenger Muhammad was building the mosque. He died in Marw during the caliphate of Yazid ibn Mu'awiya.*

(2) *See Abu Dawud, Sunnan, Hadith no. 111; see also At-Tirmidhi, Sunnan, Hadith no. 3774; An-Nasa'i, Sunnan, Hadith no. 1413; Ibn Maja, Sunnan, Hadith no. 3600; and Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 23045.*

(3) *This is narrated by Imam Ahmad on the authority of Anas ibn Malik; Ibn Abu Dawud narrated that Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri said that Messenger Muhammad used to recite the long chapters of Al-Mufasssal during the Dawn Prayer. One day he recited some of the short chapters. When he was asked, he said, 'I heard a little boy crying, so I wanted to free up his mother for him.' See Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 13726; and Ibn Abu Dawud, Sunnan, Hadith no. 424.*

said before, his *peace and blessings be upon him* being preoccupied with the boy does not apply to the test meant by the verse in question.

It is thus crystal clear that his *peace and blessings be upon him* kindness and affection for his daughter Fatima and her two sons was great. Fatima was dearer to his heart, and so were Al-Hasan and Al-Husayn whose father ‘Ali risked his life for Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* on the night of *Hijra* to Medina.

It was hard for him *peace and blessings be upon him* to see his two grandsons tripping up while they were walking. So he decided to steady them. He stopped delivering his sermon, descended from the pulpit, and lifted them from the ground. He said, ‘Allah is All-Truthful as He says: “Your wealth and children are only a test...”’ (*at-Taghabun*: 15).’ So, children can be a source of trial and a test. But what matters most is the result of this trial: will it be good or bad? The trial can be either good or bad, but in both cases it is necessary. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Do men think that they will be left alone on saying, we believe, and not be tried?’⁽¹⁾ (*al-Ankabut*: 2) The trial of wealth drives people into miserliness and hoarding money. As a matter of fact, it causes all the forms of corruption and immorality. As regards the trial of children, it leads to neglecting the primary duties a person is required to fulfil. It also drives him into cowardliness, niggardliness, and avarice. The believer is to rise above the trial of wealth; he should devalue wealth and prevent it from preoccupying him.

Even though one gets benefit from wealth or children, this is a temporary benefit which will come to an end, which is why one should not be attracted by it, irrespective of their extent and number. Instead, a person should pay attention to the great future benefit which he will receive from Allah *the Almighty* alone when he adheres to the Right Path. He *the Almighty* then says: ‘There is a great reward with Allah...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 15). Allah *Glorified is He* wants His servants to pass the tests they go through. If a person seeks to get money by all means or succumbs to the trial of his children, they may keep him away

(1) *Al Miswar ibn Makhrama narrated that Messenger Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said, ‘Fatima is my own flesh and blood. What harms her hurts me as well.’ See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 6461; see also Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 3714 and 3767.*

from showing obedience to Allah, or even make him earn illegal money. So, He *the Almighty* wills one's children to be brought up through lawful gains.

Your compliance with Allah's Way of Guidance will not go in vain, for He *the Almighty* will reward you for your obedience and your passing of the test, and that is why He concludes the verse in question by saying: 'There is a great reward with Allah...' (*at-Taghabun*: 15).

The human soul, by virtue of its natural constitution, likes what benefits it. But what really matters is the extent of the benefit. For example, the person who steals wants to benefit himself through the effort of someone else. The person who does not steal, on the other hand, wants to benefit himself so that Allah *the Almighty* blesses his money and grants him lawful sustenance.

Achieving benefit is behind any action, be it positive or negative. If you think that your breach of moral responsibility will benefit your children or increase your wealth, you should remember the reward Allah *the Almighty* gives you for your fulfilment of responsibility. Put the breach of moral responsibility in one pan of the scale and the fulfilment of responsibility in the other and see which of the two will tilt. Indeed, the one of Allah's Reward will tilt.

We should reflect on the greatness of Allah's Reward and the usefulness of the Path of Belief for those who follow it. That is why Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer – We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do' (*an-Nahl*: 97).

In fact, good life is the natural result of good deeds which one performs for the sake of Allah *the Almighty* and His Reward in the Hereafter. So, He *the Almighty* grants the believer two portions of reward: the portion of a happy, good life in this worldly life and the portion of the Hereafter about which He *the Almighty* says: 'And We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do' (*an-Nahl*: 97).

One of the benefits the believer derives from following Allah's Way of Guidance is to live a good, tranquil, and happy life; he lives in the guidance, blessing, and sustenance of Allah *the Almighty*. He *the Almighty* rewards him in

the Hereafter for his obedience and righteousness though he already benefited from righteousness in this worldly life.

For people, recompense is equal to the value of the action. But the Reward of Allah *the Almighty* does not equal the worth of the action, for it is proportional to Allah's Omnipotence. So, there is a difference between the reward people give to one another and that of Allah *the Almighty* in the Hereafter. People regard reward as an emolument for a job. According to the extent of your job, you receive your wage, recompense, or emolument. If you do not work, you will not receive any recompense.

On the other hand, the reward which Allah *the Almighty* grants to His servants in the Hereafter is great and endless. If people reward you unfairly in this worldly life, Allah *the Almighty* is the All-Just and rewards you generously, for He is the All-Just and the Granter of bestowals. Unlike the reward of this worldly life, the reward in the Hereafter continues forever. In fact, the ease of this worldly life is evanescent because you will lose it one day or it will vanish. Allah's Reward is described as great, and this indicates that it is considerable in terms of size, characteristics, and continuity which are the elements of the greatness of His Reward. Is there a reward greater than this? What makes it greater than any other reward is that it comes from Allah *the Almighty* not from the humans. In the verse in question, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'There is a great reward with Allah...' (*at-Taghabun*: 15). In another verse, He *Glorified is He* also says: '...will have his reward with his Lord' (*al-Baqara*: 122).

It is Allah *the Almighty* Who imposes religious obligations, so it is logical that the reward shall come from Him. Therefore, the true believers do not fear or feel sorry, for they are certain that Allah *the Almighty* will reward them with what He promises them. Fear is to dread something that will happen. As for sorrow, it is to grieve for something that has already happened. The believers will neither fear nor grieve when the reward comes from Allah *the Almighty*. We should not be apprehensive about what is with Allah *the Almighty* for it multiplies and increases. The person feels sad when he loses something good, but the Reward of Allah *the Almighty* is permanent; you never lose it and it will never pass you by.

Fatima, the daughter of Messenger Muhammad, used to burnish and perfume the *dirhams* when she donated them to charity. When she was asked about

this, she said, 'I polish and perfume *dirhams* because I have intended to donate them to charity.' She was asked, 'Why do you burnish and perfume them then?' She replied, 'This is because I know that they fall into Allah's Hands before they do into the hands of the poor.'⁽¹⁾

When one reflects over the Quranic verses, one concludes that the great reward has a significant meaning. Sometimes reward is not equivalent to good deeds. Rather, it is purely surplus. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'While if there is a good deed, He multiplies it and gives from Himself a great reward' (*Al-Imran*: 40). He *the Almighty* calls it 'reward' though it is surplus and excessive. This is because this surplus is resultant from the reward. If a person does not perform the good deed, he is not entitled to any reward, and in turn he does deserve any surplus.

As the reward comes from Allah *the Almighty* it is the greatest ever because the Granter is Allah *Glorified is He* Who says: 'But Allah has preferred those who strive hard in Allah's Way over those who remain [behind] with a great reward' (*an-Nisa*: 95). What is this great reward? It is explained by the following verse that reads: 'Degrees [of high position] from Him and forgiveness and mercy. And Allah is Ever-Forgiving and Merciful' (*an-Nisa*: 96). The degree here means the high position or rank which the person attains. Besides, Allah *the Almighty* adds two privileges: forgiveness and mercy.

In the verse in question, the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...With Allah...' (*at-Taghabun*: 15) gives two indications, as follows: the first is making those who do not believe in Allah *the Almighty* lose hope that they can find reward in the Hereafter for any good deeds, for they have not done these deeds to gain the pleasure of Allah *the Almighty*. Rather, they have done them for the sake of alleged deities who cannot reward them in any way, given the fact that there is no god but Allah both in this worldly life and in the Hereafter. On the Day of Judgement, Allah *the Almighty* will say: 'To whom belongs [all] sovereignty this Day? To Allah, the One, the Prevailing' (*Ghafir*: 95). None but Allah *the Almighty* has all dominion over the Day of Judgement. How do the

(1) In his *Tafsir*, As-Sam'ani narrates that Ibn Masu'd said, 'Charity falls into the Hand of Allah before it falls into the hand of the poor person.' See As-Sam'ani, *Tafsir Al-Quran*, 2/346

disbelievers expect a reward for deeds they do not perform for His *Glorified is He* sake? They have done them to find favour with other people in this world which they already achieved.

The second indication is that the reward will be in this worldly life along with the Hereafter because Allah *the Almighty* possesses both. Concerning the reward in the Hereafter, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘We will bestow upon him a great reward’ (*an-Nisa*: 74). We have three stages of receiving the reward for deeds: a reward that comes immediately upon the occurrence of the deed; a reward that comes after a short time; and a reward that comes true after a longer time. In the above-mentioned verse, Allah *the Almighty* uses a particle that refers to the realisation of the reward in the distant future, that is, in the Hereafter since the great reward can only be fully granted there. So, the believers should beware of saying, ‘Why does not Allah *the Almighty* reward us immediately for the good deeds in this worldly life?’ This is because He *the Almighty* says: ‘We will bestow upon him a great reward’ (*an-Nisa*: 74). This indicates that even though Allah provides those who do good deeds with great reward in this worldly life, His Reward for them in the Hereafter will be even greater.

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ وَأَسْمِعُوا وَأَطِيعُوا وَأَنْفِقُوا خَيْرًا
لِّأَنْفُسِكُمْ وَمَنْ يُوقِ شُحَّ نَفْسِهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٦﴾

**Be mindful of God as much as you can; hear and obey; be charitable – it is for your own good. Those who are saved from their own meanness will be the prosperous ones [16]
(The Quran, *at-Taghabun*: 16)**

The Arabic word *At-Taqwa* (mindfulness/fearing) means guarding one’s self against something; it is derived from the word *Wiqaya*, which gives the meanings of protection, guarding, shielding and so on. It means avoiding and being cautious about something evil. So, with regard to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘Be mindful of Allah...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 16), it means to beware of His Wrath in order to protect ourselves against all of His Attributes of Majesty. Whoever guards himself against these Attributes will take advantage of Allah’s Attributes of Beauty. The Attributes of Majesty include

the Ever-Subduing, the Powerful, the One Who Humiliates, the giver of Bestowals and the Harmer. When one protects himself against the Subdual, Might and Avengement of Allah *the Almighty* he takes advantage of His Attributes of Beauty, namely; the Ever-Forgiving, the All-Merciful, the Ever-Relenting and the Pardoners.

So, the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Be mindful of Allah...' (*at-Taghabun*: 16) means to guard yourselves against Allah's Attributes of Majesty so that you will not bring down His grievous punishment upon you. Hence, the believer should perform his deeds in this worldly life according to Allah's Way of Guidance. Fearing Allah *the Almighty* and guarding one's self against His punishment are direly required in the worldly life. You cannot endure the resultant implications of His Attributes of Majesty, His Wrath, Might or Revenge.

You should beware of provoking Allah's Wrath through any actions you perform. The Muslim must be firmly convinced that he will meet Allah *the Almighty*. After all, what remains for him, if he adheres to this Divine Way of Guidance, is to be promised paradise. In this connection, He *the Almighty* says: 'And fear Allah and know that you will meet Him. And give good tidings to the believers' (*al-Baqara*: 223). Fearing Allah *the Almighty* means to implement His commands and to refrain from His Prohibitions. In this way, we can adapt our choices and actions to His Way of Guidance. If we do so, we, like other creatures in the universe, will do what is good and beneficial.

Some superficial people look at some Quranic verses and claim that they are inconsistent. They argue that some verses say: 'then fear the Fire...' (*al-Baqara*: 24), while other verses read: 'and fear Allah...' (*al-Baqara*: 278). Does the believer fear the fire as he fears Allah *the Almighty*!

Such people do not understand that the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'and fear Allah...' (*al-Baqara*: 278) means to protect yourself against what may cause you harm and trouble. This also means to guard yourself against His punishment. This protection is the shield of a person who is to abide by Allah's Commands and Prohibitions. When you guard yourself against Allah's Wrath, you protect yourself against His punishment. Thus fearing Allah *the Almighty* is equivalent to protecting one's self against hell. Devout people are those who guard themselves against anything that provokes Allah's Anger. The only way

is to follow His Way of Guidance so that we will not enter hell which is one of His punitive means. Protecting one's self against hell entails obeying Allah's Commands and avoiding His Prohibitions. To say 'fear Allah' means to protect yourself against His punishment and Wrath. The same meaning goes for saying 'fear hell,' that is to say, shun what causes you to enter it.

Here, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Be mindful of Allah as much as you can...' (*at-Taghabun*: 16). This verse is connected to the previous two verses in which Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Believers, even among your spouses and your children you have some enemies – beware of them – but if you overlook their offences, forgive them, pardon them, then Allah is All Forgiving, All Merciful. [14] Your wealth and your children are only a test for you. There is great reward with Allah [15]' (*at-Taghabun*: 14-15). You should not let your wealth or children keep you away from your obedience to Allah *the Almighty* and from following His Way of Guidance. Otherwise, you will fail in your test and the result of your trial will be bad for you. Therefore, Allah's saying: 'Be mindful of Allah...' (*at-Taghabun*: 16) follows these two verses. This means to be careful and to make your fear of Allah *the Almighty* control you, not your own inclination towards hoarding wealth and stinginess.

If we ponder over the Quran, we find that it says: 'Be mindful of Allah as much as you can...' (*at-Taghabun*: 16), that is, it makes the command contingent on the person's ability. On the other hand, Allah *the Almighty* says in another verse: 'O you who have believed, fear Allah as He should be feared...' (*Al-Imran*: 102). So, the question to be asked here is 'Who is able to fear Allah *the Almighty* as duly as required?' In fact, this is hard for Muslims. That is why when the verse of *Al-Imran* was revealed, Muslims said, 'No one of us is able to fear Allah as He should be feared.' Thereupon, Allah *the Almighty* revealed His saying: 'Be mindful of Allah as much as you can; hear and obey; be charitable – it is for your own good. Those who are saved from their own meanness will be the prosperous ones' (*at-Taghabun*: 16).

One who puts Allah's saying: '...fear Allah as He should be feared...' (*Al-Imran*: 102) into practice will make remarkable achievements. However, one can fear Allah *the Almighty* as duly as required concerning limited actions. The reward is surely great, but the deeds that apply to this verse are

limited. As regards His saying: 'Be mindful of Allah as much as you can...' (*at-Taghabun*: 16), He *the Almighty* enjoins us to fear Him as far as we can. As a result, the deeds that are accepted by Him become numerous even if the reward for them is not great. The final result is that there are some limited good deeds that require high reward, while there are a lot of good deeds which call for low reward. Which of the two types is better? Of course the numerous good deeds that require low reward surpass in general the few good deeds that call for high reward.

So, what is the due and optimal fearing of Allah *the Almighty*? The due, optimal fearing of Him (*the Almighty*) is that a believer's belief must be firm and unshaken and that His Way of Guidance must be adopted as compliantly as possible. Furthermore, He *the Almighty* must be remembered and thanked instead of being forgotten and shown ingratitude.

It is said that the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...fear Allah as He should be feared...' (*Al-Imran*: 102) means that you should not be dissuaded or affected by those who blame you as long as you are pleasing Allah *the Almighty* or that you must tell the truth even if it is against yourself. Such a person is the true pious one who fears Allah as He should be feared. Some Islamic exegetes state that when the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...fear Allah as He should be feared...' (*Al-Imran*: 102) was revealed and Messenger Muhammad's Companions heard it, they found themselves unable to put it into effect. Some of them wondered, 'Who can fear Allah as He should be feared?' In the same respect, it is said that at this time Allah *the Almighty* revealed the verse reading: 'Be mindful of Allah as much as you can...' (*at-Taghabun*: 16). But does this mean that He *the Almighty* first imposed upon Muslims religious obligations that are beyond their capacity and then He said: '...fear Allah as He should be feared...' (*Al-Imran*: 102)? No, Allah *the Almighty* charges humans with the obligations which are within their capacity. People misunderstand the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Be mindful of Allah as much as you can...' (*at-Taghabun*: 16). One can say, 'I cannot perform such-and-such religious obligation.' Accordingly, such a person mistakenly thinks that he is absolved from that religious obligation. However, this is a misunderstanding.

The saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...fear Allah as He should be feared...' (*Al-Imran*: 102) means that you must fear Him as far as you can. What you

are able to do, you should do. One should not hold the opposite meaning and say, ‘I am not able,’ for Allah *the Almighty* knows best the bounds of his capability. Once you are unable, Allah *the Almighty* pardons you and alleviates your difficulty. He knows best whether a certain obligation is beyond your capacity or not.

So, the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...fear Allah as He should be feared...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 102) denotes a high level of piety attainable by distinct people. When this verse seemed hard on the Companions and they asked⁽¹⁾ Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* ‘Who can fear Allah as duly as He should be feared?’ Allah *the Almighty* revealed His saying: ‘Be mindful of Allah as much as you can...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 16) and imposed piety according to one’s capacity. So the verse in question abrogates the most optimal mandatory fearing of Allah *the Almighty*. But the verse of *Al-‘Imran* remains as an opportunity for anyone to attain the highest level of piety. If one desires to reach this level, it is much better for him. If one is not able, he can adopt the verse in question.

If we look at the two verses mentioned above from another angle, we will discover another meaningful point that refutes the allegation that there is a contradiction between them. The verse of the chapter of *Al-‘Imran* comes in a context different from that of *at-Taghabun*. The verse of *Al-‘Imran* comes in the context of verses that talk about disbelief and belief. Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘O you who have believed, if you obey a party of those who were given the Scripture, they would turn you back, after your belief, [to being] unbelievers; [100] And how could you disbelieve while to you are being recited the verses of Allah and among you is His Messenger? And whoever holds firmly to Allah has [indeed] been guided to a straight path [101]’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 100-101). The two verses here are about belief and disbelief, and

(1) *In his Tafsir, Ibn Kathir relates that Sa‘id ibn Jubayr (one of the greatest Followers) said, ‘When Allah revealed the verse reading: “O you who have believed, fear Allah as He should be feared...” (Al-‘Imran: 102), Muslims intensified their acts of worship to the point that their Achilles tendons got swollen and their foreheads became sore. Thereupon, Allah alleviated the hardships of Muslims and revealed the verse saying: “Be mindful of Allah as much as you can...” (at-Taghabun: 16). Thus the first verse was abrogated by this verse.’ See Ibn Kathir, Tafsir Al-Quran Al-‘Azim, 8/140.*

thus what is suitable here is the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...fear Allah as He should be feared...' (*Al- 'Imran*: 102). A person is obliged to believe in Allah *the Almighty* and what He ordains and to avoid all forms of disbelief and polytheism. Accordingly, belief in Allah *the Almighty* Messenger Muhammad, the Scriptures, the Last Day and Predestination is not based on one's capacity; rather, a person is required to believe in all of this as duly as possible.

Capacity is related to the matters on which it is applicable, as in the context of the chapter of *at-Taghabun*. A person can be faithful, but his personal inclinations or love for wealth might control him, or his affection for his children might lead him to yield to their wishes. Excluding the matters that are related to disbelief or polytheism, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Be mindful of Allah as much as you can...' (*at-Taghabun*: 16), which perfectly fits the context of this chapter.

Allah *the Almighty* knows that a person is weak and the circumstances can affect him greatly. Belief is not among the matters that depend upon one's capacity. It can be beyond your capacity only in the case of coercion, a fact which is clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Except for one who is forced [to renounce his religion] while his heart is secure in faith' (*an-Nahl*: 106).

Then, Allah *the Almighty* says: '...hear and obey...' (*at-Taghabun*: 15). The believers are to listen to and to obey what is ordained by Allah *the Almighty*. Not only is listening with ears needed, but what is also necessary is obedience and implementation.

You can hear what is said but may not pay heed to it. So, Allah *the Almighty* says: '...and [that] a conscious ear would be conscious of it' (*al-Haqq*: 12). The consciousness of the ear enables it to attain benefit and understand what it hears so that it will not hear mere sounds and voices as in the case of those about whom Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And there are those of them who seek to listen to you until when they go forth from you, they say to those who have been given the knowledge: What was it that he said just now?' (*Muhammad*: 16) Those people listened to Messenger Muhammad's words, yet they left him and asked, 'What has he said just now?' They listened to him *peace and blessings be upon him*, but they did not understand, nor did the spiritual light penetrate into their hearts. They looked as if they were deaf to

the verses of Allah *the Almighty*. The believer, on the contrary, listens and is affected by what he hears which increases his belief. As regards the disbeliever, he cannot comprehend what he hears. The tears of the believers are shed when they listen to the saying of Allah *the Almighty* in the Quran. As for those whose hearts are immune to the light of the Quran, they are reluctant to listen to the truth even if they hear it with their ears.

That is why Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘And those who do not believe – in their ears is deafness...’ (*Fussilat*: 44). This deafness hinders their hearing. As the ears are deaf, they cannot listen to the truth. Even if they hear something, the heart will impugn it. This is due to the fact that one’s body parts get influenced by the beliefs one holds within one’s heart. As for those who are rightly guided, they listen to the truth; their hearts receive it with satisfaction and their body parts comply with it. You listen with your ears, accept the truth with your heart and your body parts put into practice what you are ordered to do. This is the intended meaning of the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...hear and obey...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 16). The close correlation between hearing, obedience and fearing Allah *the Almighty* is also highlighted by Prophet Muhammad’s Hadith.

Concerning the believers, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘The Messenger believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, and (so do) the believers; they all believe in Allah and His angels and His Books and His Messengers; We make no difference between any of His Messengers; and they say: We hear and obey...’ (*al-Baqara*: 285). He *the Almighty* also says: ‘The only statement of the [true] believers when they are called to Allah and His Messenger to judge between them is that they say, “We hear and we obey”’ (*an-Nur*: 51).

‘Listening’ signifies the communication of the Islamic Calling, while obedience represents undertaking the obligations and compliance with Allah’s Commands and Prohibitions.

So, the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...hear and obey...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 16) means to listen in a conscious and careful way that converts into obedience. You listen to comply and obey, not just to receive words with your ears without being influenced by them. So, the hearing’s function is to deliver the sayings of Allah *the Almighty* to one’s heart and mind to be finally put into

practice. Allah *the Almighty* wants us to be among those who listen and obey, not among those who said, 'We listen and disobey.'

In this regard, He *the Almighty* says about the Jews: 'And when We made a covenant with you and raised the mountain over you: Take hold of what We have given you with firmness and be obedient. They said: We hear and disobey' (*al-Baqara*: 93). The Jews heard what Allah *the Almighty* said to them, but they disobeyed. They listened to the commands but yet defied them. They said, 'we hear,' but they did not implement what they heard. Allah *the Almighty* wants them to listen and obey, not just to receive His Words with their ears.

Thus, it is incumbent on the believers to listen, obey, and comply with Allah's sayings. Then He *the Almighty* draws our attention to charitable spending as an aspect of obedience to Him; He says: 'be charitable – it is for your own good...' (*at-Taghabun*: 16). We should note that He *the Almighty* says: '...it is for your own good...' (*at-Taghabun*: 16). This means that He *the Almighty* draws a comparison between two things: charitable spending, which is better and more advantageous, and avarice. A person's avarice occurs when he fears that he would be powerless and poor. So, he tries hard to keep and maintain what he owns for fear of poverty. A person thinks that his niggardliness and retaining of material possessions are better for him. Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* draws our attention to an important fact, saying: 'be charitable – it is for your own good...' (*at-Taghabun*: 16). He *the Almighty* reassures those who spend charitably, saying: 'The parable of those who spend their property in the way of Allah is as the parable of a grain growing seven ears (with) a hundred grains in every ear; and Allah multiplies for whom He pleases; and Allah is Ample-Giving, Knowing.' (*al-Baqara*: 261) Through charitable spending Allah *the Almighty* blesses and increases your property. So do not grieve over or fear for your wealth, for you donate your money for the sake of the Almighty and the Bountiful Who will surely increase your property.

One day Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* entered upon Bilal while the latter had a pile of foodstuff. He *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Bilal, spend charitably and do not fear impoverishment by the Owner of the Throne.'⁽¹⁾ According to another narration, the pile consisted of

(1) See *Al-Bazzar, Musnad, Hadith no. 1366*.

dried dates. Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* asked Bilal, ‘What is this foodstuff?’ He replied, ‘Some dried dates. I want to save them,’ whereupon he *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘Woe betide you, Bilal! Do not you fear that they produce smoke in hell? Make charitable donations, Bilal, and do not fear impoverishment by the Owner of the Throne.’⁽¹⁾ Bilal *Allah be pleased with him* was poor and wanted to save some dried dates to entertain Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in case he visited him. However, he *peace and blessings be upon him* instructed him to donate the dried dates charitably and said to him, ‘Make charitable donations, Bilal and do not fear impoverishment by the Owner of the Throne.’ This does not mean that he *peace and blessings be upon him* discourages us from saving a portion of our money or foodstuff to use it later in the future. Rather, he *peace and blessings be upon him* thought that Bilal *Allah be pleased with him* had saved the dried dates for his fear that Allah *the Almighty* would not provide him with anything other than them. He wanted his Companions to keep their hearts pure from the worldly pleasures.

As a matter of fact, this matter has to do with the believer’s piety and his fear that he might disobey Him by being unable to implement the command in His saying: ‘be charitable – it is for your own good...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 16). This is also connected to the fear of being captivated by the love of the worldly life and indulging in miserliness or avarice. That is why Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Those who are saved from their own meanness will be the prosperous ones’ (*at-Taghabun*: 16). So, His saying: ‘...be charitable – it is for your own good...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 16) serves as a rule that He *the Almighty* intends to use to combat the avarice within the people’s selves. He *the Almighty* says to all of us, ‘Be far-sighted, for alms and charitable spending do not decrease a person’s property.’ Using a small measurement of wheat grains as planting seeds for your land will not decrease your depository a great degree when you grow your land. This is because you expect that the land will produce many times the amount of this measure. As Allah *the Almighty* clarifies for us the roots of avarice within the human soul, He teaches us that the first thing that the

(1) This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Ibn Mas‘ud *Allah be pleased with him*. See *Al-Bazzar, Musnad, Hadith no. 1978*; *Abu Ya‘ala, Musnad, Hadith no. 6040*; and *At-Tabarani, Al-Mu‘jam Al-Kabir, Hadith no. 1017*.

human soul encounters is a person's apprehension that charitable expenses would cut down his property. On the other hand, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* warns us against niggardliness and avarice by saying, 'Beware of injustice, for it will be darkness on the Day of Resurrection. Avoid avarice, for it brought destruction down upon those who were before you and prompted them to shed the blood of one another and violate their prohibitions.'⁽¹⁾ Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Those who are saved from their own meanness will be the prosperous ones' (*at-Taghabun*: 16). The human soul inclines towards avarice, and that is why Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Those who are saved from their own meanness...' (*at-Taghabun*: 16). So, one of the Blessings Allah *the Almighty* conferred upon the person and one of the tokens of His Mercy towards him is that He *Glorified is He* protects the person from avarice and miserliness. A person who stints on his money, knowledge, or wisdom will inevitably suffer loss and forfeiture. As regards those who: '...are saved from their own meanness...' (*at-Taghabun*: 16), they will succeed and escape loss, for they have spent charitably and Allah *the Almighty* has granted them many times as much as what they spent. They have struck a deal with Allah *the Almighty* Who says: 'And Allah multiplies [His reward] for whom He wills...' (*al-Baqara*: 261).

One who communicates his knowledge to others will be rewarded in return for any person who receives this knowledge, be it religious or mundane. Likewise, a person who has great experience in some field and is known for wisdom is rewarded for providing others with them because he protects the inexperienced from committing what provokes Allah's Anger. So He *the Almighty* says: 'Those...will be the prosperous ones' (*at-Taghabun*: 16). The Arabic word *al-falah* means success, winning, and prosperity, while the word *al-muflih* means a winner, a successful and prosperous person. The word *falah* (success) contains its evidence; it is derived from a clause meaning 'to till the land'. The farmer who cultivates his land and grows it will reap the fruit in the end. Likewise, the successful person benefits from his deeds.

(1) See Muslim, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 6741; Ahmad, *Musnad*, Hadith no. 14501; Al-Bayhaqi, *As-Sunnan Al-Kubra*, Hadith no. 11835; and Al-Bukhari, *Al-Adab Al-Mufrad*, Hadith no. 488 and 483.

The success of the believers is not confined to the Hereafter, but it can also come in this worldly life as a result of charitable expenditure. So, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...and (as for) those who hoard up gold and silver and do not spend it in Allah’s way, announce to them a painful chastisement’ (*at-Tawba*: 34). Charitable spending includes numerous fields. It creates activity and circulation in society, which are beneficial for all people. People benefit from *zakat* (obligatory alms) when you pay it, exactly as when you pay to equip the Muslim army. Once you spend charitably and stop hoarding your wealth, markets will be brisk. This means the creation of a lot of job opportunities, means of living and the incentive for humanity to progress. For example, when you buy yourself a washing machine, fridge or build a small house, you cause an economic boom in society. At the same time, you develop your material comforts. Prosperity leads to the best discoveries that benefit humanity. However, if you hoard up all your money, economic recession will prevail. This does not mean that one should spend all of one’s money, for Allah *the Almighty* likes moderation in all aspects of life, a fact which is clear in His saying: ‘And they who when they spend, are neither extravagant nor parsimonious, and (keep) between these the just mean’ (*al-Furqan*: 67). Here, Allah *the Almighty* warns us against extravagance and not keeping a portion of our money for contingencies. But penny-pinching brings about stagnancy, the cessation of production and unemployment. Islam encourages thriftiness and moderate spending that creates marketability and simultaneously allows the saving of money to improve your everyday life and help you in any potential problems you encounter. In this case, you will succeed in this worldly life and in the Hereafter.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

﴿١٧﴾ إِنَّ تَقْرُضُوا اللَّهَ فَرَضًا حَسَنًا يُضَعِفْهُ لَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ شَكُورٌ حَلِيمٌ

If you make a generous loan to God He will multiply it for you and forgive you. God is ever thankful and forbearing [17] (The Quran, *at-Taghabun*: 17)

Allah *the Almighty* talks to us in the preceding verse about charitable spending, saying: ‘...be charitable – it is for your own good. Those who are saved

from their own meanness will be the prosperous ones' (*at-Taghabun*: 16). You should not make the worldly life capture your heart. Be thrifty and spend your money on your families and on the interests of your society. If the worldly life captivates you, you will not rid yourself of stinginess in your knowledge, views, or advice. So, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Those who are saved from their own meanness will be the prosperous ones' (*at-Taghabun*: 16). The problem lies in the niggardly soul whose owner even begrudges smiling at his coreligionist. This is despite the fact that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'To smile at your brother is an act of charity.'⁽¹⁾ Therefore, you should cleanse your heart of niggardliness to be successful.

A parsimonious person stints on and thus harms only himself. As for the generous person, he, unlike misers, receives more blessings from Allah *the Almighty*. Thus, He *the Almighty* says: 'Behold! You are those who are called upon to spend in Allah's way, but among you are those who are niggardly, and whoever is niggardly is niggardly against his own soul...' (*Muhammad*: 38). If your Lord sees you give charity out of your property, He will increase it for you. In this regard, one of the righteous people says, 'O Allah! You habitually bestowed blessings on me and I got used to give out of them to the people. So, I invoke You to keep bestowing on me what I got accustomed to so that I do not stop giving the people what they used to take.'

As a matter of fact, charitable expenditure generates and multiplies the blessings of Allah *the Almighty*. Suppose that you have several children and you give one of them one pound. Then this child of yours goes to a shop, buys sweets, and divides them among his brothers. You will certainly give him more money because he is kind towards his brothers.

Know, O you rich person, that when you withhold charity from the poor, you deprive yourself. Allah, the Omnipotent, is not in need of you; He is fully

(1) *This Hadith is narrated by At-Tirmidhi and Ibn Hibban on the authority of Abu Dharr Allah be pleased with him. Al-Bazzar narrated it with the following wording: 'Your smiling at the face of your coreligionist is a kindness; to pour [water] from your bucket and fill that of your coreligionist is a kindness; to promote virtue and combat vice is a kindness; to remove thorns and stones from the road is a kindness, and to show the way to a lost person is a kindness.'* See *At-Tirmidhi, Sunnan, Hadith no. 1956; see also Ibn Hibban, Sahih, Hadith no. 474; and Al-Bazzar, Musnad, Hadith no. 4070.*

Able to replace stingy people with others who openhandedly donate some of their property to charity. A person who scrimps denies himself the avenues of the Mercy of Allah. Spending in the form of charity, *zakat* (obligatory alms) or household expenditure leads to an economic boom and youth employment. This also safeguards societies from moral deviations and the loss of generations.

In this vein, lending money to a needy person is a form of spending as well. It is possible that there will be no needy person in the society if each rich person gives financial aid at least to his poor relatives. If every wealthy person provides for his needy relatives, there will be no poverty-stricken people in the Muslim societies.

If you want to broaden the scope of good deeds, you should widen the range of charitable spending. When you give charity to the needy whom Allah *the Almighty* brought into being, you endear yourself to Him by helping them, even though this is not obligatory on you.

The one who withholds charity from the needy invokes their spite and hatred. If spite and grudge spread in a society, all immoralities and abominations will be rampant. Allah *the Almighty* orders us to purify our property by spending charitably, so that it will increase and grow and spite will be eliminated from society. If grudges prevail in a society, such a society will be at stake. It is as if Allah *the Almighty* says to humans, ‘Go about in this life and it is Me Who will ensure the result of your effort. But I have an entitlement to your wealth which I have entrusted you with: you have to give the needy a portion of it.’ If the rich do not assist the needy, the needy may take what they need by stealing, robbing, or even resort to killing or complicity in murder.

By giving charity to the needy, you actually give them on behalf of Allah *the Almighty* Who bestows all the means of sustenance. He *the Almighty* commands the believers, saying: ‘O you who have believed, spend from that which We have provided for you...’ (*al-Baqara*: 254). In fact, you spend out of the favours that Allah *the Almighty* confers upon you. He *the Almighty* regards charitable spending as a loan which a servant gives to Him, the Lord, the Creator, and the Bestower of sustenance. Wealth, in fact, is Allah’s. If He puts you in possession of wealth and orders you to give charity to your poor coreligionist, He respects your ownership and does not take back His Grant.

So He *the Almighty* orders you to give charity to the poor as a loan and He will repay it on behalf of them. In this regard, He *the Almighty* says: 'Who is it that would loan Allah a goodly loan...' (*al-Baqara*: 245). In this verse, He *Glorified is He* does not say, 'would loan so-and-so'. Rather, He says: 'would loan Allah'. In the verse in question, He *the Almighty* also says: 'If you make a generous loan to Allah...' (*at-Taghabun*: 17). That is, when you give someone a loan, it seems as if you have given it to Allah *the Almighty* Himself.

The Arabic word *al-qard* (loan), linguistically, means nibbling an object with canine teeth. Allah *the Almighty* knows best that loaning is difficult. To show that it is so, He says: '...would loan Allah' (*al-Baqara*: 245). Thus, He *the Almighty* gives the reward according to its difficulty.

Loaning is harder than almsgiving. The moment you give charity, you are not worried about what you donate out of your money because you initially exclude your charitable donation from your calculations; you do not expect any recompense from the person you give charity. By contrast, when you give a loan to someone, you think about a lot of things and even ask many questions: 'Will he pay off the loan? Will I give him a loan less than he wants? How can I take back my money if he fails to repay it?'

Thus, loaning is a lot more difficult than almsgiving. The loaner always calculates the remaining time when the loan repayment becomes due. He can also commit numerous sins because of this loan. For example, he may embarrassingly or insultingly demand repayment of the borrower whenever they meet together. Also, the loaner may offensively remind the borrower of his favour and blame him vehemently. This in turn leaves no room for speaking together normally and comfortably. So, loaning is harder for both the loaner and the borrower.

Allah *the Almighty* gives a reward for the act of loaning more than He does for charity. Here, I can remember that when I was in America, an orientalist asked me, 'There is a contradiction between the Quranic verse reading: "Whoever comes [on the Day of Judgement] with a good deed will have ten times the like thereof [to his credit]..." (*al-An'am*: 160) and the Hadith of Messenger Muhammad which reads: "The following words are written on the gate of paradise: the reward for one act of charity is ten times as much as the

like thereof and the reward for a loan is eighteen times as much as the like thereof.”⁽¹⁾ Allah *the Almighty* inspired me to give the answer to the orientalist. So I said to the interpreter, ‘Yes, the reward for a good deed is tenfold as much as the like thereof in case you give charity. As regards the loan, if you, for example, donate one dollar to charity, it equals ten dollars in the sight of Allah *the Almighty*. But you take back your dollar, and thus it seems as if you have nine dollars; if they multiply, they make eighteen dollars.’

If someone asks, ‘Why is the reward for a loan multiplied?’ We say, The almsgiver has no desire to take back his alms. As regards the loaner, he expects that his loan will be paid off. The longer he keeps patient, the greater his reward will be. Moreover, the borrower takes out a loan in case of dire need, while the recipient of the alms may accept the charity even if he does not need it. Allah *the Almighty* wants to encourage Muslims to give loans because He *the Almighty* wills life to continue and its aspects to integrate. One takes care of his money and tries hard to make it grow; this can be realised by giving charity as a loan to Allah *the Almighty*. This is the way through which Allah *the Almighty* increases and multiplies your reward. Therefore, He says: ‘If you make a generous loan to Allah He will multiply it for you...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 17). He *Glorified is He* lays down a condition for the loan to be multiplied, namely; it must be goodly. But what is the goodly loan? Describing the loan as goodly indicates that the source of the money from which you give someone else a loan must be lawful. In this regard, Messenger Muhammad *Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him* says, ‘Allah is good and accepts nothing but that which is good.’⁽²⁾

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- (1) Anas ibn Malik narrated that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘On the Night of Al-Israa’, I saw these words written on the gate of paradise: “The reward for one act of charity is ten times as much as the like thereof and the reward for a loan is eighteen times as much as the like thereof.” I asked Jibril (Gabriel), “Why is loaning better than charity?” He replied, “Because the beggar asks for help and can manage while the borrower takes out a loan when s/he is in dire need of it.”’ See Ibn Maja, *Sunnan*, Hadith no. 2431; see also At-Tabarani, *Al-Mu’jam Al-Awsat*, Hadith no. 6719; and Al-Bayhaqi, *Shu’ab Al-Iman*, Hadith no. 3288.
- (2) Abu Hurayra narrated that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said ‘Allah is good and accepts nothing but that which is good. And Allah orders believers to do what He commands Prophets to do; He says, “O Messengers, eat from the good=

When you give someone else a loan, you give it to Allah *the Almighty*. So, you deal with Allah *the Almighty* and your dealing must be based on lawful gains. How can one deal with Allah *the Almighty* with ill-gotten gains he makes out of theft, embezzlement, usury or any kind of sins? Your money must be lawful and good so that your loan will be goodly and acceptable.

Allah *the Almighty* describes the loan as goodly and generous in order for it to be devoid of taunts and harm or any benefits whatsoever for the lender; otherwise, the loan will be an interest-based loan, which is forbidden in Islam. Imam Abu Hanifah⁽¹⁾ sets a great example to us in this regard. He used to sit in the shade of one of his friends' houses. One day the owner of the house borrowed some money from Abu Hanifah. The next day Abu Hanifah sat away from the shade of the house. On seeing him, the owner of the house asked him why he did so, whereupon he explained that he feared that his sitting in the shade of the house might be a type of usury.

As for reproaching and harming the recipient of charity, Allah *the Almighty* says: '(As for) those who spend their property in the way of Allah, then do not follow up what they have spent with reproach or injury, they shall have their reward from their Lord, and they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve. [262] Kind speech and forgiveness is better than charity followed by injury; and Allah is Self-sufficient, Forbearing' [263] (*al-Baqara*: 262-263). As He *the Almighty* talks about charity in the two above-mentioned verses, we should stress here that the interest-free loan is also a kind of charitable spending. As previously stated, loaning is harder on one's self than almsgiving. So, you should not taunt the person who receives your charity or borrows from you or hurt his feelings in one way or another.

= *foods and do good deeds...*" (*al-Mu'minun*:51). He also says, "O you who have believed, eat from the good [that is, lawful] things which We have provided for you..." (*al-Baqara*: 172). Then he (the Messenger) mentioned the example of a dishevelled dust-covered man who makes a long journey, raising his hands towards the sky (saying), "O my Lord! O my Lord!" But his food is unlawful; his drink is unlawful; he was nourished from illicit gains. So how are his supplications answered?'

(1) Abu Hanifa An-Nu'aman ibn Thabit At-Taymi was born in Kufah in 80 A. H. and grew up there; he traded in silk and pursued knowledge since his boyhood. Afterwards, he devoted himself to teaching and giving *fatwas*.

It is among the norms of faith that a person should forget about the fact that he gave charity. He should not tell anyone of his relatives about his kindness towards the poor, notably little children who do not understand such matters. If my son knows that I give some help to my neighbour, he may taunt the son of my neighbour about this. So beware of following your charitable expenditures by taunting or insulting their recipients. If you do so, the one who receives your charity or borrows from you will have a grudge and hatred against you.

We find a lot of people say boastfully, ‘We did too many favours to so-and-so. We helped so-and-so in such-and-such a way. But they were ungrateful to us.’ As you remember the kindness you do to others but tauntingly, it is fair that they receive it with ingratitude. As you did not seek Allah’s Cause by your favours, people will not be grateful for them.

Your charitable expenditures should not be accompanied by taunting or boasting, not only at the time when you give it but also after you do that. More appropriately, you must continue doing the same, no matter how much time passes.

The moment you give charity or give a goodly loan, you deal with Allah *the Almighty*. Consider what Lady Fatima⁽¹⁾ used to do. She would burnish and perfume the *dirhams* whenever she donated them to charity. When she was asked about this, she said, ‘I polish and perfume *dirhams* because I have intended to donate them to charity.’ She was asked, ‘Why do you want to donate them burnished and perfumed?’ She replied, ‘Because I know that they fall into Allah’s Hands before they do into the hands of the poor.’⁽²⁾

(1) *She is Fatima Al-Hashimiyya Al-Qurayshiyah, the daughter of Messenger Muhammad. Her mother is Khadija Bint Khuwaylid. Fatima was born before the Hijra. She was famous for eloquence and wisdom. She married ‘Ali ibn Abu Taleb, Messenger Muhammad’s paternal cousin, at the age of eighteen. She bore him Al-Hasan, Al-Husayn, Umm Kulthum and Zainab. She died six months after the Messenger’s death in 11 A.H. She was then 29 years old. See Az-Zirikli, Al-A‘lam, 5/123.*

(2) *There is another version in Nuzhat Al-Majalis which is mentioned by ‘Abd Ar-Rahman As-Safuri and which reads: ‘Whenever ‘A’isha wanted to donate a dirham to charity, she would perfume it. Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him asked her about that, and she said, “Messenger of Allah, I would like to perfume my dirham, for =*

In order for a loan to be goodly, it must be interest-free. Interest makes the loan bad and causes the borrower to suffer from straitened circumstances even if he is actually in dire need of the loan. Also, the one who gives interest-based loans and exploits others' difficulties suffers from loss and damage. The Messenger of Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Any loan that generates a benefit [on the part of the loaner] is based on usury.'⁽¹⁾

Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And whatever you lay out as usury so that it may increase in the property of men, it shall not increase with Allah; and whatever you give in charity, desiring Allah's pleasure – it is these (persons) that shall get manifold' (*ar-Rum*: 39). He *Glorified is He* prohibits practising usury even if it is for the purpose of achieving an increase, be it in the form of a material advantage, or money or valuable items, be it conditional or unconditional. Under these circumstances, interest-based money turns into a commodity. For example, one hundred pounds taken as a loan may be repaid as one hundred and fifty pounds.

This does serious damage to the society because wealth should grow through business. If the growth of wealth is not based on business, life will be corrupted; the poor will grow poorer and the rich will become richer. Regretfully, this is what we see in the world these days.

At the country level, we notice that poor countries become poorer because they borrow money and the resultant interest will mount and accumulate until it is more than the original debts. With the passage of time, interest increases, thus debts multiply and the settlement becomes nearly impossible. Rich countries become richer because they give loans and recover them many times.

The contract of usury protects the creditor only. There is another moral question: a person gives an interest-based loan when he has money in excess of his basic needs. One takes out the loan from a usurer only when one is in dire need of it. Look at the ethical setback in the universe; the destitute have no choice but to borrow money and later they are bound to repay it at high rates

= *it falls into the Hands of Allah before it does into the hands of the beggar.* " Thereupon, he peace and blessings be upon him said, "Allah has invested you with success, 'A'isha."'
See 'Abd Ar-Rahman As-Safuri, *Nuzhat Al-Majalis*, 1/334.

(1) See *Al-'Ajluni, Kashf Al-Khafa'*, Hadith no. 1991.

of interest to the wealthy who are not in need. How can such a loan be lawful if it is not a goodly loan which the borrowers take out to meet their daily needs or handle an emergency? The goodly loans should not harm the debtor, but rather relieve him from concern about paying it back along with its interest.

In order for a loan to be goodly, it must be based on the rules and regulations of Islamic Law. Therefore, the debt should be documented and be attested to so that neither the creditor nor the debtor will be wronged in any way. In this connection, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘O you who believe! When you deal with each other in contracting a debt for a fixed time, then write it down; and let a scribe write it down between you with fairness; and the scribe should not refuse to write as Allah has taught him, so he should write; and let him who owes the debt dictate, and he should be careful of (his duty to) Allah, his Lord, and not diminish anything from it; but if he who owes the debt is unsound in understanding, or weak, or (if) he is not able to dictate himself, let his guardian dictate with fairness; and call in to witness from among your men two witnesses; but if there are not two men, then one man and two women from among those whom you choose to be witnesses so that if one of the two errs, the second of the two may remind the other; and the witnesses should not refuse when they are summoned; and be not averse to writing it (whether it is) small or large, with the time of its falling due; this is more equitable in the sight of Allah and assures greater accuracy in testimony, and the nearest (way) that you may not entertain doubts (afterwards), except when it is ready merchandise which you give and take among yourselves from hand to hand, then there is no blame on you in not writing it down; and have witnesses when you barter with one another, and let no harm be done to the scribe or to the witness; and if you do (it) then surely it will be a transgression in you, and be careful of (your duty) to Allah, Allah teaches you, and Allah knows all things’ (*al-Baqara*: 282). In this verse of *al-Baqara*, He *the Almighty* lays down rules for borrowing and loaning. The loan must be documented so that rights will be preserved and the proprietors of wealth will be reassured that their wealth is safe. In this way, lending continues and the needy will be aided without harming the owners of capital.

As Allah *the Almighty* closes the door of interest-based loans, He opens the door of interest-free lending that is based on documentation and testifying.

Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* says, 'The usury that was practised during the Pre-Islamic period is illegal, and I begin by declaring forbidden the amount of interest which 'Abbas ibn 'Abd Al-Muttalib used to receive. Surely, it is entirely unbinding.'⁽¹⁾

Allah *the Almighty* says: 'O you who believe! Be careful of (your duty to) Allah and relinquish what remains (due) from usury, if you are believers. [278] But if you do (it) not, then be apprised of war from Allah and His Messenger; and if you repent, then you shall have your capital; neither shall you make (the debtor) suffer loss, nor shall you be made to suffer loss [279]' (*al-Baqara*: 278-279).

He *the Almighty* forbids giving interest-based loans but allows and encourages interest-free lending according to the set rules, to maintain the solidarity of society.

The fact that He *the Almighty* ordains the documentation of debts helps in preventing any possible differences, especially among close relatives and friends. A lot of people mistakenly think that He *the Almighty* means by the documentation of debts the protection of the creditor. Actually, the purpose of this, first and foremost, is to protect the debtor. When the debtor knows that his debt is registered, he does his utmost to pay it off. But if the debt is unregistered, the debtor may stop working and desist from settling his debt. As a result, he manages to meet his family's needs only once, and the rich would refrain from lending money to the poor. The rich also would take the lack of settlement of debts by some needy people as a pretext for not giving them any loans anymore. The person who defaults on his debts may involve himself in committing more sins because he narrows the chances of interest-free lending.

Allah *the Almighty* wants the badly-off to take part in economic life. As for the wealthy people, they can manage their lives as they like. The have-nots,

(1) *Ibn Khuzayma narrated on the authority of Jabir ibn 'Abdullah and 'Amr ibn Al-Ahwas that Messenger Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said, 'Surely, the usurious practices that were made during the Pre-Islamic period are illegal; you are entitled to your capitals without doing injustice to one another. Also the amount of interest which 'Abbas ibn 'Abd Al-Muttalib has to receive is unlawful. Surely, it is entirely unbinding.' See Ibn Khuzayma, Sahih, Hadith no. 3087; see also At-Tirmidhi, Sunnan, Hadith no. 3087.*

on the contrary, are always in need of help. Therefore, there is a proverb in the Egyptian countryside, reading, ‘Whoever takes and gives can have the whole money.’

When a person borrows and repays his debt, all people trust him and think of him as sincere and true to his word. It, then, seems that he owns the entire money. So Allah *the Almighty* wants the badly-off to manage his life through the documentation of the debt as the better-off are not in need of loans.

To put more emphasis on the protection of the debtor, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...and let him who owes the debt dictate, and he should be careful of (his duty to) Allah, his Lord, and not diminish anything from it...’ (*al-Baqara*: 282). The debtor must dictate the debt he owes as Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...and not diminish anything from it...’ (*al-Baqara*: 282). Here arises a question, which is, ‘Why does the creditor not dictate the debt himself?’ This is because the debtor is usually in a position of weakness and feels embarrassed to talk. Further, the creditor may reduce the repayment deadline the moment this deadline is written. Thus, the documentation of debts is also useful for the creditor as this encourages him to lend to others and promote interest-free loans.

One may ask, ‘Why does Allah *the Almighty* say: “If you make a generous loan to Allah...”’ (*at-Taghabun*: 17) using the conditional particle “if” which connotes doubt or uncertainty? On the other hand, He says: “Who is it that would loan Allah a goodly loan so He may multiply it for him many times over?” (*al-Baqara*: 245); and He also says: “Who is it that would loan Allah a goodly loan so He will multiply it for him and he will have a noble reward?” (*al-Hadid*: 11)

The answer to this argument is that the verse of the chapter of *at-Taghabun*: ‘...if you make a generous loan...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 17) comes after talking about those who stint on their wealth and are niggardly. So, He *the Almighty* says: ‘...be charitable – it is for your own good. Those who are saved from their own meanness will be the prosperous ones’ (*at-Taghabun*: 16). The compulsive miser finds spending money very hard, especially with regard to charity and lending others. There is a colloquial saying that reads, ‘A leopard cannot change its spots; old habits die hard.’ So Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘If you make a generous loan to Allah...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 17). He *Glorified is He* gives a multiplied reward for those who lend interest-free loans, saying:

‘If you make a generous loan to Allah, He will multiply it for you...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 17). That is to say that He *the Almighty* multiplies your reward for this loan many times over.

Loans, apparently, decrease your wealth, as you can invest them to make profits and maximise your wealth. However, you opt to lend your money to people in need, to gain the Reward of Allah *the Almighty*. Therefore, He *the Almighty* increases your wealth many times double its amount. In the Hereafter, He *the Almighty* gives you a great reward. You give your loan for the sake of Allah *the Almighty* and He returns your loan many times double its amount and its reward.

He *the Almighty* continues, saying: ‘...and forgive you...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 17). But what does the word ‘forgiveness’ in this verse signify? It means that He *the Almighty* will forgive the misgivings that boil up inside the lender about his money and any inadvisable behaviour towards the borrower.

In another verse, He *the Almighty* says: ‘...if you keep up prayer and pay the obligatory alms and believe in My Messengers and assist them and offer to Allah a goodly gift, I will most certainly cover your evil deeds...’ (*al-Ma‘ida*: 12). Forgiving sins and wiping out misdeeds in addition to increasing his wealth many times double its amount are a reward that Allah *the Almighty* gives to the lender. He *Glorified is He* concludes the verse in question with His saying: ‘Allah is Ever-Thankful and Forbearing’ (*at-Taghabun*: 17).

He *the Almighty* appreciates the assistance that the beneficent, the almsgiver, and the lender give to the needy. Ibn ‘Umar *Allah be pleased with him* said, ‘A man came to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and said, “Messenger of Allah, which people are dearer to Allah? Which [good] deeds are most liked by Allah?” Messenger Muhammad said, “The dearest people to Allah are those who are more helpful towards others. The deeds that Allah likes best are to give pleasure to a Muslim, eliminate his suffering, settle a debt for him or help him satisfy his hunger.”’⁽¹⁾

(1) This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Ibn ‘Umar *Allah be pleased with him*. See *At-Tabarani, Al-Mu‘jam Al-Kabir*, Hadith no. 13468; see also *At-Tabarani, Al-Mu‘jam Al-Awsat*, Hadith no. 6026; and *Al-Mu‘jam As-Saghir*, Hadith no. 861.

Allah *the Almighty* is the Ever-Thankful Who gives a great reward for few deeds. He appreciates the one who thanks Him for His Blessings. If you praise Him, He *the Almighty* will thank you and give you more reward. So, 'The Ever-Thankful' is one of the Lofty Names of Allah *the Almighty*.

It is thus clear that He *the Almighty* appreciates the aid that a servant gives to others. If people thank and appreciate one another, what do you think of Allah's Appreciation and Thankfulness! Whenever you thank Allah *the Almighty* He grants you more reward for this good deed.

But why does Allah *the Almighty* say: 'Allah is Ever-Thankful and Forbearing...' (*at-Taghabun*: 17)? What is the relationship between thankfulness and forbearance? Allah *the Almighty* mentions forgiveness and forbearance together in other Quranic verses, such as: 'Allah does not impose blame upon you for what is unintentional in your oaths, but He imposes blame upon you for what your hearts have earned. And Allah is Forgiving and Forbearing' (*al-Baqara*: 225).

The fact that Allah *the Almighty* combines thankfulness and forbearance raises some questions and calls for consideration. Forbearance is a good quality which means enduring others' offence and pardoning them. On the part of Allah *the Almighty* forbearance means that He does not hasten to punish the sinners.

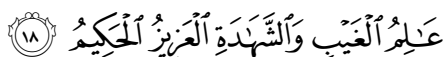
He *the Almighty* is All Forbearing towards a servant who commits misdeeds and also pardons the minor sins of the righteous. If your good deeds are tarnished with something bad or you contravene Allah's Way forgetfully or by mistake, do not let this trouble you or damage your relationship with Him. He *the Almighty* is All Forbearing and pardons you for such a misdeed. This applies to the popular proverb saying, 'Your mistakes are always overlooked by your lovers.'

By saying: 'Allah is Ever-Thankful and Forbearing' (*at-Taghabun*: 17), Allah *the Almighty* wants to say to His servants: 'I appreciate your lending money to My servants who are in need. I am also All Forbearing towards you; I will not hasten to punish you when you speak tauntingly or insultingly the moment you lend money to others. This gives you a chance to repent so that you will get your reward many times over. What matters most is that the interests of those in need must be served.'

The books of Hadith give us the following account: ‘Abdullah ibn Mas‘ud *Allah be pleased with him* said, ‘When the verse: “Who is it that would loan Allah a goodly loan...?” (*al-Baqara*: 245) was revealed, Abu Ad-Dahdah said, “Messenger of Allah, does Allah want us to give a loan?” Whereupon he *peace and blessings be upon him* said, “Yes, Abu Ad-Dahdah.”⁽¹⁾ Abu Ad-Dahdah said, “So extend your hand.” Messenger Muhammad extended his hand to him, whereupon Abu Ad-Dahdah said, “I have decided to give my orchard as a loan to my Lord.” The orchard consisted of six hundred palm trees. Abu Ad-Dahdah walked away till he reached the orchard where his wife and children lived and called out, “Umm Ad-Dahdah.” She replied, “Here I am at your disposal!” He said, “Go out. I have lent the orchard to my Lord.”⁽²⁾

Abu Ad-Dahdah *Allah be pleased with him* knows well that Allah *the Almighty* is Ever-Thankful and Forbearing. He *Allah be pleased with him* extended his hand to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and donated the orchard to charity. His wife did not object or disagree with him. He gave the orchard as a loan to Allah *the Almighty* so that its yield would go to the poor and needy.

Allah *the Almighty* subsequently, says:



He knows the unseen, as well as the seen; He is the Almighty, the Wise [18] (The Quran, *at-Taghabun*: 18)

The above-mentioned verse includes three of the Lofty Names of Allah *the Almighty*. In fact, the chapter of *at-Taghabun* includes a number of Allah’s Lofty Names, including: the Omnipotent, the All Seeing, the Omniscient, the Self-Sufficient, the Praiseworthy, the All-Acquainted, the Forgiving, the

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- (1) Abu Ad-Dahdah, Thabit ibn Ad-Dahdah, was from Banu Anif or Banu Al-‘Ajlan. He took part in the battle of Uhud and was martyred at the hands of Khalid ibn Al-Walid (while he was still a polytheist). It is said that Abu Ad-Dahdah died at home after Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* returned from Al-Hudaybyya.
- (2) This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Anas ibn Malik *Allah be pleased with him*. See Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 12504; see also Ibn Hibban, Sahih, Hadith no. 7259; Al-Bazzar, Musnad, Hadith no. 2032; and Al-Hakim, Mustadrak, Hadith no. 2194.

All-Merciful, the Ever-Thankful and the All-Forbearing. He *the Almighty* concludes this list of these Lofty Names with His saying: ‘He knows the Unseen, as well as the Seen; He is the Almighty the All-Wise’ (*at-Taghabun*: 18). With regard to His saying: ‘He knows the Unseen, as well as the Seen...’ (*at-Taghabun*: 18), the unseen is that which is known only by Allah, the Knower of the unseen. He does not acquaint any of His creatures with the Unseen except those whom He selects from among the humans, a fact which is crystal clear in His saying: ‘The Knower of the unseen! So He does not reveal His secrets to any [26] Except to him whom He chooses as a Messenger; for surely He makes a guard to march before him and after him [27]’ (*al-Jinn*: 26-27). The unseen is what is unknown for you and others. As for things that are unknown for you but known to others, they are not called unseen. For example, if your money is stolen, you do not know who has stolen it. The thief, in this case, is unknown for you, not for others. The thief knows himself; the person who is complicit in the crime knows him too; and the person who sees and connives knows him as well. You do not know the place where the stolen objects are hidden while the thief does. So, it is unknown for you but actually known to others. There are things which are unseen and unknown for you and others too. Such matters are known only by Allah *the Almighty* Who says: ‘The Knower of the Unseen! So He does not reveal His secrets to any’ (*al-Jinn*: 26). The Unseen meant by Allah *the Almighty* in His saying: ‘The Knower of the Unseen’ (*al-Jinn*: 26) is the absolute Unseen which is exclusive to Him *Glorified is He*.

Allah *the Almighty* may bestow some indications of the Unseen on some mystics, but when he tells the people about it, He *the Almighty* may bring the events contrary to what he said in order to prove that He *the Almighty* is the only Knower of the Unseen.

Allah *the Almighty* knows the absolute Unseen which has no premises or clues that may help us come to it. Thus, we cannot discover it, for it is known only by Him *the Almighty*.

Thus, the absolute Unseen is what is known to Allah *the Almighty* alone, and has no clues. He *the Almighty* may disclose it to the one whom He wishes. This is supported by His saying: ‘The Knower of the Unseen! So He does not reveal His secrets to any [26] Except to him whom He chooses as a Messenger; for

surely He makes a guard to march before him and after him [27]' (*al-Jinn*: 26-27). The absolute Unseen differs from the clue-based Unseen. The human being can use these clues to discover one of the mysteries of the universe.

An example of the absolute Unseen is the Day of Judgement about which Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Say, "None in the heavens and earth knows the Unseen except Allah"...' (*an-Naml*: 65). So He *the Almighty* alone knows the time when the Day of Judgement will take place. At the same time, He creates the preliminary events and signs that indicate the imminence of this Day.

Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* boasts about not knowing the appointed time of the Day of Judgement. When he was asked about it, he said, 'The one who is asked about it does not know more than the one who is asking.'⁽¹⁾

To hide the Unseen from people is of a great advantage. Allah *the Almighty* is the Lord of all mankind and He wants people to help and benefit from one another. For example, if you detect one fault in someone else's character, you may ignore all of his good qualities and dislike him. So, He *the Almighty* hides from you the flaws of others in order that you can take advantage of their good qualities.

He *the Almighty* hides from us the Unseen through three barriers: the past, the future, and the place. Before your birth, you have no idea about the past events, but someone reliable comes to you and informs you of these past events. Also, you do not know what will happen in the future. As for the barrier of place, you have no idea about things existing at a place other than the place at which you are present. Besides, an object can exist at the same place where you stay, but you are unaware of it.

Here, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'He knows the Unseen, as well as the Seen...' (*at-Taghabun*: 18). This informs us that He *the Almighty* knows the Unseen and the Seen alike. Someone may mistakenly think that if he stays at

(1) This Hadith is narrated by Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him. The Hadith reads as follows: 'O Messenger of Allah, when will the Hour be?' He said: 'The one who is asked about it does not know more than the one who is asking.' See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 50 and 4777; Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 102, 108 and 106; Abu Dawud, Sunnan, Hadith no. 4697; and At-Tirmidhi, Sunnan, Hadith no. 2610.*

an isolated, hidden place and does what he likes, Allah *the Almighty* will not witness him. This is untrue, for He *the Almighty* knows and observes the Seen as well as the Unseen. Nothing is hidden from Him in this vast universe.

Any secret or mystery is known by Allah *the Almighty* a fact which is clearly manifested in His saying: ‘The Beneficent Allah is firm in power. [5] His is what is in the heavens and what is in the earth and what is between them two and what is beneath the ground. [6] And if you utter the saying aloud, then surely He knows the secret, and what is yet more hidden [7]’ (*Ta Ha*: 5-7). Allah *the Almighty* knows the unseen which is hidden and the seen as well. Some may assume that He, Who is Unseen to us, knows only the unseen. But He *the Almighty* stresses the fact that He knows both the Unseen and the seen.

The fact that Allah *the Almighty* knows the seen protects people against wronging and attacking one another, as they know well that He *the Almighty* is fully Aware of the seen and the unseen. Thus He *Glorified is He* is the best of all witnesses. Witnesses can be really reliable and even-handed or even pretend to be so to conceal their dishonesty. But Allah *the Almighty* is the best of all other witnesses.

He *Glorified is He* says: ‘Indeed Allah is over all things, Witness’ (*al-Hajj*: 17). The witness is the one who sees or observes something without affecting or changing the thing witnessed in any way. As regards Allah *the Almighty* He is the Judge who arbitrates between His servants. The judge needs evidence or witnesses who must also be reliable and honest. Reliable testimony comes true through adhering to a Divine Religion that prevents humans from deviating from the truth. As the Judge is Allah *the Almighty* there is no need for evidence or witnesses. His Knowledge encompasses everything, nor is there absent from Him an atom’s weight within the heavens or within the earth.

Witnessing connotes the recording of the deeds of people; it also means that they have been notified of Allah’s Way of Guidance, but they opposed and deviated from it and committed sins that incurred their punishment. Punishment is based on the crime; incrimination is based on religious texts which must be conveyed and spread.

In the same vein, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Say, “Sufficient is Allah as Witness between me and you. Indeed he is ever, concerning His servants, acquainted and seeing”’ (*al-Isra*’: 96). Allah being a Witness, means that He

is the Witness Who observes, the Arbitrator Who judges and the executive authority that executes.

After that He *the Almighty* describes Himself, saying: 'He is the Almighty' (*at-Taghabun*: 18). The Almighty is the One Who is never surmounted due to His Omnipotence and Who cannot be questioned by anyone. He is the Dominant Who cannot be conquered by any other power. He is the All-Powerful and Exalted in Might.

The phrase 'the Exalted in Might' connotes dominance and subdual. Nothing can subdue or defeat Him. The Arabic word *Al-'Aziz* (The Almighty) means also something which is rare. It comes in the sense of invincibility or rarity and scarcity. It also means something which is difficult for people to achieve or do. For example, you can say, 'It was hard for me to reach the summit of the mountain.'

Allah is the Almighty One since there is no god but Him, and He is the Invincible and All-Powerful God. He says: 'Indeed, it is your Lord Who is the Powerful, the Exalted in Might' (*Hud*: 66).

The Almightyness as an absolute Attribute belongs to Allah alone. In a restricted sense, we say, 'the one who is the most honourable and influential of his people'. It is an attribute that is treated here as a Name. Allah's Names are divided into two categories: proper nouns and nominalised adjectives. If the Name has no antonym, it is a proper noun like the 'Almighty'. If the Name is derived from the adjective and verb roots like the Bestower of Honour, it must have an antonym such as the Humiliator. If Allah *the Almighty* only bestowed honour or if He only inflicted dishonour, He would not be the True God.

In a general sense, the Name 'the Almighty' applies to Allah alone. But it is allowed to say, 'So-and-so is most influential among his people; so-and-so is merciful towards others; so-and-so is beneficent towards others.' But if you say 'the All-Beneficent' as a general word, it refers to Allah *the Almighty* alone.

Allah *the Almighty* is not only the Exalted in Might, but He is also the Lord of Might, a fact which is stated in the Quran: 'Exalted is your Lord, the Lord of Might, above what they describe' (*as-Saffat*: 180). He *Glorified is He* also says: 'Those who take disbelievers as allies instead of the believers. Do they seek with them honour [through power]? But indeed, honour belongs to Allah entirely' (*an-Nisa'*: 139).

If you really aspire to dignity and power, ask Allah, the Owner of the Eternal Might, for them. If you desire honour that makes you dispense with other humans, turn to the Source of Honour and Might, namely; Allah *the Almighty*.

If you desire true honour, derive it from Allah Whose Might never changes. In this regard, He *the Almighty* says: ‘But indeed, honour belongs to Allah entirely’ (*an-Nisa*: 139). This means that the proper way to obtain honour and might is to ask Allah *the Almighty* for them.

The adverb ‘entirely’ in the above-mentioned verse indicates that honour is of different forms: wealth, authority, and glory. When one tries to meditate on these forms, he concludes that all of them apply to Allah *the Almighty*.

If a person desires a permanent and outstanding honour, he must turn to Allah *the Almighty* and regard Him as his first and last Refuge. As Allah is the Exalted in Might, those who believe in Him are honourable and mighty, a fact which is clear in His saying: ‘and to Allah belongs [all] honour, and to His Messenger, and to the believers...’ (*al-Munafiqun*: 8).

All might and honour originate from Allah *the Almighty* alone. Also, the honour of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the believers is derived from Allah *the Almighty*. Thus, Mightiness, together with its various forms, belongs to Allah *the Almighty* such as the Mightiness of forbearance and avengement.

No one can ask Allah *the Almighty* why He does such-and-such and leaves such-and-such. Thus He is described as the Exalted in Might Who possesses all forms of Almightyness.

To be honourable you should derive your honour from Allah *the Almighty* from Messenger Muhammad and from faith. Concerning some people, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘and they have taken besides Allah [false] deities that they would be for them [a source of] honour’ (*Maryam*: 81). Idolaters seek honour from their worship of idols. But what is the point of idolatry? Allah *the Almighty* responds to them, saying: ‘No! “Those gods” will deny their worship of them...’ (*Maryam*: 82). The adverb ‘no’ negates the fact that these idolaters can derive honour from idols. Quite the opposite, those false deities will be against them on the Day of Judgement.

Then, Allah *the Almighty* describes Himself as: 'The All-Wise' (*at-Taghabun*: 18). He is the One Whose Actions are extremely wise. Although Allah is the Exalted in Might, His Actions are wise and He subdues and dominates everything wisely.

Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* calls Allah 'Exalted in Might and Wise' in his saying: 'Indeed, I will emigrate to [the service of] my Lord. Indeed, He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise' (*ar-Rum*: 26). So, he *peace be upon him* chooses 'the Exalted in Might' from among other Attributes of Allah because this Attribute suits his situation when his people attempted to burn him to death. It is as if he says to his people, 'I will turn to the refuge of the invincible one.' He also describes Allah *the Almighty* as 'the All-Wise' with regard to His Actions. Therefore, Allah is Exalted in Might, yet He is All-Wise and He never does injustice to anyone. He is the Owner of insurmountable Might and impeccable Wisdom.

The Arabic word *hikma* (wisdom) is derived from *al-hakama*, meaning 'the metal bar attached to a horse's bridle and put into its mouth so that its owner can control it'. This is because the horse is a pampered, unruly animal which needs taming. So the metal bar put into a horse's mouth makes it more controllable.

To describe Allah *the Almighty* as 'the All-Wise' means that He controls and dominates His creatures so that they do not proceed without spiritual guidance and knowledge. Wisdom entails setting a goal for every movement so that all movements will be in harmony with one another and the whole universe will be controlled by the absolute truth. Allah is the All-Wise because He sets the framework and limits of each being. Wisdom also means that everything performs its function proficiently and masterfully. Wisdom with regard to Islamic jurisprudence is to deduce the sound rulings; regarding poetry, it is to compose well-rhymed and well-metered poetical verses; with regard to medicine, it is to diagnose diseases and find suitable cures for them; regarding engineering, it is to design a hospital according to the needs of patients, physicians, medical equipment, drug stores, and the like. Wisdom required for building a house differs from that needed for constructing a hospital or bridge.

Finally, we must consider the verses of the chapter of *at-Taghabun* in the light of Allah's Wisdom with which He concludes the same chapter. In this case, we will discover that He *the Almighty* is All-Wise with regard to creating

humans as believers and disbelievers, the creation of the heavens and earth, the misfortunes that befall people, making some of our wives and children enemies to us, dividing people into rich and poor, ordering the rich to give charity, paying *zakat* (obligatory alms) and giving interest-free loans to the poor and the needy and multiplying the reward for aiding and lending money to the poor.

The Greatness of Allah *Glorified is He* is clearly manifested in the fact that He is *the Almighty* Who cannot be defeated and the All-Wise Who puts everything in its proper place. Therefore, when people get to know the wisdom behind Allah's Ordinances, they will admire the Greatness of His Power.

As He *Glorified is He* says: 'So believe in Allah, in His Messenger, and in the light We have sent down: Allah is fully Aware of what you do' (*at-Taghabun*: 8). We must submit and surrender to His Unchallengeable Will by obeying His Commands which are decreed on the basis of His Wisdom and Comprehensive Knowledge. At this point, a human being's choice must submit to Allah's Will because it, that is, the Divine Will cannot be changed by any means.

In our daily life, we may find that a person is experienced and has deep knowledge about a certain issue more than all other people. Therefore, we say to him, 'We delegate this matter to you; whatever you decide we shall follow!' This means that we abandon our right to choose and submit ourselves to the wisdom of that person. However, we do not grant this privilege to anyone unless we are very sure that he is well versed in the matter in hand and that he is a very wise person. In such a case, when one asks you, 'Why do you follow the opinion of so and so?' You say to him, 'He is experienced in such matters.' This response proves that you trust his knowledge, truthfulness, and wisdom.

The Wisdom of Allah *the Almighty* entails that He *Glorified is He* does not consider the superficial aspects of something without taking its bad consequences into account. But you, O man, may take a decision thinking that it will end your troubles, while this very decision may lead to greater harm.

Likewise, with regard to the medications and their different effects, the clever doctor is the one who tries hard to avoid the side effects of the medications he prescribes. Therefore, a doctor may prescribe a medication with a side effect but yet prescribes another one to alleviate this side effect.

This falls under the concept of wisdom as he takes into account the side effect which may arise in the future. In the Egyptian countryside, they call the doctor *Al-Hakim* (the wise man) as he wisely treats human beings by prescribing the medications which cure the disease and do not cause them grave harm.

Allah *the Almighty* describes Himself as the All-Wise because He does not leave anything to coincidence. Instead, He decrees all matters according to what is right. Similarly, the Glorious Quran is described as 'a Book of Wisdom', a meaning which is clear in His saying: '*Alif Lam Mim*. [1] These are verses of the Book of Wisdom [2]' (*Luqman*: 2). This means that the One Who revealed it is the All-Wise.

In the Glorious Quran, Allah *the Almighty* clarifies the Way of Guidance which leads people to goodness. So, when we follow it, it will bring about all that is in our interest and will not cause any harm. This is the essence of wisdom. Therefore, the Quran is full of wisdom as it is revealed by Allah, the All-Wise. Besides, it decides on all matters of faith.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* urged Muslims to praise Allah as the Knower of the Seen and the Unseen, in the mornings and evenings. In this regard, Abu Hurayra *Allah be pleased with him* narrated that Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* asked Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'O Messenger of Allah, command me with something that I may say when I reach morning and evening,' whereupon he said: 'Say: O Allah Knower of the Unseen and the seen, Originator of the heavens and the earth, Lord of everything and its Possessor, I bear witness that there is none worthy of worship except You, I seek refuge in You from the evil of my soul and from the evil of Satan and his shirk.'⁽¹⁾

As a matter of fact, the early Muslims used to practice their religion in the mornings and evenings. It is narrated that Al-Harith ibn Malik *Al-Ansari Allah*

(1) *This Hadith is narrated by At-Tirmidhi who said, 'It is a good, authentic Hadith'. It is also narrated by Ahmad ibn Hanbal, At-Tayalisi, An-Nasa'i and by Al-Bukhari on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him. See At-Tirmidhi, Sunnan, Hadith no. 3392; Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 63; At-Tayalisi, Musnad, Hadith no. 9; An-Nasa'i, As-Sunnan Al-Kubra, Hadith no. 7652 and 10563; and Al-Bukhari, Al-Adab Al-Mufrad, Hadith no. 1202.*

be pleased with him once passed by Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who asked him, ‘O Harith! What state are you in?’ ‘I find myself as a true believer,’ replied Al-Harith. Prophet Muhammad then asked him, ‘Everything possesses a truth; what is the truth behind what you claim?’ ‘O Prophet of Allah! I have become disenchanted with this world,’ he answered. ‘I stay awake (in worship) in the night, and endure thirst (by observing fasting) in the day. It is as if I am witnessing the Throne of Allah, observing the inmates of Paradise meeting each other and hearing the shrieks of the inmates of Hell.’

That is why in the aforementioned Hadith of Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* did not ask for mere words to be just uttered with the tongue. Instead, he asked about a supplication to be felt by his entirety; by his tongue, hands, legs, heart, and intellect. Therefore, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* taught him the following supplication to praise Allah *the Almighty* with in the mornings and evenings and when he goes to his bed as well. He taught him to say: ‘O Allah Knower of the Unseen and the Seen, Originator of the heavens and the earth, Lord of everything and its Possessor, I bear witness that there is none worthy of worship except You, I seek refuge in You from the evil of my soul and from the evil of Satan and his shirk.’

This supplication affirms that Allah *Glorified is He* is the Knower of the Unseen and the Seen. He knows what is hidden from the people exactly as He knows what is known to them, for He is the Creator of the Heavens and the Earth, that is, the One Who originated them without any previous model. He *Glorified is He* is the Lord and the King of all things; He is the Owner of all that exists in the Heavens and the Earth. In addition, He possesses all what you own, even the most precious thing within you, O man, your spirit.

He is the Only God; there is no god but Him. He created us and endowed us with spirits so that our bodies could move in this life according to His Divine Way of Guidance, not according to any other paths which drive us away from the Only One Who knows the seen and the unseen.

As we praise, remember, supplicate and return to Allah *the Almighty* alone in all our affairs, we also seek refuge in Him from the evil of our own tempting souls which, if we succumbed to their whims, cause us to suffer more grave effects resulting from the evil of Satan and his vicious schemes.

Here, we should not forget that Satan had sworn by Allah *Glorified is He* that he would exert all his effort to misguide the children of Adam.

Muslims believe that Allah *the Almighty* is the Creator of the Heavens and the Earth, that He is the Lord and the King of all things, and that there is no god but Him *Glorified is He*. This belief, which is underscored each morning and evening and also when one goes to bed, is further confirmed when you believe that He *Glorified is He* is the All Knowing, the All-Seeing, the All-Hearing, the All-Wise *the Almighty* the Knower of the Seen and Unseen and the One from Whom nothing can be hidden.

Accordingly, we realise why the chapter of *at-Taghabun* begins and concludes with glorifying Allah *Glorified is He*. It begins with His saying: 'Everything that is in the heavens and earth glorifies Allah; all control and all praise belong to Him; He has power over everything' (*at-Taghabun*: 1) and ends with His saying: 'Allah is ever thankful and forbearing; [17] He knows the unseen, as well as the seen; He is the Almighty the All-Wise' (*at-Taghabun*: 17-18).

the chapter of

at-Talaq

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

The chapter of *at-Talaq* ⁽¹⁾ (Divorce):

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِذَا طَلَقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَطَلِّقُوهُنَّ لِعَدَّتِهِنَّ وَأَحْصُوا الْعِدَّةَ
وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ رَبَّكُمْ لَا تُخْرِجُوهُنَّ مِنْ بُيُوتِهِنَّ وَلَا يَخْرُجْنَ
إِلَّا أَنْ يَأْتِيَنَّ بِفَحِشَةٍ مُبَيَّنَةٍ وَتِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ يَتَعَدَّ حُدُودَ اللَّهِ
فَقَدْ ظَلَمَ نَفْسَهُ لَا تَدْرِي لَعَلَّ اللَّهَ يُحْدِثُ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ أَمْرًا ﴿١﴾

Prophet, when any of you intend to divorce women, do so at a time when their prescribed waiting period can properly start, and calculate the period carefully: be mindful of God, your Lord.

Do not drive them out of their homes — nor should they themselves leave — unless they commit a flagrant indecency. These are the limits set by God — whoever oversteps God's limits wrongs his own soul — for you cannot know what new situation God may perhaps bring about [1] (The Quran, *at-Talaq*: 1)

Here, Allah *the Almighty* addresses Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying: ‘Prophet...’ (*at-Talaq*: 1). This shows his greatness and high status in the sight of the One Who selected him to be the last Prophet, a point which is further illustrated by the fact that He *the Almighty* has addressed and called other Prophets and Messengers with their given names, saying: ‘He said: O Adam! Inform them of their names’ (*al-Baqara*: 33); ‘O Musa (Moses)! Surely I am Allah, the Lord of the worlds’ (*al-Qasas*: 30); ‘O Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), did you say to people...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 116)

(1) The chapter of *at-Talaq* was revealed in Medina. It consists of 12 verses. Ibn Mas‘ud called it the smaller chapter of *an-Nisa*. It was revealed after the chapter of *al-Baqara* and before the chapter of *al-Bayyina*. According to the order of revelation, it is the chapter number 96, but according to its current order in the Quran, it is the chapter number 65.

and: 'O Nuh (Noah)! Descend with peace from Us...' (*Hud*: 48). It is thus clear that He *Glorified is He* addresses each of His Messengers with his name, without any adjective of glorification, whereas He always addresses Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with an adjective such as: 'O Messenger...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 41) or 'O Prophet...' (*al-Anfal*: 65).

As He *Glorified is He* does not address him *peace and blessings be upon him* with his name, then it is not permissible for us to call him *peace and blessings be upon him* with his given name without any adjective of esteem and honour. This point is clearly indicated in His saying: 'Do not hold the Messenger's calling (you) among you to be like your calling one to the other...' (*an-Nur*: 63). Therefore, it is not fitting to address him with his name only, saying, 'O Muhammad,' as the relationship between him and the Muslims is not based on his own character, but rather, on the fact that he is Allah's Messenger and, therefore, we should address him, saying: 'O Prophet,' or 'O Messenger'. This is the proper and honorary way we should follow when we address him *peace and blessings be upon him*.

In our daily life, when we want to address a high profile person, we address him saying: 'His Majesty!', 'His Eminence Sheikh!' or 'Dear Sir!' Accordingly, it is more worthy to follow Allah's Way of addressing him *peace and blessings be upon him* by saying 'O Prophet' or 'O Messenger'.

As a matter of fact, the Messenger is an intermediary between Allah *the Almighty* and the people in terms of delivering the revelation. He is the person who informs people of Allah's Revelation which people should follow. On the other hand, a Prophet sent by Allah brings about no new legislation. Instead, he preaches the same legislation of the preceding Messenger or Messengers. He acts as a role model for his people.

One may ask here, 'Why does Allah *Glorified is He* address Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in this context as a Prophet and not as a Messenger although the issues discussed here are concerned with legislations?' The answer is that the purpose here is to make him a role model for the Muslims in such matters, a mission which properly suits the Prophets.

In Arabic, the word *nabi* (prophet) is derived from *naba'* (announcement) which means great news that should be cared for. It here refers to the issue of

divorce that is pertinent to the marital relationship which tackles the core of the social life of any community, as it, that is, divorce organises the relationship between men and women and what is pertinent to their children. Leaving these matters unorganised makes the communities suffer complete disorder.

In fact, divorce is one of Allah's Legislations, thus violating it is an act of wrongdoing. When He *Glorified is He* addresses the communal issues, He treats them in a way that totally prevents defects and disorder. On the contrary, when people make legislations, they, even if their intentions are good, draft such legislations according to their limited knowledge and, therefore, they may be ignorant of something that may occur in the future. If we assume that they made a particular piece of legislation, and then come to know that there is an aspect that they had not considered, what will be the case?

If they are sincere, they will not act arrogantly and will reconsider what they have legislated. However, if they insist on applying what they have legislated, then it is the community that will suffer until another legislator considers the needs of the community and reconsiders the legislation.

Allah *Glorified is He* has enacted Legislations which prevent people from suffering and the divergence of opinion. By so doing, He guarantees that the community shall not suffer from the mistakes that may be committed by human legislators for a while until other legislators amend what has been mistakenly done. The one who enacted the first legislation has not got enough knowledge of the new incidents which may arise. Accordingly, when such new incidents come about, people become in need of an amendment to the legislation.

If we investigate any man-made law concerning any worldly issue and consider its development, we come to know that people continuously develop it until it becomes identical, or at least closer, to the Islamic Legislation in that regard. For example, the Europeans objected to the rulings of divorce in Islam, but they, later on, came to enact divorce in Italy in the very heartland of the Vatican. Here is the question, 'Have they legislated it under the influence of Islam?' The answer is 'No'. They have legislated it due to the necessities of life which have compelled them to do so and which conclusively prove the correctness of the rulings of the Islamic *Shari'a*, even before they are put into practice, a point which is crystal clear by the fact that the Europeans were

compelled to enact this piece of legislation on divorce in order to address the social problems of their community.

Divorce is a very difficult process as it happens at a time when both the husband and the wife are angry with each other. In fact, marriage is a relationship which is based on living in tranquillity, love, and kindness. When these feelings are absent, how can a husband or a wife be compelled to live with a spouse she/he hates? Separation in such a case is a means ordained by Allah *the Almighty* in order to open an avenue for both man and woman to seek a more suitable spouse. There are many real incidents where we find that a husband or a wife finds his happiness with a new spouse. Taking into account all these considerations, such separation is legislated and approved, despite the fact that severing the marital relationship is difficult for the family.

Allah *Glorified is He* determines three constituents for the preservation of the marital relationship, saying: 'And one of His signs is that He created mates for you from yourselves that you may find rest in them, and He put between you love and compassion; most surely there are signs in this for a people who reflect' (*ar-Rum*: 21). Investigating these three phases, we find that the marital life of the two spouses starts with tranquillity. At this level, they enjoy mutual happiness, reassurance, and satisfaction of their needs. When this level of dealing with each other is jeopardised, then love comes to be the basis for their life that guarantees a level of mutual acceptance. When love is lost between them, then they move to the third level of compassion in which each party shows kindness towards the other in the state of weakness or sickness. As such, the marital relationship endures and survives the hardships of life.

If these three constituents are absent from the relationship between the two spouses, then their life together becomes impossible and separation is then better for them. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* makes divorce legal as a solution in such cases. However, He *Glorified is He* considers it one of the most detestable things, that is, it should be the last resort. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* underlines this, saying, 'Of all the lawful acts the most detestable to Allah is divorce.'⁽¹⁾

(1) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar Allah be pleased with him. See Abu Dawud, Sunnan, Hadith no. 2180; see also Ibn Maja, Sunnan, Hadith no. 2018; and Al-Bayhaqi, As-Sunnan Al-Kubra Hadith no. 15292.*

This is why He *Glorified is He* says here: ‘When any of you intend to divorce women...’ (*at-Talaq*: 1) the Arabic particle *idha* (when) is used here to bear the meaning of conditionality and to indicate that this divorce is not the general rule to be followed. This is also asserted by the usage of the Arabic particle *in* (if) in His saying: ‘There is no blame on you if you divorce women when you have not touched them or appointed for them a portion, and make provision for them, the wealthy according to his means and the straitened in circumstances according to his means, a provision according to usage; (this is) a duty on the doers of good (to others)’ (*al-Baqara*: 236), to communicate the same meaning, that is, He *Glorified is He* does not intend divorce to be the standard practice.

Although Allah *Glorified is He* addresses Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in this verse in question, this is also viewed as an address to all Muslims as he *peace and blessings be upon him* is the one who receives the commands and then conveys them to the people. Similarly, He *the Almighty* says: ‘Then set your face upright for religion in the right state...’ (*ar-Rum*: 30).

One may ask, ‘Why does not Allah say: ‘O you who believe! When you intend to divorce women,’ instead of: ‘Prophet, When any of you intend to divorce women’ (*at-Talaq*: 1), although the verb used afterwards is in the plural form?’ We underline it again, ‘When He *the Almighty* addresses Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* it is in fact an address to all Muslims. It is also some kind of veneration for him.’

This Quranic chapter discusses the matter of divorce which touches upon the lives of the people and organises their marital relationship and how, in some cases, it ends. It also addresses some issues that could destroy families and communities if they were not properly regulated. In fact, it is necessary that *Shari’a* regulates the issue of divorce in order not to let any party wrong the other and to prevent confusion of lineage. Therefore, regulating such a matter cannot be left to laymen. Instead, it is the responsibility of the governor or the judge.

So, being the ruler and the judge of the Muslim *Ummah* during his lifetime, Allah *the Almighty* addresses His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and instructs him how to settle disputes among the spouses. In other

words, as the affairs of divorce rest in the hand of the State which shall apply the rulings of the *Shari'a* upon Muslims, then it is suitable here that the Divine Address shall be for the ruler of the Muslim *Ummah* during that time (that is, Prophet Muhammad), not the believers.

No one is entitled to marry a woman without the consent of her guardian and without a marriage contract, witnesses, and a bride-gift. Likewise, no one is entitled to divorce his wife without registering the divorce or bringing just witnesses to attest to it. The same applies when one wants to take back his wife during her waiting period after having divorced her once or twice. All this is prescribed for safeguarding woman's rights and avoiding wrongdoing.

In this regard, 'Umran ibn Husayn narrated that Messenger Muhammad was asked about a person who divorced his wife, and then had intercourse with her, but he did not call any witness to attest to her divorce or to her restoration, whereupon he *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Your act of divorce is against the *Sunnah* and your taking her back is against the *Sunnah*. Call two witnesses to attest to her divorce and to her return in marriage, and do not repeat it.'⁽¹⁾

In this chapter, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'When any of you intend to divorce women, do so at a time when their prescribed waiting period can properly start...' (*at-Talaq*: 1). This verse indicates that there are certain kinds of waiting periods for the divorcee. They are as follows:

- When the divorced woman is not pregnant, then the waiting period is three menstrual periods;
- If she is pregnant, then the waiting period lasts until she delivers her baby; and
- For those women who have ceased menstruating and those who have not yet menstruated, the waiting period is three months.

(1) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Abu Dawud, Ibn Maja and At-Tabarani on the authority of 'Umran ibn Husayn. In his commentary on the Sunnan of Ibn Maja, As-Sindi says, 'This signifies that it is more appropriate for one to bring witnesses in both cases in order to avoid dispute and mistrust.' See Abu Dawud, Sunnan, Hadith no. 2188, Ibn Maja, Sunnan, Hadith no. 2025; and At-Tabarani, Al-Mu'jam Al-Kabir Hadith no. 14690.*

The first type of waiting period is clearly defined in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘Divorced women must wait for three monthly periods before remarrying...’ (*al-Baqara*: 228). This verse explains that in the case where the woman is divorced once or twice, her husband has the right to take her back in marriage so long as she is still in her waiting period. As soon as the waiting period ends, he has no right to take her back unless he concludes a new marriage contract and gives her a new bride-gift. This applies only to the first two occurrences of divorce, for after divorcing her for the third time, he has no right to remarry her.

The waiting period is the time which follows the divorce or the death of the husband and during which a woman has no right to marry. In the case of divorce, the waiting period is three menstrual periods or three periods of purity. With regard to the woman who reached menopause or has not menstruated yet, her waiting period is three months. As for the woman whose husband died, her waiting period is four months and ten days. Further, the waiting period of the woman whose marriage is consummated differs from that of one whose marriage is not.

With regard to the divorcee who is pregnant, her waiting period lasts until she delivers her baby as indicated in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘If they really believe in Allah and the last Day, it is not lawful for them to conceal what God has created in their wombs...’ (*al-Baqara*: 228). This verse indicates also that it is prohibited for a divorcee to conceal her pregnancy for fear that she will be obliged to wait without marriage until she delivers her baby. A woman may marry, while she is still pregnant and thus the newborn baby is falsely attributed to someone who is not his real father. The word ‘women’ in His saying: ‘...when any of you intend to divorce women, do so at a time when their prescribed waiting period can properly start...’ (*at-Talaq*: 1) includes all these kinds of divorcees. The verse orders Muslims to consider each divorcee’s state and to apply the legislation of divorce as clearly stated in the *Sharia*.

The address here is for all the members of the Muslim *Ummah*. In Arabic, when a command is directed to a group, then it is directed to each member of the group. For example, when a teacher orders the students to bring out their

pens, this means that each student should bring out his own pen. Likewise, when a group head orders a group of drivers to get into their cars, then each driver should get into his own car. Thus, the Arabic rule states that when a command is given in the plural form to a group of people, it is also directed to each member of that group. Another example for this point is found in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'And if you fear that you cannot act equitably towards orphans, then marry such women as seem good to you, two and three and four; but if you fear that you will not do justice (between them), then (marry) only one...' (*an-Nisa*: 3). In this verse, He *the Almighty* generally addresses the entire Muslim *Ummah*. Yet, this is not an individual command which means that each one must be polygamous.

We should take into account that His saying: '...do so at a time when their prescribed waiting period can properly start...' (*at-Talaq*: 1) means that the husband shall not divorce his wife during menstruation or in the state of purity in which they had sexual intercourse. Instead, he should wait until her menstrual period ends. In this case, if she is a menstruating woman, then her waiting period is three menstrual periods. If she reaches menopause, then her waiting period is three months. As for the waiting period of a pregnant woman, it lasts until she delivers her baby.

In the case of a menstruating woman, what is considered is the state of purity between two menstruations. It is narrated that 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar divorced his wife during the lifetime of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* while she was menstruating. 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab mentioned that to him *peace and blessings be upon him*. So, he ordered him to order his son, 'Abdullah, to take her back and to keep her until she is clean from her menses, and then to wait until she gets her next period and becomes clean again. Then, if he wishes to divorce her, he can divorce her when she is clean from her menses, before he has sexual intercourse with her. Then, Messenger Muhammad said to him, 'This is the waiting period which Allah has fixed.'⁽¹⁾

Allah *the Almighty* decrees that the husband should not divorce his wife during her menstruation as he may not have a desire for her during this period.

(1) See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 5251*; see also *Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 3725*; *Abu Dawud, Sunnan, Hadith no. 2181*; and *An-Nasa'i, Sunnan Hadith no. 3390*.

Therefore, He *the Almighty* commands him, if he wills, to divorce her in a period of purity when he has not had sexual intercourse with her. By so doing, we will be sure that he had done so out of an absolute and total conviction that their life will no longer be possible and that he no longer has any desire for her.

In the aforementioned Hadith, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* ordered ‘Abdullah to take his wife back and keep her until she is clean from her menses, and then to wait until she has her next period and becomes clean again. This period is more than one month. Then, if he wishes to divorce her, he can divorce her when she is clean from her menses, before he has sexual intercourse with her. He *peace and blessings be upon him* then said, ‘This is the waiting period which Allah has fixed.’

There is no doubt that this gives the husband a great opportunity to reconsider the matter many times before he divorces his wife and destroys his family.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘And calculate the period carefully...’ (*at-Talaq*: 1). This means that they should remember the time when divorce occurs in order to be able to calculate the waiting period after which the woman is permitted to marry another husband. *Al-Ihsaa*’ (the calculation) intended here means to know the beginning and the ending of the waiting period of the woman so as to remove harm from her by not allowing the period of her ‘*idda* (waiting period) to be extended.

But who is ordered here to calculate the waiting period? Is it an order to the husbands, wives or all Muslims? Some scholars contend that the order here is directed to the husbands as they are obliged to fulfil some rights such as maintenance payments. In addition, they are entitled to take their wives back during the waiting period, if they so want. If they do not calculate the waiting period until it is over, then it will be too late to take them back, a case under which they will be obliged to conclude a new marriage contract and pay a new bride-gift if they want to take their wives back in marriage.

Accordingly, we find that calculation has many benefits, such as knowing the time during which a husband may take his wife back and knowing the time when maintenance payments and housing become an obligation on him. It is noteworthy here that commanding Muslims to ‘calculate’ signifies that they should be very accurate in this regard. This is because inaccuracy in this

process may lead to two problems, as follows: first: the divorcee may get married before the completion of her waiting period and this, consequently, may lead to confusion of lineage; second: the waiting period of the woman may be lengthened, a matter that may put her into difficulty because she becomes in need of someone to support and take care of her.

Thus, calculation in this context signifies exactness and precision with regard to the waiting period so that no mistake should occur in this process. It is as if Allah *the Almighty* says, 'O Prophet Muhammad, order the believers who want to divorce their wives not to divorce them during the menstrual period, but at the time when the prescribed waiting period can start properly. In other words, the husbands should not leave them until they are clean from their menses, and then wait until they get their next period and become clean again.' This is the order that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* gave to 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* in this regard. This address applies only to the divorcee whose marriage is consummated. In case the marriage is not consummated, there shall be no waiting period.

Moreover, Allah *Glorified is He* prescribes the waiting period as a preservation of the husband's right, the right of the widow and the woman's dignity, as no one is allowed to propose to her until she completes her waiting period.

A divorcee may, out of desire to avenge herself against the man who divorced her, rush to marry another man. She may be insinuated to by another man to seek divorce and, therefore, becomes in a hurry to marry him. Further, as soon as the woman gets divorced and goes through the waiting period, people may propose to her or she may aspire to marry someone. So, He *Glorified is He* prohibits her from marriage for a certain period as a means of protecting her.

Then He *Glorified is He* says: 'Be mindful of Allah, your Lord. Do not drive them out of their homes – nor should they themselves leave – unless they commit a flagrant indecency...' (*at-Talaq*: 1). He *Glorified is He* draws our attention to the matter of piety which controls the relations between the spouses in the affairs of marriage, divorce, the waiting period and maintenance allowance. He says: 'Allah will find a way out for those who are mindful of Him' (*at-Talaq*: 2); 'Allah makes things easy for those who are mindful of Him' (*at-Talaq*: 4); 'Allah will wipe out the sinful deeds and increase the

rewards of anyone who is mindful of Him' (*at-Talaq*: 5) and: 'So, you who have understanding, you who believe, beware of Allah' (*at-Talaq*: 10). The Arabic word *taqwa* (piety/fearing Allah) means to act upon the Orders of Allah *the Almighty* and to refrain from what He forbids, so as to regulate our choices according to His Way of Guidance. By so doing, we will be acting in such a way that serves the benefit and general good of humanity, exactly as the entire universe around us does.

Piety, in general terms, refers to obedience to Allah by following His Orders and refraining from His Prohibitions. It suggests abstinence from the dilemmas and troubles of life by adhering to the Divine Way of Guidance. Only then could anyone shun such troubles. By contrast, anyone who turns away from piety will live miserably, a fact which is clear in His saying: '...his shall be a straitened life...' (*Ta Ha*: 124). One should not think that piety is confined to protecting oneself from the hellfire, it is rather, more comprehensive. It signifies desistance from troubles and misery arising from transgressing Allah's Way of Guidance. It should be noted that as a person may violate the rights of others, he will similarly have his rights violated.

Further, piety indicates shunning the troubles of life, which are caused by approving and complying with man-made laws which are contrary to the Divinely enacted Law by virtue of which we can avoid such troubles. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And whoever turns away from My Reminder, his shall be a straitened life...' (*Ta Ha*: 124). This verse indicates that the life of such a person will be full of troubles and worries because he violates the Way of Allah. Should there be no problems as a consequence of such violations, people would say, 'We violated Allah's Law and yet we prospered.' Thus, problems have to exist in order to remind us that the Divine Way of Guidance must prevail and that adhering to it will entirely solve our problems.

The Arabic word *danka* (straitened) denotes extreme distress and misery from which one cannot escape. It is not limited to poverty and need; rather, it incorporates many other forms, which is why we stress that the level of civilisation should not be evaluated only on the basis of the material aspect, regardless of the other specifications. Undoubtedly, perfecting the material aspects of life results in success and prosperity in the worldly life. However,

upholding the religious, spiritual, and moral values leads to luxury in the worldly life and delight in the Hereafter. The issue does not concern the economic aspect of life as much as it has to do with neglecting and cancelling the Divine Laws that guarantee our happiness in this life even in the state of poverty.

In fact, life becomes miserable in the absence of the Light of Faith and its Guidance. When one preserves the purity of one's spirit and testifies that Allah *the Almighty* is the Only God, all the Divine Teachings will be clear to him. By following them, he will be protected from falling prey to forgetfulness of the Remembrance of Allah *the Almighty*. Here, we should strongly stress that if one forgets the Remembrance of Allah, he will be directly put into a state of difficulty and hardship.

When you hear someone saying, 'Life is miserable,' this only conjures up the problem of poverty even though 'misery' has a broader meaning. People can be extremely miserable in spite of wealth, prosperity, and welfare. For example, Sweden, one of the richest countries, is the abode of insanity, perversity, psychological problems, and suicide despite the high level of income provided to individuals.

The relation between divorce and piety is explained in the saying of Allah *Glorified is He*: 'And when you divorce women and they reach their prescribed time, then either retain them in good fellowship or set them free with liberality, and do not retain them for injury so that you exceed the limits, and whoever does this, he indeed is unjust to his own soul; and do not take Allah's communications for a mockery, and remember the favour of Allah upon you, and that which He has revealed to you of the Book and the Wisdom, admonishing you thereby; and be careful (of your duty to) Allah...' (*al-Baqara*: 231).

To 'be careful of your duty to Allah' means to adhere to the Path of Truth. The pious believer is the one who fears Allah *the Almighty* as Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* admonished men, saying, 'Fear Allah regarding women for they are powerless. Indeed, you have got them under Allah's Trust and have the right to intercourse with them by Allah's Word.'⁽¹⁾

(1) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Jabir ibn 'Abdullah who narrated that Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him told this Hadith in his farewell sermon on Mount Arafat. See Al-Bayhaqi, Shu'ab A-Iman, Hadith no. 4881.*

In the verse in question, He *Glorified is He* says: ‘...be mindful to Allah...’ (*at-Talaq*: 1). Then He immediately follows the word ‘Allah’ with His saying: ‘...your Lord...’ (*ar-Rahman*: 1) to indicate that He *Glorified is He* combines the Attributes of Divinity and Lordship.

Moreover, His Provision is guaranteed to His creation, believers, and disbelievers alike, since He *Glorified is He* brought them into existence and created them; thereby securing their sustenance and life and depriving none of them of His Conferment of Lordship in the worldly life.

As a matter of fact, Divinity has to do with legal obligations, whereas Lordship signifies provision and nourishment, both are basic requirements for everyone’s life on earth. No one has brought himself into existence; rather, it is only Allah, the Creator, Who brought all the people, believers, and disbelievers, into existence; hence He *the Almighty* is the only One Who is Fully Able to secure their sustenance.

In other words, the Conferment of Lordship encompasses all the creatures of Allah *the Almighty*. By contrast, the Conferment of Divinity is concerned with the Divine Commands (‘dos’ and ‘don’ts’).

The Arabic word *Rabb* (Lord) refers to the one who raises someone under his guardianship until he reaches the expected level of perfection. With regard to Allah *the Almighty* Lordship implies that He rears the creation for a specific end and a specific mission. Considering that such rearing requires material, spiritual and methodological fundamentals, which He *Glorified is He* provides to all people, as He says in the chapter of *al-Fatiha*: ‘All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds’ (*al-Fatiha*: 2).

He *Glorified is He* is the Master, the King and the Provider of all the Worlds. He nourishes all the creation in a way that makes them fit for their mission in life by giving them physical strength, by ensuring the survival of the species by reproduction and by promoting ethical values.

Allah *Glorified is He* says in another verse: ‘but I am a Messenger from the Lord of the worlds...’ (*al-A’raf*: 61). Here, that particular Prophet tells his people that he was sent by the Master and the Provider of the Worlds. It is not befitting for the Provider to send down a revelation to mislead those whom He nourishes, but rather to send down a reforming and guiding one.

In the context of divorce, Allah's saying: 'be mindful of Allah, your Lord...' (*at-Talaq*: 1) signifies that Muslims should not disobey His Orders, and that He forbids them from divorcing their wives during the period of menstruation or after having intimacy with them. It is permitted, though, to divorce them during a period of purity in which they did not have intercourse.

It is also a warning against leniency with regard to the rulings of divorce and the calculation of the waiting period. In this context, the people of the pre-Islamic era used to neglect women and the relatives of a divorcee hardly defended her rights and consequently such rights were gradually forgotten and denied.

Therefore, these verses are so strongly worded that such rights are referred to as 'the Limits of Allah'. To urge Muslims to be more pious, the Most Honourable Name 'Allah' is immediately followed by His saying 'your Lord' to remind people that His Wrath must be seriously feared and taken into account. Consequently, it is as if He *the Almighty* said to them, 'Fear Allah, your Lord, and do not prolong their waiting periods to harm them and do not disobey His Commands.' This is a call for men, in particular, to fear Him *the Almighty* in respect of divorce that it should not arise from the desire to transgress or revenge, or following a sudden whim or impulse because Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'Of all the lawful acts the most detestable to Allah is divorce.'⁽¹⁾

Thus, Muslims should be careful of their duty to Allah by guarding themselves against committing any act of disobedience including that of harming their wives by divorcing them during their menstrual period or at the other times when divorce is prohibited.

Not only does Allah *Glorified is He* direct orders regarding one's spouse or household by virtue of His Divinity and His Right to be obeyed, but also because His Lordship guides one to what improves life with his spouse and within his household. So, when divorce takes place, it has to be in accordance with the *Shari'a* and to emanate from piety and fear of Allah.

(1) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar Allah be pleased with him. See Abu Dawud, Sunnan, Hadith no. 2180; Ibn Maja, Sunnan, Hadith no. 2018; Al-Bayhaqi, As-Sunnan Al-Kubra, Hadith no. 15292; and At-Tartusi, Musnad Hadith no. 14*

Further, He *the Almighty* provides the believers with His Guidance and guards them with His care so that their life may be on the Right Path. Yet, piety here is concerned with counting the days of the divorcee's waiting period; it also has to do with not allowing the revocably divorced women to leave their husbands' houses. Allah, our Lord, knows what is in the minds of His creation, men, and women, and knows what may reconcile between a husband and his divorcee whom he divorced at a moment of anger. Thus, He *Glorified is He* prescribed that the divorcee should not leave her house so that they may come together and get their life back on track.

In this regard, Jabir ibn 'Abdullah *Allah be pleased with him* said, 'My maternal aunt was divorced and she went out to cut down fruit from her palm trees. A man met her and forbade her (to go out). So, she went to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and mentioned that to him. He said, "Go out, and cut down fruit from your palm trees for perhaps you may give alms or do an act of kindness."⁽¹⁾ Some people may mistakenly think that this Hadith is contradictory to the verse under discussion in which Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Do not drive them out of their homes...' (*at-Talaq*: 1).

In Islam, a woman is entitled to possess her own money and to manage her property either personally or by authorising a trustworthy person to do so. Yet, she has to abide by Allah's Law, that is, she does not have the right to go out during her waiting period. However, this is not entirely prohibited, for she is allowed to go out for necessary needs and to look after her property. The preceding Hadith gives us a practical example; the maternal aunt of Jabir ibn 'Abdullah was divorced and went out to cut down fruit from her palm trees and a man met her and forbade her to go out. Yet, when she went to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* he allowed her to go out to look after her property. With greater foresight, he said to her, 'Perhaps you may give alms or do an act of kindness.' He *peace and blessings be upon him* directed her to do good deeds such as giving charity or doing favours like rendering relief to the grief-stricken, repaying the debts of the heavily indebted, helping someone who wants to get married or giving some dates to the poor and the needy.

(1) See Muslim, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 3794; Abu Dawud, *Sunnan*, Hadith no. 2299; An-Nasa'i, *Sunnan*, Hadith no. 3550, Ibn Maja, *Sunnan*, Hadith no. 2034; and Ahmad, *Musnad*, Hadith no. 14484.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Do not drive them out of their homes...' (*at-Talaq*: 1). Here, He *the Almighty* forbids husbands from driving their divorced wives out of their houses until their waiting periods are over. In addition, the divorcee is not allowed to leave the house without the husband's permission and he should not give her leave as long as she is still in the waiting period. If she leaves the house, she is not entitled to housing or maintenance allowance.

The possessive pronoun in the word 'homes' mentioned in the verse refers to the divorced women, to indicate that they have the same right to stay at such houses as their owners. In Islamic Jurisprudence, this is called 'beneficial ownership' and the divorcee, during her waiting period, has the same ruling as the wife except for intercourse with her husband.

Given that they are still in their waiting period, the divorced wives should not be driven out of the houses which they used to inhabit before divorce, that is, the houses of their husbands. So, the 'homes' were attributed to the wives because they are more engaged with them with regard to lodging. Thus, men are forbidden to let their wives leave their houses before the waiting period is over. Instead, they should keep them in their houses for they, during the waiting period, are still their wives. Further, attributing the houses to the divorced wives gives rise to a feeling in the spouses that their marital life is still present during the waiting period because the wife is still at her marital home.

This, undoubtedly, shortens the psychological distance between the spouses, thus paving the way for reconciliation and eliminating the causes of parting. During her waiting period, a woman should reside in her marital house, and thereby she will not feel that she is a stranger. This feeling stimulates her to act in the same way as she used to do before divorce, providing a great chance for reconciliation and amicable reunion.

Husbands should not drive their divorced women (during their waiting periods) out of the houses they shared with them before divorce because of anger or hatred for them or being in need of such houses. This is so because housing is a right prescribed by Allah *the Almighty* for wives, and therefore not to be transgressed except in the case of necessity, such as the collapse, the burning or the damage of the house or out of fear of falling into a religious trial.

The saying of Allah *Glorified is He* ‘Do not drive them out of their homes...’ (*at-Talaq*: 1) provides evidence for the divorcees’ right of housing during the waiting period, for the houses out of which their husbands are forbidden from driving them are the ones they used to inhabit before divorce.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says: ‘...nor should they themselves leave – unless they commit a flagrant indecency...’ (*at-Talaq*: 1). Throughout her waiting period, a revocably divorced woman should not leave the house of her husband, yet she can go out if a necessity arises during the daytime provided that she stays at home over night. The husband is also not permitted to drive her out of the marital house during her waiting period and she is not allowed to go out except in the case of an urgent necessity. Should it happen, she will be a sinner but meanwhile should continue to count the waiting period, whether revocably or irrevocably divorced, to prevent the confusion of lineage.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...unless they commit a flagrant indecency...’ (*at-Talaq*: 1), it is also mentioned in His saying: ‘O you who believe! It is not lawful for you that you should take women as heritage against (their) will, and do not straiten them in order that you may take part of what you have given them, unless they are guilty of manifest indecency...’ (*an-Nisa*: 19) and in His saying: ‘O wives of the Prophet! Whoever of you commits an open indecency, the punishment shall be increased to her doubly; and this is easy to Allah’ (*al-Ahzab*: 30). In spite of the fact that Muslim scholars differ concerning the definition of ‘indecency’, it signifies a terrible sin. The Arabic root of the word implies excessive ugliness, thereby deemed by some scholars to refer to specific kinds of sin, namely; adultery and fornication which are utterly obscene; this point of view is supported by the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘And go not nigh to fornication; surely it is an indecency and an evil way’ (*al-Isra*: 32). Other groups of scholars believe that it denotes sins for which there is a prescribed punishment or that it may refer to the major sins.

I opine that this word in question is used to refer to any form of extreme obscenity. The word ‘indecency’ does not only connote normal ugliness, but rather an intense and excessive one. Examining the verses of the Quran, one can find that adultery is the only sin referred to as an act of indecency, and

therefore this word has to mean adultery or anything opposing Allah's Laws. But why does the word 'indecent' refer to adultery in particular?

It is because all sins other than adultery have to do with the circumstances surrounding the human soul, while adultery is the only sin which is concerned with the human soul itself because it results in confusion of lineage, disgrace, suspicions about one's wife and children, depravity and corruption. Consequently, Allah *the Almighty* clearly commands the Muslim *Ummah*, saying: 'And go not nigh to fornication; surely it is an indecency and an evil way' (*al-Isra*: 32).

Scholars defined indecency as the great sin for which the sinner feels embarrassed. S/he keeps it in secrecy and cannot expose it openly, recognising how obscene and abhorrent it is. Acknowledging the indecency of such a sin, the one perpetrating it tries not to become exposed and to conceal his crime from others. Further, he detests seeing it happen to his family and relatives. It suffices that Allah *the Almighty* describes such a sin as being 'indecent' and prescribed a punishment to be inflicted publicly on anyone committing it.

However, the question to be asked here is: 'What is meant by "indecent" in the saying of Allah: "...be mindful of Allah, your Lord. Do not drive them out of their homes – nor should they themselves leave – unless they commit a flagrant indecency..." (*at-Talaq*: 1)? Some scholars maintain that it implies hatred and disobedience of her husband's commands. If this is the case of the woman, then her husband becomes entitled to *fidyah* (ransom). In this regard, Ibn Mas'ud *Allah be pleased with him* stated, 'If she harms you, you will have the right to get back what she took from you, that is, the bride-gift.'⁽¹⁾ Other scholars suggest that a divorcee, who leaves her house before the waiting period is over, is committing an open indecency. Furthermore, other scholars said that a woman committing an open indecency is the one who insults and abuses the family of her husband; hence, they are allowed to drive her out. In this verse, 'indecent' denotes outright disobedience, such as insulting and abusing the family of her husband and, thus, she is rendered an ill-mannered woman. Such a sharp-tongued, insolent woman does not deserve to stay at the marital house with her husband until her waiting period is complete. In this

(1) In his *Tafsir*, As-Suyuti attributes this Hadith to Ibn Jarir At-Tabari's *Tafsir Jame' Al-Bayan*; the interpretation of the verse (4:19). See As-Suyuti, *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur*, 290/4.

regard, Imam Ash-Shafi'i permitted driving out the woman who insults her in-laws. The open indecency is the evident reason for driving such a woman out of the house during her waiting period, as her staying in this house inflicts harm on the household owing to her abusive language and disgraceful deeds. That being the case, it is permissible to expel her because she inflicted harm upon herself through ill-treatment, even though housing could have been a source of compassion and care for her. This ruling is only related to the revocably divorced woman, while the irrevocably divorced one has no right to housing, since this right to housing follows that right of maintenance allowance which is confined to the revocably divorced women. Further, it is out of Allah's Wisdom that He obligates housing for the divorcee in order to preserve her *'ird* (honour) and to protect her from the piercing gazes of men.

It is worth noting that Allah *Glorified is He* describes the act of indecency as flagrant to emphasise that it is conspicuously manifest and self-evident, with no room for ambiguity. This is also an expression of how this woman exposes her indecency or insolence openly in an intolerable way and how she insults and rebels against her husband and his family.

Allah *the Almighty* then says: 'These are the Limits set by Allah – whoever oversteps Allah's Limits wrongs his own soul – for you cannot know what new situation Allah may perhaps bring about' (*at-Talaq*: 1). Here, these demonstrative pronouns 'these' refer to the Limits of Allah presented here in the rulings of divorce in the case where there is no chance to go on with the marital life. When divorce is imperative, it has to follow the legal way to preserve the rights of the woman, the right of the man to take his wife back and the right of the society to protect offspring and prevent the confusion of lineage.

These are included in the Limits of Allah, for it is not right to confine His Limits to the penalties for theft, adultery, highway robbery⁽¹⁾ and

(1) The punishment for highway robbery is mentioned in Allah's saying: 'The punishment of those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger and strive to make mischief in the land is only this, that they should be murdered or crucified or their hands and their feet should be cut off on opposite sides or they should be imprisoned...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 33). It is the most vicious crime since it incorporates other crimes, such as robbery, violence, murder, intimidation, threatening innocents and causing random destruction. Any offence including these multiple crimes is subject to the punishment for highway robbery.

murder. Thus, Allah's Limits are His Rulings which may be in the form of orders or prohibitions.

The Arabic word *hadd* (limit) denotes the barrier preventing things being mingled, and *hudud* (limits) of Allah are His Prohibitions for which He set certain limits in order not to be transgressed. As a matter of fact, in order to prevent yourself from indulging in such prohibitions, you should observe Allah's Commands and keep a distance from His Prohibitions. Thus, Allah's Limits are His Rulings which stand as a barrier between the permissible and the impermissible.

Allah's Limits are mentioned either after the prohibitions or after the commands. For example, with regard to Allah's saying: '...these are the Limits of Allah, so do not exceed them...' (*al-Baqara*: 229), it comes after a command, meaning that we must not go beyond them. But, when it comes after the prohibitions as in His saying: '...these are the Limits of Allah, so do not go near them...' (*al-Baqara*: 178), it indicates that He *Glorified is He* wants to protect one's soul from the bad effects of committing prohibited acts. So, it would be better that he keeps himself away from them.

It is important to pay attention to the Hadith in which Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'The lawful is clear and the unlawful is clear, and between that are matters that are doubtful (not clear). So whoever leaves it to protect his religion and his honour, then he will be safe, and whoever falls into something from them, then he soon will have fallen into the unlawful. Just like if someone grazes (his animals) around a sanctuary, he would soon wind up in it. Indeed for every king is a sanctuary (pasture), and indeed Allah's Sanctuary is what He made unlawful.'⁽¹⁾

Due to the fact that Allah's Limits include orders and prohibitions, we can say that they all fall under 'dos' and 'don'ts'. Were we to convert the obligations into prohibitions and vice versa, the world would be thrown off balance, thereby allowing injustice to take place.

(1) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of An-Nu'man Ibn Bashir Allah be pleased with him. See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 52 and 2051; see also Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 4178 and 4181; Abu Dawud, Sunnan, Hadith no. 3331; At-Tirmidhi, Sunnan, Hadith no. 1205; An-Nasa'i, Sunnan, Hadith no. 4453; and Ibn Maja, Sunnan Hadith no. 3984.*

Injustice suggests giving the right of someone illegally to another. In fact, the rulings of divorce are part of the Limits of Allah. If you transgressed them by substituting them with man-made laws, this constitutes an act of injustice. It is He *the Almighty* Who is entitled to set the Limits that prevent the confusion of the right with the wrong. He also gives some rights precedence over others. In our daily lives, when we divide houses and lands, we set clear boundaries. As such, the boundary/limit is a barrier between two rights so that no one oversteps his boundaries.

So, regarding His Limits relating to His Commands, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...these are the Limits of Allah, so do not exceed them...’ (*al-Baqara*: 229); regarding His Prohibitions, He says: ‘...these are the Limits of Allah, so do not go near them...’ (*al-Baqara*: 187). This means that when you follow His Orders, you must not go beyond them, and when you are forbidden from doing something, you must not approach it. For instance, when He *the Almighty* prohibits wine, He does not say ‘do not drink wine,’ He says instead: ‘O you who believe! Intoxicants and games of chance and (sacrificing to) stones set up and (dividing by) arrows are only an uncleanness, the devil’s work; shun it therefore that you may be successful’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 90). It implies that one should not even go to the place where such things could be found, he should rather keep himself at a distance. He *Glorified is He* loves those who abide by His Limits; they do not approach His Prohibitions nor do they transgress what He made permissible.

These topics of divorce, the waiting period, the counting of the waiting period, the obligation of piety and not to drive the divorcee out of her house unless she commits an open indecency are the Limits of Allah that He set for the people. Obedience to Allah entails that one should not overstep these Limits. As a matter of fact, one’s obedience, piety, and preservation of Allah’s Limits will not benefit Him *the Almighty* nor do they negatively affect Him *Glorified is He* in any way. Nonetheless, whoever observes these Limits, He *the Almighty* will fulfil His Promise to him.

In the verse in question, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...whoever oversteps Allah’s Limits wrongs his own soul...’ (*at-Talaq*: 1). Likewise, He says in another verse: ‘...and whoever exceeds the Limits of Allah these it is that are

the unjust' (*al-Baqara*: 229). He *Glorified is He* warns us against transgressing these limits because the transgressor commits injustice against himself, his dependants and the entire society. Thus, the transgressors are those who violate and transcend the Divine Legislation. In His warning to us, He *the Almighty* distinguishes between transgressing the Orders and transgressing the Prohibitions.

So, He *the Almighty* says: '...whoever oversteps Allah's Limits wrongs his own soul...' (*at-Talaq*: 1). Likewise, He says: 'And when you divorce women and they reach their prescribed time, then either retain them in good fellowship or set them free with liberality, and do not retain them for injury so that you exceed the limits, and whoever does this, he indeed is unjust to his own soul...' (*al-Baqara*: 231). So, He *the Almighty* warns against transgression; for example, one who physically abuses his wife after taking her back should not think that he does injustice to her, for, in fact, he does injustice to his own self. When you inflict harm on a person, Allah *the Almighty* stands by his side, and if he invokes Him against you, the supplication will be accepted; thereby depriving you of gaining Allah's Pleasure. Is there, then, any type of injustice worse than what incurs Allah's Wrath?

One of the types of injustice committed by one against himself is pursuing a temporary whim or a false joy that brings about regret, grief and pain. In doing so, he imposes upon himself an intolerable burden. This is apart from doing injustice to other people. However, committing injustice against oneself is the pinnacle of absurdity. Were he to do injustice to others, we would assume that it may be beneficial for him, but what is the benefit of doing injustice to oneself? Injustice to oneself is the misdeed which affects its wrongdoer badly, or it is that which invokes great punishment in the Hereafter. As Allah *Glorious is He* forbids you to do injustice to yourself, the same is true for others.

Anyone who violates the Divine Legislations and Laws concerning himself and his wife deprives himself of the delight of this worldly life and the Hereafter. Further, anyone who transgresses the Limits of Allah with regard to divorce, taking back his wife after divorce, the calculation of the waiting period, and not driving the divorcee out of the marital house actually commits injustice against himself. That is because he, by so doing, destroys his life, in the first place, by a divorce that might have been issued because he could not

deal properly with his wife, which in turn resulted in dissension, parting and child displacement.

In other words, the one who oversteps Allah's Limits and Orders by divorcing his wife during her menstrual period in fact does injustice to himself. Some people intend to divorce their wives to harm them. With regard to those people, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And when you divorce women and they reach their prescribed time, then either retain them in good fellowship or set them free with liberality, and do not retain them for injury so that you exceed the limits, and whoever does this, he indeed is unjust to his own soul...' ⁽¹⁾ (*al-Baqara*: 231). In the pre-Islamic era, some people used to divorce their wives once and leave them until shortly before their waiting periods are over at which they would take them back; then they would then divorce them again. In fact, they did so to harm their wives by prolonging their waiting periods, which is why Allah *the Almighty* prohibits this practice.

So, a husband should not keep the marital life going with the aim of harming and humiliating his wife, yet pretending that he is doing good for her. In other words, he should not maintain that he does not want to divorce her and that he will take her back while intending within himself to humiliate and retaliate against her. This is utterly rejected in Islam. In fact, doing injustice to one's wife or divorcee leads to the marital life being thrown off balance and losing its benefits by virtue of dissension, dispute, conflict, stubborn wills and verbal abuse.

Such a husband took Allah's Verses in jest and manipulated the concession granted to him by Allah to take his divorced wife back in marriage to inflict more harm and suffering on her. We know that Allah *Glorified is He* offers the husband the chance to take his revocably divorced wife back and to keep her in their marital house after divorce until her waiting period is complete. Her

(1) *In his Tafsir, Ibn Kathir relates that Ad-Dahhak stated: 'Those husbands referred to in this verse used to inflict harm on their wives to pay ransom. Other scholars maintain that a husband used to divorce his wife once and leave her until shortly before her waiting period is over at which he takes her back, intending to harm her so as not to get married to another one, then divorces her again and frequently does the same thing, only to harm her by prolonging her period, which is why Allah prohibits this practice and warns against committing it.' See Ibn Kathir, Tafsir Al-Quran Al-'Azhim, 1/629.*

staying could provide an incentive for the husband to consider the matter of taking her back during her waiting period which is a common practice, as Allah *the Almighty* says: '...for you cannot know what new situation Allah may perhaps bring about' (*at-Talaq*: 1). If she leaves her house, with much gossip going on and people causing calumny between them, the relationship between them, which is cautiously guarded by the Legislation, will be severed. Here, He *Glorified is He* commands the divorcing husband to abide by the Rulings of Allah *the Almighty* regarding the matters of divorce as he does not know what will happen later on. After all, He *the Almighty* knows best the interest of people and can cause things to go well between the two spouses.

In Arabic, the word *la'ala* (perhaps) signifies one's wish for and expectation of the occurrence of a certain thing. When this word is said, this means that the thing said after it will most probably happen. As a matter of fact, the levels of expectation differ from one person to another and to Allah *the Almighty*. You may say, 'Ask so and so that he may give you what you want.' This is a level of expectation. But it is more expected to happen when one says, 'I may give you,' as this expression in this case is relating to yourself. The third, and the highest, level of expectation is relating to Allah *Glorified is He*. When He *the Almighty* says, 'Allah may perhaps do such and such', then He will do that thing as He is the Most Generous One Who loves to show Mercy to people and nothing can prevent Him from doing what He wills.

'Ubayd Allah ibn 'Abdullah ibn 'Utba narrated that 'Amr ibn Hafs ibn Al-Mughira set out along with 'Ali ibn Abu Taleb *Allah be pleased with him* to the Yemen and sent to his wife, Fatima Bint Qays,⁽¹⁾ the one pronouncement of divorce which was still left from the (irrevocable) divorce; and he commanded Al-Harith ibn Hisham and 'Ayyash ibn Abu Rabi'a to give her maintenance allowance. They said to her, 'By Allah, there is no maintenance

(1) She is Fatima Bint Qays ibn Khalid, a woman from the clan of Fihir which belongs to the tribe of Quraysh. She is the sister of prince Ad-Dahhak ibn Qays. She is one of the early female Companions of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. She narrated some Hadiths from him. She was intelligent and beautiful. When the Caliph 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab was killed, the group of consultation gathered in her house to deliberate on the next Caliph. She died during the reign of Mu'awiya in 50 A.H. See Az-Zirikli, *Al-A'lam*.

allowance for you, except in case you are pregnant.’ She then came to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and mentioned their opinion to him, whereupon he said: ‘There is no maintenance allowance for you.’ Then she sought permission to move (to another place), and he (Prophet Muhammad) permitted her. She said: ‘Allah's Messenger, where (should I go)?’ He said: ‘To the house of Ibn Umm Maktum’ and, as he is blind, you could put off your garments in his presence and he would not see you. When her waiting period was over He *peace and blessings be upon him* married her to Usama ibn Zayd.⁽¹⁾ Marwan ibn Al-Hakam (the governor of Medina) sent Qubisa ibn Dhu’ayb in order to ask Fatima about this Hadith, and she narrated it to him, whereupon Marwan said, ‘We have not heard this Hadith but from a woman. We would adopt a safe (path) which is followed by the people.’ When these words of Marwan were conveyed to Fatima, she said, ‘Allah’s saying judges between us and proves who of us is of correct opinion; He *the Almighty* says: “Do not drive them out of their homes – nor should they themselves leave – unless they commit a flagrant indecency”’ (*at-Talaq*: 1). After she recited the entire verse, she asserted, ‘This is in regard to the revocable divorce, so what new turn can the event take after three pronouncements of separation of divorce? Why do you say there is no maintenance allowance for her if she is not pregnant? Then, on what grounds do you restrain her!’

This Hadith gives us an overview of the life of one of the great female Companions of Prophet Muhammad, Fatima Bint Qays, who had profound knowledge of the Quran to the extent that she corrected the understanding inferred by the other Companions.

Fatima *Allah be pleased with her* got divorced from her husband, ‘Amr ibn Abu Hafs ibn Al-Mughirah three times, and ‘Ali ibn Abu Taleb *Allah be pleased with him* ordered Al-Harith ibn Hisham and ‘Ayyash ibn Abu Rabi’a to give her maintenance allowance. But they refused because she was not pregnant and it was her third time of divorce and therefore her divorce was irrevocable.

(1) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Fatima Bint Qays Allah be pleased with her. See Muslim, Sahih, Hadiths no. 3771, 3772 and 3777; Abu Dawud, Sunnan, Hadith no. 2292; An-Nasa’i, As-Sunnan Al-Kubra Hadith no. 9199; and At-Tabarani, Al-Mu’jam Al-Kabir, Hadith no. 20366.*

She referred the matter to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who told her, 'There is no maintenance allowance for you.' As long as she is not entitled to have maintenance allowance, then she is not entitled to housing also. Therefore, she sought permission from him *peace and blessings be upon him* to leave the house of her ex-husband, whereupon he *peace and blessings be upon him* permitted her to move to the house of 'Abdullah ibn Umm Maktum, a blind man, until she fulfilled her waiting period.

When her waiting period was over,⁽¹⁾ he *peace and blessings be upon him* married her to Usama ibn Zayd. During the reign of Marwan ibn Al-Hakam⁽²⁾, the governor of Medina during that time, he asked her about this story. When she related it to him, he denied her moving from the house of her ex-husband to another place, which is why he totally denied the story. Fatima then said, 'What judges between me and you is the saying of Allah: "Do not turn them out of their houses"' (*at-Talaq*: 1). She then asserted, 'This is in regard to the revocable divorce only.'

Allah *the All-Wise and the Most Merciful* does not want to put people into difficulty or hardship. His *Sharia* is all based on justice and mercy. Therefore, as He permits man to divorce his wife, He sets out regulations and limits to be observed. In this regard, He *the Almighty* says: 'When any of you intend to divorce women, do so at a time when their prescribed waiting period can properly start, and calculate the period carefully: be mindful of Allah, your Lord' (*at-Talaq*: 1). He *Glorified is He* gives the husband and the wife, who go

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- (1) *When the waiting period was over, Mu'awiya ibn Abu Sufyan and Abu Al-Jahm proposed to her. Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him advised her, 'As for Abu Jahm, he does not put down his staff from his shoulder, and as for Mu'awiya, he is a poor man having no property; marry Usama ibn Zayd.' She objected to him, but he again said: marry Usama; so she married him. Allah honoured and raised her rank by him. Usama ibn Zayd was young as he was twenty years old at the death of Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him. However, he was previously married to Hind Bint Al-Fakih and Durra Bint 'Uday and had a son, Mohamad, and a daughter, Hind. When he married Fatima, they had Jubayr, Zayd and 'Aisha. He married other women also and died in 50 A. H. See Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 1480; and Ibn Sa'd, At-Tabaqat Al-Kubra, 4/66.*
- (2) *He is Abu 'Abd Al-Malik, Marwan ibn Al-Hakam ibn Abu Al-'Aas, an Umayyad Ruler. He was born in Mecca in 2 A.H. and died in 65 A.H. at the age of sixty three. See Az-Zirikli, Al-'Alam, 7/207,*

through revocable divorce, an opportunity to reunite again and continue their marital life. Therefore, He orders the revocably divorced woman to calculate her waiting period so that her husband may take her back during this period.

It is as if He *Glorified is He* is saying that He decreed that the divorced woman should remain her husband's wife during the waiting period so that the husband may regret his decision or the reason for which he divorced her ends, and thus decides to take her back in marriage. Thus, it will be easy for him to do so because she is still in his house.

Some scholars drew our attention to the fact that this verse encourages people to issue, if they willed, revocable divorce, and not to issue three pronouncements of divorce at one time in order not to miss the chance to take their wives back in marriage during the waiting period should they regret their decision.

One may ask, 'Does this verse: "for you cannot know what new situation Allah may perhaps bring about..." (*at-Talaq*: 1) address Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*?' The answer is that it addresses the one who transgresses the limits laid down by Allah *Glorified is He* that is, it is not directed to him *peace and blessings be upon him*. Accordingly, this verse means that whoever transgresses the limits laid down by Him *the Almighty* actually puts himself into hardship, as one does not know what may happen regarding his marital issues later on. He *the Almighty* may cause the husband to change his mind, thus replaces his enmity towards his wife with love and affection and, in such a case, he will still have the opportunity to correct his mistake and to take his wife back in marriage during her waiting period.

This is similar to Allah's saying: 'And as for those who are guilty of an indecency from among your women, call to witnesses against them four (witnesses) from among you; then if they bear witness confine them to the houses until death takes them away or Allah opens some way for them' (*an-Nisa*': 15). The Arabic word *sabil* (way) here refers to lashing or stoning to death – two punishments which completely purify the sinful women. This is because Allah *Glorified is He* wants to relieve people of all hardships and difficulties, a fact which is crystal clear in His saying: '...and has not laid upon you any hardship in religion...' (*al-Hajj*: 78) and in His saying: 'Allah does not desire to put on you any difficulty...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 6).

Thus, He *the Almighty* does not choose you to be Muslims in order to put you into difficulty and hardship. Instead, the *Shari'a* is all about easiness and facilitation. In case of difficulty, He *the Almighty* makes concessions to people and introduces measures so that the people can live peacefully in their communities.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

فَإِذَا بَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَأَمْسِكُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ فَارِقُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ وَأَشْهِدُوا
ذَوَى عَدْلٍ مِّنكُمْ وَأَقِيمُوا الشَّهَادَةَ لِلَّهِ ذَٰلِكُمْ يُوعِظُ بِهِ مَن كَانَ
يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَمَن يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا ﴿٢﴾

When they have completed their appointed term, either keep them honourably, or part with them honourably. Call two just witnesses from your people and establish witness for the sake of God. Anyone who believes in God and the Last Day should heed this: God will find a way out for those who are mindful of Him [2] (The Quran, *at-Talaq*: 2)

The Arabic verb *balagha* (to complete) has two meanings: sometimes it refers to being close to completing something, while other times it is used to signify the real completion of the thing. The first meaning is clear in Allah's saying: 'O you who believe! When you rise up to prayer, wash your faces...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 6) which orders Muslims, when they are about to perform prayer, to prepare themselves and perform ablution. An example of the real completion of something is the case in which an aeroplane arrives at its destination and then its pilot announces that they have *balagha* (reached) a certain country. So, when the husband divorces his wife and her waiting period is about to end, he can either complete the divorce or take her back again in marriage, an act which is recommended by Allah *the Almighty* till the very last moment.

However, with regard to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'And when you have divorced women and they have ended – their term (of waiting), then do not prevent them from marrying their husbands when they agree among themselves in a lawful manner...' (*al-Baqara*: 232), it refers to the time when the waiting period is over and a husband is no longer entitled to take back his wife except with a new contract and bride-gift. If a husband wants to take her

back in marriage, some relatives may oppose this remarriage. We say to those people, ‘As long as both husband and wife agree to resume their marriage, no one shall hinder this reconciliation and reunion.’

Thus, the verse in question refers to the time when the waiting period has not come to an end, and that is why the husband is commanded to: ‘...either keep them honourably, or part with them honourably...’ (*at-Talaq*: 2). As for the aforementioned verse of the chapter of *al-Baqara*, it refers to the actual termination of the waiting period. This is also the case in His saying: ‘And (as for) those of you who die and leave wives behind, they should keep themselves in waiting for four months and ten days; then when they have fully attained their term, there is no blame on you for what they do for themselves in a lawful manner; and Allah is All Aware of what you do’ (*al-Baqara*: 234). This verse refers to the waiting period of the widow which lasts up to four months and ten days. The meaning here is that she may marry another one when her waiting period is over.

As for the waiting period of the menstruating woman, it is defined in Allah’s saying: ‘Divorced women must wait for three monthly periods’ (*al-Baqara*: 228). Here, the waiting period is not defined according to time, but according to the periods of purity. As for the waiting period of the woman who reached menopause or those who have not menstruated yet, it is defined by a period of time which is nearly equal to the periods of menstruation, namely; three months; Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘The period of waiting will be three months for those women who have ceased menstruating and for those who have not [yet] menstruated...’ (*at-Talaq*: 2).

With regard to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...either keep them honourably...’ (*at-Talaq*: 2), it means that the husbands, if they will, can take their wives back in marriage honourably. This is one of two options available for a husband in this case. However, taking her back in this case shall be done according to *ma’ruf*, which is an Arabic term signifying all acts of obedience to Allah, drawing nearer to Him, being kind to people and observing the obligations of *Shari’a* and refraining from what is prohibited. It also signifies good deeds. With regard to taking back one’s wife, it means being just to her, treating her well and giving her all her due rights.

In Arabic, *al-ma'ruf* (good) is the opposite of *al-munkar* (evil). The good thing is known to all people by their natural disposition. *Al-Ma'ruf* also refers to the thing that is widely known to people. Allah *the Almighty* commands Muslims to live with their wives in accordance with what is fair and kind, saying: '...and treat them kindly...' (*an-Nisa'*: 19).

There is a difference between love and kindness. Marital life can survive as long as both parties consider the latter, that is, kindness, even if there is no love. Here arises the question, 'Does the absence of love ruin the marital life?' The answer is 'No'. The husband may take back his revocable divorcee and continue his life with her, even if he hates some of her bad behaviours in order to preserve the interest of their children and to give her the chance to change her behaviour.

Accordingly, we find that Allah's saying, '...either keep them honourably...' (*at-Talaq*: 2) alleviates the psychological pressure of the husband which may prevent him from seeking to take his wife back in marriage out of his hatred for her. It is noteworthy that one should always remember that he is required to treat his wife kindly and fairly, and not necessarily with love. As a matter of fact, marriage may start with kind and fair treatment between the two spouses and then they both may develop this relationship into love.

Kind and fair treatment means that a husband should fulfil his duties with regard to his wife. This is why some scholars say, 'Kind treatment means that in case a husband fails to maintain his wife, he should divorce her in order not to cause her any harm.'

Thus, Allah's saying: '...either keep them honourably...' (*at-Talaq*: 2) means that when one takes his revocable divorcee back, he should give her all her due rights which include spending on her, clothing, housing and good treatment. It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* says to the divorcing husband, 'Do not be in hurry to lose your wife as Allah will make a way out for you and your affairs will become better.'

This meaning is also underscored in Allah's saying: '...Keep your wife and be mindful of Allah' (*al-Ahzab*: 37). This is what Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to Zayd⁽¹⁾ *Allah be pleased with him*.

(1) He is Zayd ibn Haritha ibn Shurahel ibn 'Abd Al-'Uzza. He was a poet and one of Prophet Muhammad's Companions. In a raid on his mother's tribe, Tay', he was enslaved by=

Fair and kind treatment necessitates that a husband should not take his wife back with intent to harm her, a fact which is crystal clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘And when you divorce women and they reach their prescribed time, then either retain them in good fellowship or set them free with liberality, and do not retain them for injury so that you exceed the limits...’ (*al-Baqara*: 231). Harm with regard to marriage occurs when a husband pretends that he wants to take his revocable divorcee back while he intends to humiliate her. This is utterly prohibited in Islam.

Yet, how can taking one’s wife back occur? Imam Ash-Shafi‘i⁽¹⁾ says, ‘As long as marriage and divorce cannot be concluded except by talking, taking one’s wife back is concluded by talking also.’ As for Imam Abu Hanifa, he says, ‘Taking one’s wife back can occur by having sexual intercourse.’ Imam Malik yet says, ‘If a husband has sexual intercourse with his revocable divorcee with the intention of taking her back, then it occurs’.

Taking one’s revocable divorcee back in marriage occurs when one says, for example, ‘I took back my wife in marriage.’ The basic ruling is that ‘this act is concluded by uttering words to that effect.’ This is because the husband has the right to take his revocable divorcee back in marriage before the end of her third menstruation, even though he is not allowed to have sexual intercourse with her during her menses. If the third menses ends before he takes her back in marriage, then he cannot take her back in marriage except with a new contract and bride-gift.

Allah *the Almighty* says here: ‘...or part with them honourably...’ (*at-Talaq*: 2) and similarly He says: ‘...set them free with liberality...’ (*al-Baqara*: 231).

the tribe of Banu Al-Qayn and was sold at Mecca. Khadija Bint Khuwaylid bought him and gave him as a present to Prophet Muhammad who adopted him as his son. Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* prohibited the act of adoption. Concerning his divorce of Zaynab Bint Jahsh, Allah’s saying: ‘But when Zayd had accomplished his want of her, We gave her to you as a wife...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 37) was revealed. He died in 8 A.H.

- (1) In his book, Al-Mawardi mentions these opinions. He further states, ‘Taking back one’s revocable divorcee in marriage does not take place except with an utterance on the part of the one who can speak, a signal on the part of a dumb and a sexual intercourse on the part of the capable one.’ Abu Hanifa said, ‘This takes effect by utterance or action such as sexual intercourse, kiss or even lustful gaze.’ But Imam Malik stated, ‘In order for taking the wife back in marriage to be valid, a husband should have an intention to do so.’ See Al-Mawardi, Al-Hawi Al-Kabir, 10/759-60.

This indicates that separation should be fulfilled in the best possible manner, without violence or repulsiveness, as it, that is, separation in itself is an awful thing that should not be compounded with severity and violence.

Divorce and separation shall be effectuated without hatred, enmity, or aggression. Instead, it shall be done in a good way. In fact, divorce is usually associated with anger and rage, so it should be done without violence. In order to alleviate her pain, a husband may say to his divorcee, 'This is our destiny and I hope that Allah may compensate you with a better husband.' It is sufficient for a woman to bear the pains of separation and divorce. What an awful state is it when one separates from his wife while cursing her, speaking harshly to her and preventing her due rights!

Fair and kind treatment to the divorcee requires that she should be given all her due rights. With regard to this point, Allah *the Almighty* says: '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). Thus, each divorcee shall receive a maintenance allowance prescribed by Him *Glorified is He*. If the bride-gift is not specified for a wife and the marriage is not consummated, she is given a bride-gift according to the state of the husband, whether wealthy or destitute, a fact which is crystal clear in His saying: '...and make provision for them, the wealthy according to his means and the straitened in circumstances according to his means...' (*al-Baqara*: 236). If the bride-gift is specified for a woman, and the husband divorces her before consummation of the marriage, she is to be given one-half of it. This indicates that Allah *Glorified is He* did not only specify a suitable ruling for each state, but also distinguished each state with a special expression.

When a woman gets divorced before the consummation of marriage, then this process is called *tasrih* (sending forth), an expression which signifies separation without any pain felt on the part of both spouses. There is no doubt that a husband who divorces his wife before having sexual intercourse with her does not grieve or incline to her. Therefore, he should separate from her in the best manner as a way of alleviating the great deal of pain she would endure in this case.

Moreover, in this case, there is no waiting period for the divorcee. This means that she has the right to marry again if anyone proposes in marriage to her.

Furthermore, she should be given maintenance allowance as a compensation for the psychological pain she would endure.

On the other hand, as for a woman who gets divorced after the consummation of marriage, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...or part with them honourably...’ (*at-Talaq*: 2). He reminds both of them that He gathered between them by way of a marital relationship saying: ‘...They are an apparel for you and you are an apparel for them...’ (*al-Baqara*: 187) and by saying: ‘...you have lain with each other...’ (*an-Nisa*: 21). Therefore, they should consider this matter if they decide to end this relationship, that is, they should end it with kind and fair treatment.

The last verse signifies the best level of interaction between both the husband and his wife. In this case, a woman is exposed to her husband in a way that never happened, and shall not happen, even before her father, brother, mother or sister. This is the highest level of exposition and involvement that may happen between a man and a woman. A husband and wife directly interact with each other at all levels and in all daily activities, a matter which clearly indicates that they become closely connected to each other, as Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...They are an apparel for you and you are an apparel for them...’ (*al-Baqara*: 187). Therefore, He *Glorified is He* reminds the husband that he is going to separate from someone who he used to love very much. This is an encouragement for him to take her back in marriage.

Furthermore, if the separation becomes inevitable, then it should happen in a good manner, that is, without cursing, wrongdoing, or depriving the wife of any of her due rights. It is noteworthy here that Allah *the Almighty* gives precedence to taking one’s revocable divorcee back over the completion of divorce. This proves that taking the revocable divorcee back is more pleasing to Him *the Almighty* and more consistent with the ultimate objectives of the *Shari’a*. After all, of all the lawful acts, divorce is the most detested by Him *the Almighty*.

Moreover, in order that the process of taking one’s wife back in marriage is done in the best manner, one should bring two just people to witness it. If a husband does not take his revocable divorcee back before the completion of her waiting period, then he cannot marry her except with her consent. In this case, she has the right either to marry him or any other one.

If a husband takes his wife back in marriage during the waiting period, then he is not required to fulfil the requirements of marriage except for bringing just witnesses to prevent the possibility of subsequent denial and to confirm the legal rights such as inheritance, if any of the spouses dies.

One may ask, 'How can we bring forth just witnesses?' We say that we should consider their truthfulness and their behaviour, whether or not they are upright and moderate with regard to all their states and ethics. If we find that a certain person is upright and just with regards to his own affairs, then we can trust him with regards to others' affairs. A witness shall also be experienced in the field about which he is brought to give witness.

As Allah *the Almighty* orders us to choose the just ones among us to make a judgement about a sheep,⁽¹⁾ then what about people's lives and benefits? Therefore, we are required to distinguish the just people among us through observing their attitude towards themselves and their family. On discovering their competence and ability, we should charge them with this public service; otherwise, the *ummah* will be harmed. In fact, it is always the rash decision on the part of those who should be holding the leading positions in a nation that leads to its destruction.

So, 'just witnesses' in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Call two just witnesses from your people...' (*at-Talaq*: 2) means those whose religion, honesty and integrity are approved. They avoid the major and minor sins; abide by chivalry, honesty, pure-heartedness, and uprightness.

The Quranic verses as regards testimony can be either general or restricted. It is restricted in Allah's saying: 'And as for those who are guilty of an indecency from among your women, call to witnesses against them four (witnesses) from among you...' (*an-Nisa*': 15). This is also the case of the divorced women in their waiting periods as clarified in His saying: 'When they have completed their appointed term, either keep them honourably, or part with them honourably. Call two just witnesses from your people and establish witness for the sake of

(1) This is a reference to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'O you who believe! do not kill game while you are on pilgrimage, and whoever among you shall kill it intentionally, the compensation (of it) is the like of what he killed, from the cattle, as two just persons among you shall judge...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 95).

Allah...’ (*at-Talaq*: 2). On the other hand, as for His saying: ‘...and have witnesses when you barter with one another...’ (*al-Baqara*: 282), testimony or calling up witnesses in this situation is not limited; it rather extends to all Muslims, irrespective of any qualifications.

Allah *Glorified is He* stipulates that witnesses in such incidents relating to the personal affairs of the Muslim women should be Muslims, whereas this stipulation is not mentioned in the case of testimony to giving over the property of the orphans to them or buying and selling. The difference between the purely financial rulings and the Muslim women’s rulings is conspicuously obvious in this regard.

The verses in their totality, however, maintain that the basic ruling of testimony is that witnesses have to be just and trustworthy. They warn us against false statements and deception, which are the characteristics of unfaithful and dishonest people. We should not bring such witnesses especially in the matters relating to the Muslim women. On the other hand, in other matters there is some leniency with regard to the qualifications of the witness as in the case of the financial contracts and the incidents that take place in public before many people. In this case, testimony of the truthful and honest people who adhere to their religion is to be accepted.

Thus, not everyone is qualified for giving testimony. In actuality, for one’s testimony to be accepted, ten conditions must be met in the witness: he must be free, mature, Muslim, just and fully aware of his testimony; getting no benefit from his testimony, nor defending harm from himself; not known for frequent mistakes, nor lacking chivalry and having no hostility towards the one against whom he testifies.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* directs us to give upright testimony whenever we are called to witness, saying: ‘...and establish witness for the sake of Allah...’ (*at-Talaq*: 2). Establishing testimony entails not testifying to something unless it is totally clear to you.⁽¹⁾ The matter of testimony should then be clearer to you

(1) *Ibn ‘Abbas Allah be pleased with him narrated that when Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him was asked about giving witness, he said, ‘Do you see the sun?’ He replied, ‘Yes’. He said, ‘Give witness in a similar case [which is as clear as the sun], or leave it.’ Ibn Hajar said, ‘Ibn ‘Adi narrated it with a weak chain of narrators; Al-Hakim =*

than sunlight. To establish testimony is to give it whenever needed, without change or alteration, or concealing any part of it. If a person properly gives testimony, Allah *the Almighty* will be pleased with him, and thus the person draws near to Him. He *Glorified is He* promises those who are upright in their testimonies will be admitted into paradise, saying: 'Those shall be in gardens, honoured' (*al-Ma'arij*: 35). Those upright witnesses testify only to what they know, favour neither relative nor friend nor even themselves, with no regard to the status of the one they attest for or against. Further, they do not conceal or change their testimony. Allah *Glorified is He* commands us to accept the calling to witness, saying: '...and the witnesses should not refuse when they are summoned...' (*al-Baqara*: 282). Once you are called as a witness, you have to hasten to give your testimony. If you are called, then giving testimony will fall under one of three types:

- People's rights; in this case, giving testimony is not permissible unless one is called for giving it.
- Allah's Rights: this has to do with laws such as divorce or setting slaves free. In these cases, testimonies shall be given, whether one is asked to give it or not.
- Allah's Rights such as legal corporal punishments. In such case, one shall not give testimony unless one is asked to do so.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* addresses all of us, saying: 'anyone who believes in Allah and the Last Day should heed this: Allah will find a way out for those who are mindful of Him, and will provide for them from an unexpected source' (*at-Talaq*: 2). This verse refers to all previously stated legal rulings which include divorce, the waiting period and its calculation and the prohibition of driving the revocable divorcee out of the marital house unless the waiting period is over. He *the Almighty* also commands that we should not transgress the Limits He specified unless women are proven to

= *nonetheless graded it authentic, but he was mistaken.* See *Al-Bayhaqi, Shu'ab Al-Iman, Hadith no. 10469*; see also *An-Naysabouri, Al-Muzakkiat, Hadith no. 21*; *Al-Mutaqi Al-Hindi, Kanz Al-A'mal, Hadith no. 17782*; and *Ibn Hajar, Bulugh Al-Maram, Hadith no. 1405*.

have committed adultery. Moreover, He *the Almighty* orders the one who takes his revocable divorcee back in marriage before the termination of her waiting period to be kind and fair in his dealing with her and to refrain from harming or subjugating her. Even in the case of separation, it shall be performed without cursing or depriving the woman of her due rights.

Among these legal rulings is that two just Muslims should be brought to witness in the case of divorce or taking a divorcee back in marriage, in order to prevent any circumvention, manipulation or twisting of the truth. These witnesses are commanded to give testimony in the best manner, as He *the Almighty* says: ‘...and establish witness for the sake of Allah...’ (*at-Talaq*: 2).

Establishing the testimony means that one should consider Allah *the Almighty* alone and not fear any anyone else, as indicated in His saying: ‘O you who believe! Be maintainers of justice, bearers of witness of Allah’s sake, though it may be against your own selves or (your) parents or near relatives; if he be rich or poor, Allah is nearer to them both in compassion; therefore do not follow (your) low desires, lest you deviate; and if you swerve or turn aside, then surely Allah is aware of what you do’ (*an-Nisa*’: 135). Here, the people are forbidden from distorting or changing the truth or refraining from giving their testimonies in fear of the one they are witnessing against because Allah is Fully Aware of all that they do.

Sometimes people give testimony, but they twist the truth. This is why it is said that one’s own whims jeopardise justice. Therefore, all people are in dire need of the Help of Allah *the Almighty* in this regard. This meaning is also asserted in His saying: ‘O you who believe! Be upright for Allah, bearers of witness with justice, and let not hatred of a people incite you not to act equitably; act equitably, that is nearer to piety, and be careful of (your duty to) Allah; surely Allah is Aware of what you do’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 8).

As a matter of fact, falsifying the testimony leads to the destruction of the societies. If the members of the society bear witness fairly and justly, every one of them will be deterred from doing injustice when he is about to do it. The believer is commanded to establish justice to Allah *Glorified is He* by rectifying himself. Then, he is commanded to bear witness fairly and justly in order to reform others.

The Arabic word *shahada* (testimony) indicates numerous correlated meanings which are all gathered under the meaning of the word 'presence', a point which is clear in Allah's saying: 'And proclaim among men the Pilgrimage: they will come to you on foot and on every lean camel, coming from every remote path, [27] That they may witness advantages for them... [28]' (*al-Hajj*: 27, 28).

If the one bearing witness is truthful, he will not be afraid to have a conversation with any party or to answer any question he is asked. As long as the incident has actually happened, it remains in that state, no matter how numerous are the questions and no matter what changes may happen in the way of expressing it. The truthful witness states a real incident that never changes. The untruthful witness, on the contrary, tries to twist the truth, to beat about the bush and to change his testimony.

As a matter of fact, a witness serves as the decisive factor in the case of settling disputes, and that is why Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* commanded the witness not to testify about anything except if he actually saw it with his naked eyes, that is, as clear as he sees the sun. If he meets this condition, he can attest to a certain incident, otherwise he should not do that. Testimony requires two conditions: the presence of the witness at the moment when what he attests to happened and honesty in reporting the incident. In this regard, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...This is more proper in order that they should give testimony truly' (*al-Ma'ida*: 108).

The witness is the one who, by his witnessing, enables the judge to give a just judgement. When there is a conflict or a dispute that cannot be settled except by the judge, we refer the case to him, and thus he will ask to summon the witnesses. He will question them, that is, the witnesses to give their testimony, to enable him to give a sound and a just verdict in the light of what the witnesses said. Establishing the testimony also means to consider the Pleasure of Allah *Glorified is He* which is the ultimate goal of the testimony and also of every good deed. Thus, you should seek Allah's Pleasure in every testimony you give.

Allah's Legislation is an admonition for everyone believing in Him as his Lord Who is the All-Wise, the Lawgiver and the All Knowing about the instincts of the goodness and the evil of the human soul.

The Arabic word *maw'izha* (exhortation) means to advise someone to do the right thing concerning a certain matter. Actually, the advised one knows what he should do but needs someone to admonish him. So, the adviser does not issue new orders; rather, he admonishes the listener regarding the teachings of Islam which the latter already knows but neglects.

In the verse in question, it is Allah *Glorified is He* Who admonishes us, and that is why we should heed and pay attention to His Admonition. He *the Almighty* cares for us and wants our spiritual education to be perfect. Indeed, He is Far Exalted over seeking anything in return for His Admonition, for nothing reaches Him from us, given the fact that we are powerless in comparison to Him.

In fact, only the reasonable and wise people accept the Divine Admonition and thereby follow Allah's Way of Guidance, because they employ their minds in the matter first and thereupon choose from among the alternatives. On the contrary, the insane people's thoughts are unorganised and inconsistent because they lack the intellectual ability to choose from among the alternatives. On the other hand, the reasonable person accepts the exhortation and exhorts others; he neither rejects it nor deviates from the Divine Way of Guidance which He *Glorified is He* has prescribed on us concerning the social relationships with one's wife or divorcee.

So, with regard to His saying: 'Anyone who believes in Allah and the Last Day should heed this...' (*at-Talaq*: 2), the believer recognises that his belief entails some requirements and thus constitutes a practical responsibility for him. It entails acting according to Allah's Will and following His Way of Guidance. When someone embraces Islam of his own accord, he should adhere to the covenant of belief which is the first thing with which He *the Almighty* entrusts him. Thus, as long as the person believes in Him *Glorified is He* he should obey His commands.

Here, He *Glorified is He* mentions the quality of believing in Him first, which is the first pillar of belief. Afterward, He mentions the necessity of believing in the Last Day, which is the last pillar of belief. So, attaining to faith starts with believing in Him *Glorified is He* and ends with believing in the Last Day.

Thus, the true believer obeys Allah's Command with regard to calling witnesses and establishing the witness for His sake because he submits to His Legislations and fears His punishment in the Hereafter. He, therefore, is heedful of His Teachings and does good deeds to the best of his ability to be prepared for the Hereafter. By contrast, the disbeliever is heedless of the consequences of his misdeeds.

Allah *the Almighty* exclusively mentions the believers because they are the only ones who benefit from His Teachings that warn them against what is harmful and that remind them about what softens their hearts. In this connection, He *Glorified is He* says in the chapter of *al-Baqara*: '...with this is admonished he among you who believes in Allah and the Last Day, this is more profitable and purer for you; and Allah knows while you do not know' (*al-Baqara*: 232). In the chapter of *at-Talaq*, He *Glorified is He* unlike it in the chapter of *al-Baqara*, does not use the singular form. This is because in the chapter of *al-Baqara*, He *Glorified is He* addresses only the guardian who prevents the irrevocably divorced woman that ended her waiting period from returning to her husband with a new contract and a new bride-gift. By contrast, in the chapter of *at-Talaq*, He *Glorified is He* addresses numerous people with different commands and prohibitions; He commands the husband to divorce his wife at a time when her prescribed waiting period can properly start and to calculate the period carefully, and meanwhile He prohibits him from driving her out of her home. Besides, He *Glorified is He* commands the divorcee to calculate her waiting period properly and accurately and not to leave her home. Further, He *the Almighty* addresses the one who wants to take his divorced wife back in marriage during her waiting period either to keep her honourably or to part with her honourably. Moreover, He *the Almighty* commands the husband to call two just witnesses to establish the witness for Allah's sake. Thus, He says: 'Anyone who believes in Allah and the Last Day should heed this...' (*at-Talaq*: 2).

Subsequently, He *Glorified is He* says: 'Allah will find a way out for those who are mindful of Him...' (*at-Talaq*: 2). Every verse in the Quran has a high position, status and rank including this verse that talks about the rulings of divorce, waiting period, housing of the divorced wife and the prohibition of driving her out of her husband's house. It is, nevertheless, a general verse that

applies to anyone undergoing a hardship, a worry, or a calamity. For this reason, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said about this verse, ‘I know a verse if all the people followed it, it would suffice them.’⁽¹⁾ Thus, this verse is sufficient for Allah’s servants so as not to seek refuge with or humiliate themselves before anyone other than Him *the Almighty*. It opens the door of hope for anyone who has a concern, who feels sad or undergoes a hardship in his life.

In this vein, Allah *Glorified is He* addresses the believers, saying: ‘O you who believe! If you remain mindful of Allah, He will give you a criterion...’ (*al-Anfal*: 29). This *furqan* (criterion) is the way out that He *the Almighty* provides for those who are mindful of Him. It also represents the way to salvation, victory, and casting the light of guidance into the hearts of the pious people. Therefore, being mindful of Him *Glorified is He* saves the believer and enables him to overcome his anxiety about his current situation in life. The verse in question clearly tells us that He *Glorified is He* will find a way out for the pious people and will provide for him from an unexpected source. So, the believer should abandon every sinful act and reflect on Allah’s Bounties that He bestows on him.

He *Glorified is He* will make the matters easy for the pious person as long as he remains mindful of Him and pursues the earthly causes. Afterwards, he will find that the alleviation of his calamity has come from an unexpected source because He *Glorified is He* is the Ultimate Refuge for the believer. If you could not find any solution for your problems, all what you should do is to take refuge with Allah *Glorified is He* Who is the Supreme Causer. The ‘way out’ for the believer is to accept Allah’s Predestination and to know that He is the One Who gives, deprives, tests, relieves and protects.

In the same vein, ‘Ubada ibn As-Samit *Allah be pleased with him* narrated that a husband divorced his wife by a thousand pronouncements of divorce. So, his sons went to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and said, ‘O Messenger of Allah, our father has divorced our mother by a

(1) See Ibn Maja, *Sunnan*, Hadith no. 4220; An-Nasa’i, *As-Sunnan Al-Kubra*, Hadith no. 11539; Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, Hadith no. 3819; Ad-Darimi, *Musnad*, Hadith no. 2767; and Ahmad, *Musnad*, Hadith no. 21591.

thousand pronouncements of divorce; is there any way out of this?' He replied, 'Your father did not fear Allah, so He will not find a way out for him. She has been irrevocably divorced three times even though this divorce is not according to the *Sunnah*, and the remaining number of pronouncements of divorce are sins that burden him.'⁽¹⁾ In the same connection, when a man asked Ibn 'Abbas *Allah be pleased with him* about divorcing his wife by one hundred pronouncements of divorce, he told him that he had disobeyed his Lord, that his wife had become irrevocably divorced, and that he did not fear Allah, so He would not find a way out for him.⁽²⁾ Then, Ibn 'Abbas recited the saying of Allah: 'Allah will find a way out for those who are mindful of Him...' (*at-Talaq*: 2).

Thus, Allah *the Almighty* will find a way out for the one who is mindful of Him by virtue of doing what He Commands and refraining from what He prohibited. If the husband divorces his wife, He *the Almighty* makes the waiting period of the woman a means to take her back in marriage. Even if her waiting period elapses before taking her back and then he desired her, he can propose to her and remarry her. But if the husband divorces her three times, he will find no way to get his wife back.

Therefore, He *the Almighty* makes the matters easy for the pious husband who divorces his wife one time by enabling him to take her back with the witness of two just people. Even if her waiting period elapsed without taking her back, he can propose to her like anyone else.

Here, having piety along with believing in Allah and the Last Day makes the husband fear to play with the matter of divorce; he refrains from issuing it one time during every menstrual period of his wife; otherwise, he will be violating the *Sunnah*, disobeying Allah and making the matter hard for himself, to the extent that there will be no way out for him.

Thus, Allah *the Almighty* makes the matters easy for the one who fears Him by obeying His commands and refraining from His Prohibition. He takes him

(1) See *Ad-Daraqutni, Sunnan, Hadith no. 3943; and Al-Haythami, Majma' Az-Zawa'id, Hadith no. 7772.*

(2) See *Al-Bayhaqi, As-Sunnan Al-Kubra, Hadith no. 15373; see also Sa'id ibn Mansur, Sunnan, Hadith no. 1064; and At-Tabarani, Al-Mu'jam Al-Kabir, Hadith no. 10994.*

from disobedience to obedience and from the unlawful and the doubtful matters to what is lawful and certain. Further, He will save him from the doubtful matters, the tribulations of this worldly life and the hardships of the Day of Judgement.

One should beware of deviating from Allah's Way because this runs counter to piety which rids the believer of the ordeals of the worldly life through adhering to the Divine Way of Guidance. By contrast, the one who turns his back to piety, he will live miserably, a fact which is crystal clear in His saying: 'And whoever turns away from My reminder, his shall be a straitened life' (*Ta Ha*: 124). No one should think that piety only means to protect oneself from the hellfire, for it also signifies the protection from the worldly problems and risks that result from violating Allah's Way of Guidance. As a matter of fact, life is full of problems caused by setting and applying man-made laws, but if we apply the Divine Laws, we will ward off such problems and ordeals. That is why He *the Almighty* says: 'And whoever turns away from My Reminder, his shall be a straitened life' (*Ta Ha*: 124). Thus, the life of such a person will be full of problems and anxieties due to his violating the Divine Way of Guidance. By contrast, the one who follows that Way will derive a great benefit.

Living miserably means that the person undergoes many distresses and hardships from which he cannot escape. In fact, the one who turns his back on Allah *Glorified is He* is inflicted with such a miserable life. On the contrary, the life of the one who believes in Him will never be distressful even if he lacks the means of sustenance, as he knows that his Lord can find a way out for him. When the disbeliever, on the other hand, faces straitened circumstances and lacks the means of sustenance, he finds no one to take refuge in and that is why he may commit suicide. The miserable life does not only mean to be needy or poor as it comprises many other forms and aspects. For example, some developed countries, like Sweden, enjoy materially luxurious lives, but they suffer the highest rates of suicide and sexual perversion, even though they have the highest income rates in the world. So, you should not measure the level of civilisation according to the material side only, but you should also take into consideration all other aspects. The one who is successful in the

material sides avails himself thereof in this worldly life only, but upholding religious, moral and ethical values is the way to prosperity in this worldly life and the Hereafter.

Some scholars opined that the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Allah will find a way out for those who are mindful of Him, [2] and will provide for them from an unexpected source [3]' (*at-Talaq*: 2-3) is applicable to everything that inflicts the person and needs alleviation. So, they did not make it specific to the matters of divorce. In this connection, Ibn 'Abbas narrated that 'Awf ibn Malik Al-Ashga'i came to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and said, 'O Messenger of Allah, my son was captured by the enemy and his mother grieves for him. What should I do?' He *peace and blessings be upon him* said to him, 'Fear Allah, be patient and ask her to say, "No power or might except with Allah," many times.' He returned to her and upon asking him, 'What did the Messenger of Allah tell you?' he said to her, 'He ordered you and me to say, "No power or might except with Allah," many times.' She said, 'He has ordered you with something good.' So they kept saying it until the enemy became oblivious about their son and he managed to escape and brought four thousand sheep to his father. Thereupon, the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Allah will find a way out for those who are mindful of Him, [2] and will provide for them from an unexpected source [3]' (*at-Talaq*: 2-3) was revealed. With regard to the previous Hadith, the unexpected source of provision refers to the spoils that the captured son seized from the enemies.⁽¹⁾

In the same connection, it is related that a man came to 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* and asked him to appoint him as a governor. 'Umar asked him, 'Do you recite the Quran?' 'No,' replied the man. So, he told him that those who do not recite the Quran are not qualified for governorship. Afterwards, the man went and exerted his effort to learn the Quran, hoping that 'Umar would appoint him. However, after he learned the Quran, he abandoned 'Umar who later asked him, 'Why have you abandoned us, man?' He replied, 'O Commander of the Faithful, I did not abandon you, but I had

(1) In his *Tafsir*, Ath-Tha'alibi narrates this Hadith on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas. It is also narrated by Az-Zay'li in his book. See Az-Zay'li, *Takhrij Ahadith Al-Kash-shaf*, 4/53

learned the Quran, so Allah made me dispense with ‘Umar.’⁽¹⁾ He asked him, ‘Which verse had made you dispense with me?’ He said, ‘The saying of Allah: “Allah will find a way out for those who are mindful of Him, [2] and will provide for them from an unexpected source [3]”’ (*at-Talaq*: 2-3).

Allah *the Almighty* makes a way out from the straitened circumstances for the pious people, whereas the impious ones will be inflicted with all forms of hardship. Thus, the one who adheres to the Limits that He *the Almighty* sets and is mindful and fearful of His Power will be alleviated from all his suffering and hardship and will be guided to the Straight Path. This applies to the case of divorce or any hardship that the person may confront in this worldly life.

Piety, which leads to the way out of all hardship, has two forms: outward and inward. The outward piety has to do with the actions of the body; it includes preserving the Limits of Allah *Glorified is He* by not transcending them to the best of one’s ability. If he were forced to do so, he should hastily repent and seek Allah’s Forgiveness.

As for the inward piety, it is the source of sincerity in the actions and the good intention. The *ummah* unanimously agreed on the virtue of having piety and that one should only seek the accompaniment of the pious people so that he can have a living heart which is always heedful of Allah *the Almighty*. Piety results in fearing Him *the Almighty* which in turn protects the person from all evils.

He *the Almighty* has guaranteed to find a way out for the pious people from what makes people’s lives miserable. If this does not happen, this indicates that there is a defect in the person’s piety and therefore he should seek Allah’s Forgiveness and repent to Him.

Undergoing straitened circumstances means that what was spacious diminishes and that the life becomes miserable. These straitened circumstances have many levels. One may find that his country closes in around him, so he travels to another one to lead a good life. The whole world may become

(1) See *Ath-Tha’labi, Al-Kashf Wa Al-Bayan Fi Tafsir Al-Quran*, 9/338; see also *Ash-Shirbini, As-Siraj Al-Munir*, 4/227; and *Al-Biq’a’i, Nazhm Ad-Durar Fi Tanasub Al-Ayat Wa As-Suwar*, 8/31.

unbearable to him, but in that case, he may find his soul spacious for him. If one's soul closed in around him, he would reach the maximum level of misery. When a matter closes in around someone, this means that he cannot think about an alternative to get him out of his straitened circumstance. His situation is contrary to the believer who is certain that Allah *the Almighty* will save him from the hardship he is undergoing. For this reason, you will bear any hardship because Allah *Glorified is He* is your Lord. Thus, when the worldly life, your relatives, beloved ones or even your soul close in around you, your Lord will be enough for you and you will be under His Care. That is why He *the Almighty* has described those who will be saved, saying: 'Surely Allah is with those who guard (against evil) and those who do good (to others)' (*an-Nahl*: 128). Therefore, He *the Almighty* puts the one who fears Him under His Protection and Care. In this case, no hardship will afflict him.

Piety, in a general sense, means obeying Him *the Almighty* by following His Commands and avoiding His Proscriptions. Likewise, He *Glorified is He* finds a way out for the one who is undergoing a hardship due to his problems with his wife to the point that he is about to divorce her. He *Glorified is He* preserves his house, wife and children for him. Thus, if the husband fears Him *the Almighty* in dealing with his wife and children, He *Glorified is He* guides him to a way by which he can reform them without destroying the family.

In fact, having piety and fearing Allah *the Almighty* are the foundations of all the marital issues. In addition, they prevent many evil things. So, the one whose marital situation is so difficult that he resorts to divorcing his wife should do that in conformity with Allah's Commandment, that is, he should not divorce his wife during her period of menstruation; rather, the wife should be in a state of purity. This may give a chance for employing reason, deliberating, and reforming this matter.

Even if the husband divorced his wife during the period of purity, he can take her back during her waiting period. Allah *Glorified is He* has made the chance of taking the divorced woman back in marriage more likely by prohibiting the revocably divorced wife from leaving the house. This could make the chance of reconciliation, closeness, and tranquillity between the husband and his wife more possible so that he takes her back in marriage and ends their discord.

If the ignorant person, who does not know about the prohibition of *bid'i* (innovative) divorce, divorces his wife during her menses or by triple divorce, he should repent to Allah *the Almighty* to be alleviated from this problem.

This verse under discussion may also apply to the one who may have resorted to divorcing his wife because of some reasons relating to her. Allah *the Almighty* relieves him and his children from this situation by providing him with another wife that preserves him and his children. He *the Almighty* says that He will also: '...provide for him from an unexpected source' (*at-Talaq*: 3). He provides him with sexual gratification, a wife, money (if he had divorced his first wife for his poverty) and good health (if he had divorced her for his deteriorating health).

Every verse in the Quran has a high position, status, and rank including this verse that talks about the rulings of divorce, waiting period, the housing of the divorced wife and the prohibition of driving her out from her husband's house. It is, nevertheless, a general verse that includes everyone undergoing a hardship, a worry, or a calamity. For this reason, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said about this verse, 'I know a verse if all the people followed it, it would suffice them.'⁽¹⁾ Thus, it is sufficient for Allah's servants to not seek refuge in or humiliate themselves to anyone other than Him. This verse opens the door of hope for anyone who has a concern, feels sad, or undergoes a hardship in his life.

Allah *Glorified is He* addresses the believers, saying: 'O you who believe! If you remain mindful of Allah, He will give you a criterion...' (*al-Anfal*: 29). This 'criterion' is the way He *the Almighty* provides for those who are mindful of Him. It also represents the way to salvation, victory, and casting the light of guidance into the hearts of the pious people. Therefore, He *the Almighty* saves the pious believer and enables him to overcome his anxiety about his current situation in life. If he adheres to His Limits, He *the Almighty* finds a way out for him and provides for him from an unexpected source.

(1) See Ibn Maja, *Sunnan*, Hadith no. 4220; see also *An-Nasa'i*, *As-Sunnan Al-Kubra*, Hadith no. 11539; *Al-Hakim*, *Al-Mustadrak*, Hadith no. 3819; *Ahmad*, *Musnad*, Hadith no. 21591; and *Ibn Hibban*, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 6669.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

وَيَرْزُقُهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ وَمَنْ يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ
 إِنَّ اللَّهَ بَلِغُ أَمْرِهِ قَدْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدْرًا ﴿٢﴾

**And will provide for them from an unexpected source;
 God will be enough for those who put their trust in Him.
 God achieves His purpose; God has set a due measure for
 everything [3] (The Quran, *at-Talaq*: 3)**

Allah *Glorified is He* finds a way out for the pious people if they try to the best of their ability to avoid the sinful acts. The person should ponder over Allah's Bounties and feed himself and his dependants only from rightful property earned through a legal activity.

The believer should always find support in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Allah will find a way out for those who are mindful of Him. [2] And will provide for them from an unexpected source [3]' (*at-Talaq*: 2-3). The last verse means that we should not measure our provision according to our activities because it, that is our measure, may be incorrect. The person should exert his efforts in the means of getting provision, but he should not measure his provision according to these means because one's provision may come from an unexpected source. That is why He *Glorified is He* says here: 'Allah will find a way out for those who are mindful of Him. [2] And will provide for them from an unexpected source [3]' (*at-Talaq*: 2-3). Inasmuch as the believer exerts his effort in pursuing the means of provision, He *Glorified is He* bestows on him what is more than his effort. This also applies to the pious people, for every believer receives a provision beyond his effort, provided that he is pious and exerts his (utmost) effort. At a point of time during his calamity, he will find that the relief has come from an unexpected source, as Allah *the Almighty* is the Ultimate Refuge for the believer.

Assume that you are walking in a street with only one pound in your pocket and then you lost it; will you feel sad? Yes, you will. But if you have ten pounds in your house, your sadness will be less. Further, if your balance in your bank account is one thousand, you will not be sad at all.

The one who believes in one Lord and exerts his effort in seeking the means of provision will be relieved from his calamity and provided with more than the effort which he exerted. In fact, you do not seek your provision inasmuch as it seeks you. The mystic scholars say that one's provision knows his place better than one's knowledge about where his provision is. The evidence of this fact is that you may seek your provision in a place, but Allah provides you in another place. Similarly, you may see the plants growing well in the fields, and thus hope for an abundant harvest, but the crop may be spoiled for one reason or another. Therefore, you would not be provided with that abundant harvest.

Allah *Glorified is He* provides immeasurably for whomever He pleases. So, no one should think that he is provided in return for his work; rather, He *the Almighty* makes work a means for providing people. He *Glorified is He* does not deprive anyone of lawful work and provision for maintaining himself if he abandons the illegal work.

Now, what is provision? It is all that is useful, even though some people mistakenly think it is confined to money. We say to them that provision is all that is useful and beneficial; your knowledge, creation, and status are all forms of provision because they are useful.

Back to the verse in question, Allah *Glorified is He* commands the divorcing husband and the divorcee to try all the means to prevent their separation, but with regard to those who failed to find a solution, He *the Almighty* says: 'And if they separate, Allah will render them both free from want out of His Ampleness, and Allah is Ample-Giving, Wise' (*Al-Imran*: 130). In fact, Allah's Bounty is infinite and He is fully Able to provide the husband with a good wife that satisfies his desires, and to provide the divorcee with another good husband who satisfies all her needs and accept her ugliness, if she were so. He *the Almighty* will cause a man of insight to see the good and the beautiful aspects she has.

You should beware of thinking that He *the Almighty* cannot provide alleviation for the human being. Out of His Wisdom, He *the Almighty* does not force the two spouses to live together, while they hate each other due to the lack of mutual love and mercy between them.

Allah *the Almighty* is Limitless and Omniscient. His Knowledge encompasses His Dominion and no one thing distracts Him from another thing. That is why when Imam 'Ali Allah pleased with him was asked, 'How does Allah hold all people accountable at the same time?' He answered, 'He does so as He provides all of them at the same time'. Thus, Allah's Bounty is Limitless, for He is fully Able to bestow His Favours on all people. By so doing, His Favours, nevertheless, do not decrease nor come to an end.

The provision, as we have said, is all that is useful; thus, strength, knowledge, wisdom, humbleness, the husband, and the wife are all different forms of provision. That is to say that all that serves the movement of life is a provision. For example, you may have little money, but you have good health by which you can work, earn money, and even give some of your money as a charity to the disabled and the sick people. Likewise, if you are wise, you can prevent the foolish person from committing what harms you and your society. Similarly, if you have knowledge, you can make use of it to teach the ignorant people and more importantly to act upon it.

Thus, some people's provision may be knowledge and wisdom by which they can address some problems in their houses and with their wives. Handling the marital problems needs Allah's Help to prevent the severing of the bond between the husband and the wife. This can only be achieved by following Allah's Way and Laws in our dealings with the wives, a matter that is fulfilled by either keeping them honourably or parting with them honourably. No one should think that leaving one's husband or wife is the end of the world; rather, it could be the beginning of a new good life.

Allah *the Almighty* says: '...And will provide for them from an unexpected source...' (*at-Taghabun*: 3). This means that He *the Almighty* provides the pious people from a source they do not know or expect. Some scholars even said that if the person fears Allah, opts for the lawful provision, and has patience towards his family, He *the Almighty* will relieve him from any financial difficulties and provide for him from an unexpected source. In this context, Abu Dharr narrated that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* kept reciting the saying of Allah: 'Allah will find a way out for those who are mindful of Him. [2] And will provide for them from an unexpected source [3]'

(*at-Talaq*: 2-3). When he finished reciting them, he said, ‘O Abu Dharr, if the people adhere to these two verses, it will suffice them.’ Abu Dharr then said, ‘He kept reciting them to me until I slept. He then asked me, “What would you do if you were driven out of Medina?”’ I replied, ‘I will go to the vastness and comfort of Mecca.’ He then asked me, ‘What would you do if you were driven out of Mecca?’ I replied, ‘I will go to the vastness and comfort of Ash-Sham and the sacred land.’ He then asked me, ‘What would you do if you were driven out of Ash-Sham?’ I said, ‘By the One Who sent you with the true Message I will use my sword.’ He said, ‘There is something better than that.’ I asked, ‘What is better than that?’ He replied, ‘To listen and obey even if the leader was an Abyssinian slave.’⁽¹⁾

Thus, whoever puts his trust in Allah, his soul will never close in on him because he is certain that He *Glorified is He* will find a way out for him; He will bestow relief on him from an expected source. Thus, He *Glorified is He* delivers him from all the calamities in both this worldly life and the Hereafter.

Such certainty was affirmed by Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in his advice to Ibn ‘Abbas *Allah be pleased with him*. ‘Ibn Abbas was a fourteen-year-old boy when Prophet Muhammad died. He said, ‘The Messenger of Allah said, “O young man, I shall teach you some words [of advice]: Be mindful of Allah and Allah will protect you. Be mindful of Allah and you will find Him in front of you. If you ask, then ask Allah [alone]; and if you seek help, then seek help from Allah [alone]. And know that if the nation were to gather together to benefit you with anything, they would not benefit you except with what Allah had already prescribed for you. And if they were to gather together to harm you with anything, they would not harm you except with what Allah had already prescribed against you. The pens have been lifted and the pages have dried.”’⁽²⁾

(1) See Ahmad, *Musnad*, Hadith no. 21591; and At-Tabarani, *Al-Mu‘jam Al-Awsat*, Hadith no. 2474.

(2) See Ahmad, *Musnad*, Hadith no. 2669, 2763 and 2804; see also At-Tirmidhi, *Sunnan*, Hadith no. 2516; Abu Ya‘la, *Musnad*, Hadith no. 2556; Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, Hadith no. 6304; At-Tabarani, *Al-Mu‘jam Al-Kabir*, Hadith no. 6304; and Al-Bayhaqi, *Shu‘ab Al-Iman*, Hadith no. 192, 1042, 9528 and 9529.

When Allah preordains something according to His Knowledge, it will inevitably come to pass, be it in your interest or not. That is why you should only rely on Him because He is *the Almighty* God Who always achieves His Purpose.

If you do good deeds for the sake of Allah *the Almighty* alone, He will satisfy all your needs. Thus, you should seek Help from Him *the Almighty* alone, for this excludes you from any form of humiliation in this worldly life. When you seek the help of anyone other than Him, you seek the help of a human being whose power and authority, however great they are, are limited. Hence, you should seek the Help of the Ever-Living Who never dies. If the human being does his best in seeking the means of provision, he must recall that his Lord, the only true God, supports him.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says: 'Allah will be enough for those who put their trust in Him' (*at-Talaq*: 3). In the same connection, He *the Almighty* says: 'Believers should put their trust in Allah' (*al-Baqara*: 160) and: 'Allah loves those who put their trust in Him' (*al-Baqara*: 159). As a matter of fact, the one who does not put his trust in Him *Glorified is He* should check his faith.

Every part of the body has a distinct action to perform. Having certainty and putting trust in Allah *the Almighty* are the actions of the heart. Evidently, walking is the action of the foot; working is the action of the hand, and so on. Thus, you should not assign the action of the heart to the foot or the hand, as the true meaning of putting trust in Him *the Almighty* is to work (that is, perform the religious obligations) with the limbs and to rely on Him *the Almighty* with the heart. In fact, the outcome of many actions and efforts were disappointing because they lacked the element of depending on Him *the Almighty*. For instance, you may find a farmer who grows his crops well. As he does not rely on Him *the Almighty* a storm may blow or a climatic change may take place, thus the crops may be spoiled and he will be disappointed.

You should beware of neglecting the means and the causes, or letting them seduce you. After all, if you neglected the means of provision, you would not truly put your trust in Allah *Glorified is He* which entails that the limbs should perform their due work, while the heart shall rely on Him. So, beware of thinking that depending on Him *the Almighty* implies neglecting the actions of the limbs, for this is a kind of fatalism and laziness. The evidence

of this fact is that such a person likes to put his trust in Him *the Almighty* in the difficult situations, not in the easy ones.

We say to the one who falsely claims that he puts his trust in Allah *the Almighty* yet does not perform the due work, ‘You are not truly putting your trust in Allah. If you are truthful in your claim, do not stretch your hand out to a piece of bread to put it in your mouth. Confirm your claim by letting your trust in Him put that morsel in your mouth and chew it for you. Thus, your claim that you are relying on Him without pursuing the means is lethargy in your faith, not true dependence on Him *the Almighty*.’

Putting one's trust in Allah *Glorified is He* generally means that he has pursued all the possible means and takes refuge with Allah, the Omnipotent God. Relying on Him *the Almighty* faithfully means to render all your affairs to Him because you trust His Precise Measurement. If He provides you with the means of provision, you should not desist seeking them, claiming that you are putting your trust in Him *the Almighty*.

As a matter of fact, He *the Almighty* does not abandon the one who puts his trust in Him. Let us offer an example to further illustrate this point; Hajar the wife of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was left in the area of Allah's Sacred Mosque with her baby, Ismail (Ishmael) in a place bereft of food and water.

When she asked him, ‘To whom are you leaving us? Has Allah commanded you to do so?’ He answered in the affirmative. Then she said, ‘Then He will not abandon us.’ By her dependence on the Creator, she had no need for the creation.

When her son became very thirsty, she looked for any passing caravan to get water from them. In her search for water, she went to the high places and left the valley; she climbed the top of the mountains of As-Safa and Al-Marwa, but she could not find anything. She kept going back and forth between these two mountains seven times. We can imagine how difficult her condition was. Further, she must have been thirsty like her baby.

When she became exhausted, she quit and returned to her baby. If her walking between the two mountains of As-Safa and Al-Marwa had been useful and she had seen a source of water, we would have said that her effort

brought water to her. But she said previously, 'He will not abandon us.' Her statement has actually to do with the Creator of the means and not with the means themselves. Had Allah *the Almighty* given her the means directly in her pursuit for water, she would not have provided a tangible proof for the truthfulness of her statement that He *the Almighty* would not abandon them.

Thus, He *the Almighty* wanted her walking between the two mountains to prove useless. When she returned to her baby, she found the water beside his foot. In this way, she was truthful in her reliance on Him *the Almighty* and in her certainty that He would not abandon her. It is as if He *the Almighty* wanted to tell her that He would not abandon her, for the water would not be brought to her through her walking; rather, by the foot of her child with which he hit the ground and thereupon water gushed forth. The baby's hitting of the ground with his foot is not normally an effective cause, but He *the Almighty* wanted to retain the causation even if the cause is inadequate to bring about the effect.

So, you should put your trust in Allah, the Ever-Lasting Who never ceases to exist; the Almighty Who is Invincible, and the Omnipotent Who cannot be overpowered.

As for His saying: 'Allah will be enough for those who put their trust in Him' (*at-Talaq*: 3), it means that He supports and provides for them sufficiently. Likewise, He *the Almighty* says: 'O Prophet! Allah is sufficient for you and (for) such of the believers as follow you' (*al-Anfal*: 64). This means that He *the Almighty* is enough for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and also for the believers who followed him.

The verse could possibly mean that He *Glorified is He* is enough for him *peace and blessings be upon him* in what is beyond the human capacity, and that He *the Almighty* is sufficient to the believers with regard to such matters which are within the human capacity. He *the Almighty* says: 'Certainly a Messenger has come to you from among yourselves; grievous to him is your falling into distress, excessively solicitous respecting you; to the believers (he is) compassionate, [128] But if they turn back, say: Allah is sufficient for me, there is no god but He; on Him do I rely, and He is the Lord of Mighty Power [129]' (*at-Tawba*: 128-129).

If you carefully examine the matter, you will find that no one is enough for you except Allah *the Almighty* Who can bestow His Protection and support on you. Thus, it is better for you to rely on Him *the Almighty* and to obey Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who completely conveyed the Message of Allah. As long as He *Glorified is He* is enough for you and there is no god but Him, you should remain under His Care. Thus, you will need no one else because He gives you all what you want and protects you from what is evil which you mistakenly may think is good. Further, if you put your trust in the Ever-Living Who never dies, He will protect you from His servants' sins and evils. This is due to the fact that He Alone knows the sins of His servants and about which they are thinking.

In this vein, 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud⁽¹⁾ *Allah be pleased with him* says that the greatest verse concerning entrusting one's affairs to Allah *the Almighty* is His saying: 'Allah will be enough for those who put their trust in Him' (*at-Talaq*: 3). He *the Almighty* will relieve the concern of the one who entrusts his affairs to Him. That is why Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Whoever likes to be the strongest among people should put his trust in Allah.'⁽²⁾ Thus, Allah's saying: 'Allah will be enough for those who put their trust in Him' (*at-Talaq*: 3) entails that the person should entrust Allah *the Almighty* with all his affairs and accept His Predestination. Wahb ibn Munabih narrated that He *the Almighty* says: 'If My servant put his trust in Me, I will find a way out for him even if the heavens and the earth schemed against him.'⁽³⁾

It should be noted here that Allah's saying: 'Allah will be enough for those who put their trust in Him' (*at-Talaq*: 3) does not only apply to the marital issues, but also to all the affairs of the people. Therefore, whoever relies on Allah and entrusts his affairs to Him, He *the Almighty* will be enough for him, and He will manage his affairs for him. Relying on Him *the Almighty* in the religious and mundane matters implies depending on Him to bring about the benefits and ward off the harm.

(1) See *At-Tabarani, Al-Mu'jam Al-Kabir*, Hadith no. 8577; see also *Al-Bukhari, Al-Adab Al-Mufrad*, Hadith no. 489; 'Abd Ar-Razzaq, *Musannf*, Hadith no. 6002; and *Al-Bayhaqi, Shu'ab Al-Iman*, Hadith no. 2173

(2) See *Al-Hakim, Al-Mustadrak*, Hadith no. 7707; and 'Abd ibn Humayd, *Musnad*, Hadith no. 675

(3) See *Ahmad, Az-Zuhd*, Hadith no. 291; see also *Al-Alusi, Ruh Al-Ma'ani*, 14/331.

As for His saying: 'Allah achieves His Purpose...' (*at-Talaq*: 3), it means that His Decree and Predestination will inevitably take place. His Purpose will be achieved regarding those who put their trust in Him and also those who do not, for He *Glorified is He* executes His Decrees regarding His creation according to His Unchallengeable Will. 'Abdullah ibn Rafa' *Allah be pleased with him* said that when Allah's saying: 'Allah will be enough for those who put their trust in Him...' (*at-Talaq*: 3) was revealed, the Companions of Prophet Muhammad said that if they put their trust in Allah, they would not care about preserving their possessions. Thereupon, His saying: 'Allah achieves His Purpose...' (*at-Talaq*: 3) was revealed.

Allah's Decree will inevitably come to pass, whether the person relies on Him *the Almighty* or not. If you put your trust in Him, He grants you comfort and blessings. Otherwise, He will leave you to your incapability and indignation. In either case, His Purpose will certainly be achieved.

The believers should not consider what Allah *the Almighty* has promised to be unlikely to happen due to the absence of the means of achieving it, for if He has made a Promise about something He wanted, He provides the means of achieving it. After all, He is the Master and the Controller of this universe; everything is subjected to His Power and complies with His Will. Thus, what He *the Almighty* wants will inevitably happen; nothing can stop or change it.

Then, He *the Almighty* concludes the verse in question with His saying: 'Allah has set a due measure for everything' (*at-Talaq*: 3). This means that He has set a specified time and end for everything. In this context, He *the Almighty* has set a specific time and due measure for divorce, the waiting period and other relevant issues. That is why He *the Almighty* says: 'Allah will find a way out for those who are mindful of Him, [2] and will provide for them from an unexpected source; Allah will be enough for those who put their trust in Him. Allah achieves His Purpose; Allah has set a due measure for everything [3]' (*at-Talaq*: 2-3). Thus, the true believer should not be anxious about anything in this worldly life as long as he is under Allah's care, for He has the way out of your situation. Further, He is the Provider in Whom you should put your trust and be certain that His Decree and Predestination will take place. He *the Almighty* achieves His Purpose and has set a due measure for everything. When He decrees something, no one can stop it.

He *the Almighty* subsequently says:

وَالَّتِي يَبْسَنَ مِنَ الْمَحِيضِ مِنْ نِسَائِكُمْ إِنْ أَرْبَبْتُمْ فَعِدَّتُهُنَّ ثَلَاثَةُ أَشْهُرٍ وَالَّتِي لَمْ يَحِضْ
وَأُولَتْ الْأَحْمَالِ أَجَلُهُنَّ أَنْ يَضَعْنَ حَمْلَهُنَّ وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِ يُسْرًا ﴿٤﴾

If you are in doubt, the period of waiting will be three months for those women who have ceased menstruating and for those who have not [yet] menstruated; the waiting period of those who are pregnant will be until they deliver their burden: God makes things easy for those who are mindful of Him [4] (The Quran, *at-Talaq*: 4)

Menstruation is a necessary chemical process for women and for having children. In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* does not talk about menstruation, but rather about the waiting period of the woman who was divorced during the time of her purity. He *the Almighty* has specified the waiting period of the revocably divorced woman, stating that it is three times of purity, that is, she menstruates and becomes pure three times.

However, what about the divorced woman who reached menopause? How can she fulfil Allah's Command to calculate her waiting period? If the woman ceases menstruating, her waiting period is not calculated by menstrual periods or periods of purity; rather, it has a fixed period, namely; three months. Normally, women reach menopause at the age of fifty-five or sixty. Their waiting period in such a case is three months instead of three menstrual periods.

In the chapter of *al-Baqara*, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Divorced women must wait for three monthly periods' (*al-Baqara*: 228). Thus, menstruation is the basis for determining the time of the waiting period, but after the cessation of menstruation, months are used to determine it. Hence, the waiting period of a woman who has reached menopause is three months. The age of ceasing menstruation, like the age of its beginning, differs according to the woman and the country she lives in.

The Arabic word *mahid* (menstruation) is an infinitive which refers to the menstrual blood or to the menstrual period during which Allah *the Almighty* has commanded the husband to keep away from women, saying: '...so keep away from women during it...' (*al-Baqara*: 222).

The 'menstruating woman' refers to the one who menstruates even if she is not during her monthly period. This meaning is clear in the Hadith in which Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Allah does not accept the prayer of a woman who has reached puberty unless she wears a veil.'⁽¹⁾ Here, he is not referring to days of the menstrual period because the menstruating woman is not commanded to pray. The Hadith, therefore, refers to the woman who menstruates. When she ceases menstruating, the woman is no longer called a menstruating woman. She becomes from the elderly women who have ceased menstruating, but she must keep praying while wearing a veil, even if she reached menopause.

Then, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'If you are in doubt...' (*at-Talaq*: 4). Therefore, if you have a doubt and you are not certain about the state of the woman, whether she is a menstruating one or still young, or whether she ceased her monthly period or not, then the waiting period of the women who ceased menstruating or those who have not started menstruating yet is three months.

If a young woman stopped menstruating, we have to check whether or not she is pregnant. If her pregnancy is confirmed, her waiting period lasts until she delivers her baby. If her pregnancy is not confirmed, she should wait for one year's period of time maximally. Thus, His saying: 'If you are doubtful...' (*at-Talaq*: 4) refers to the state of being doubtful and ignorant about the divorcee's waiting period.

Among the women about whom we may be doubtful are those who have not menstruated yet. They are the young women who were divorced after the consummation of marriage. Their waiting period is three months because they have not menstruated yet and their husband had already had sexual intercourse with them.

Thus, the young women who have not menstruated yet are treated like those who ceased menstruating because they are linked in the verse in question with the conjunction 'and', so they share the same ruling, namely; that their

(1) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of 'Aisha Allah be pleased with her. See Abu Dawud, Sunnan, Hadith no. 641; see also Ibn Maja, Sunnan, Hadith no. 655; Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 25208, 25875 and 26269; Ibn Hibban, Sahih, Hadith no. 1711; and Al-Bayhaqi, As-Sunnan Al-Kubra, Hadith no. 3379*

waiting period is three months. The waiting period of women in both these circumstances is not calculated according to the menstrual periods, as they either have not menstruated yet, or have reached menopause.

Marriage to the young woman who has not attained puberty is permissible according to this verse. Furthermore, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* got married to ‘Aisha Allah *be pleased with her* when she was six years old.⁽¹⁾ As Islam is embraced by different societies, jurists allowed the marriage to young women stipulating that no harm inflicts her and that she can endure the consummation of marriage.

Allah says: ‘...the waiting period of those who are pregnant will be until they deliver their burden’ (*at-Talaq*: 4). Thus, the waiting period of the pregnant woman ends when she delivers her baby. The woman should not conceal her pregnancy as He *the Almighty* says: ‘Divorced women must wait for three monthly periods before remarrying, and, if they really believe in Allah and the Last Day, it is not lawful for them to conceal what Allah has created in their wombs’ (*al-Baqara*: 228). This verse is proof that the woman is entitled to bear witness regarding her private matters that no one knows except her. She has to confirm whether she is pregnant or not, and she should not conceal that because she may be pregnant and conceal this matter to avoid waiting for the long period of pregnancy that hinders her marriage to someone else. If this happened, the baby would be attributed to someone other than his real father. The period of pregnancy normally remains for nine months. Concealing pregnancy may lead to many problems including that the child will not inherit from his real father and that the women who are presumptively unmarriageable to him are not really unlawful. For example, the daughter of the one who is not his real father is not really his sister and thus he is allowed to marry her. This also applies to the unreal paternal and maternal aunts. Thus, the scale will be upside down.

As for the unreal father, the baby gains illegal rights by inheriting from someone who is not his/her biological father. Further, the marriageable women

(1) In this regard, Al-Bayhaqi narrated a Hadith that reads: ‘After the death of Khadija, the Messenger of Allah got married to ‘Aisha in Mecca when she was six years old. He consummated the marriage in Medina when she was nine years old.’ See Al-Bayhaqi, *As-Sunnan Al-Kubra*, Hadith no. 13805; see also *Dala’il An-Nubuwwa*, 7/384

who are the relatives of that unreal father would be unmarriageable to him. He would unrightfully enter and see from them what is forbidden. Besides, other illegal matters will happen.

Accordingly, the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'It is not lawful for them to conceal what Allah has created in their wombs' (*al-Baqara*: 228) indicates that life should be based on purity, honour, decency and safeguarding the rights of each other.

So, the waiting period of the pregnant women ends with the delivery of the baby. In this regard, it is narrated that during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* a woman called Subay'a Bint Al-Harith Al-Aslamiyya⁽¹⁾ delivered her baby fifteen days after the death of her husband and he *peace and blessings be upon him* allowed her to marry again immediately. Furthermore, 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab said, 'If a widow gives birth to a child, she can marry again even if the late husband has not been buried yet.'

Thus, the waiting period of a pregnant woman, whether a divorcee or a widow, ends with the delivery of the baby, even in the case of a miscarried foetus. Menstruation has nothing to do with this case.

However, it is not permissible for the divorcee to lie about her true state in terms of her menstruation or pregnancy by claiming, when she is pregnant, that her waiting period is over in order to marry another one soon with the intention of attributing her baby to him. Likewise, it is unlawful for her to claim that she is still in her waiting period in order to inherit from her deceased husband, given the fact that the divorcee is not entitled to inherit from him after the end of her waiting period.

Here arises a question, which is, 'How can the waiting period of a pregnant widow be calculated? Should she wait for four months and ten days, which is

(1) Subay'a Bint Al-Harith Al-Aslamiyya was the wife of Sa'd ibn Khawla. He died in the Farewell Pilgrimage while she was pregnant. She gave birth to her baby twenty days after his death. She was one of the female Companions of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and narrated Hadiths from him. Her Hadiths were narrated by 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar, Zhufar ibn Aws and Masruq. She was one of the Companions regarding whom the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'O you who believe! When believing women come to you flying, then examine them...' (*al-Mumtahana*: 10) was revealed.

the waiting period specified for a widow, or should she wait until the delivery of her child?’

The answer is that Allah *Glorified is He* specified the waiting period of a widow, saying: ‘And (as for) those of you who die and leave wives behind, they should keep themselves in waiting for four months and ten days; then when they have fully attained their term, there is no blame on you for what they do for themselves in a lawful manner; and Allah is Aware of what you do’ (*al-Baqara*: 234). However, this ruling only applies to a widow who is not pregnant. In the case of pregnancy, her waiting period shall be the longer of the two periods. If the period of four months and ten days is the longest, then it will be her prescribed waiting period. Conversely, if the period prior to her delivery is longer than four months and ten days, then her waiting period lasts until the delivery of her baby. So, if the wife of a deceased husband gives birth to a baby before his burial, for example, her waiting period is four months and ten days. However, some jurists opine that her waiting period in this case ends upon the delivery of her baby. If she is not a widow, that is, a divorcee, then her waiting period ends when she gives birth to her baby and afterwards she is legally permitted to marry again immediately.

Some people try to rationalise the ruling of the widow’s waiting period, saying that if the foetus is a male, her pregnancy can be confirmed after three months; and if it is a female, her pregnancy can be confirmed after four months. That is to say that the waiting period in the case of the widow is intended to ascertain whether or not she is pregnant. I say to them, ‘May Allah reward you for your interpretation, but the widow’s waiting period is not prescribed to ascertain whether or not she is pregnant, for if this were the case, her waiting period would be over after three menstrual periods, if she is a menstruating woman, or after three months if her menstruation ceased or she has not menstruated yet. However, Allah *the Almighty* specified the waiting period of the widow as four months and ten days as a token of gratitude and honour for her late husband and their marital life.’

When a pregnant widow waits for the longer of the two terms, then she applies the two verses regarding the waiting period of the widow and the pregnant woman. However, if she only waits until she delivers her baby, when its date

comes in less than four months and ten days, then she does not apply one of the two verses. In fact, it is agreed upon by the scholars of the principles of jurisprudence that applying the two verses is more preponderant.

Accordingly, when a husband dies, while his wife is still pregnant in her first month, then her waiting period is not four months and ten days; rather, she must wait until she gives birth to her baby. It is wrong to say that she waits for the shorter of the two periods as this entails that, if she is in her first month of pregnancy, her waiting period ends after four months and ten days, that is, she can marry, while she is still in the sixth month of her pregnancy. This is not lawful according to the scholars' consensus. In fact, it is one of the major sins. In this vein, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'A pregnant woman shall not get married unless she gives birth to her baby.'⁽¹⁾ He also said, 'It is not lawful for a man who believes in Allah and the Last Day to marry a pregnant woman (until she delivers her baby).'

Afterwards Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Allah makes things easy for those who are mindful of Him' (*at-Talaq*: 4). This is the third time in this chapter where He *Glorified is He* reminds the people about piety or being mindful of Him in the space of only four verses. He *the Almighty* says: 'Prophet, when any of you intend to divorce women, do so at a time when their prescribed waiting period can properly start and calculate the period carefully: be mindful of Allah, your Lord...' (*at-Talaq*: 1); 'Allah will find a way out for those who are mindful of Him...' (*at-Talaq*: 2); and: 'Allah makes things easy for those who are mindful of Him' (*at-Talaq*: 4). So, piety is mentioned in the first, the second and the fourth verse. This indicates the greatness of being mindful of Allah *the Almighty* adhering to His limits and fearing His punishment.

In the context of divorce, He *the Almighty* underlines the importance of piety which entails avoiding sins, obeying His commands and abiding by His Rulings concerning the issues of divorce. If the husband is pious, He *the Almighty* guides him to obedience, facilitates the matter for him, and finds a way out for

(1) Abu Sa'id Al Khudri Allah be pleased with him narrated that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said the following statement regarding the captives taken at Awtas, 'There must be no intercourse with a pregnant woman till she gives birth to her child or with the one who is not pregnant till she has had one menstrual period.'

him. Moreover, He *the Almighty* makes it easier for him to take his revocable divorcee back as long as she is still in her waiting period, and even if her waiting period is over, he can propose to her and remarry her.

Allah *Glorified is He* commands the husbands and wives to apply these rulings and to endure the hardships they may entail for His sake because this helps the pious people and relieves them from such hardships.

As for Allah's saying: '...makes things easy...' (*at-Talaq*: 4), it means that He *the Almighty* makes the matters that seem difficult for someone very easy by delivering him out of his current difficult situation. This Promise is intended to encourage the husbands to obey His Commands with regard to spending on revocable divorcees during their waiting periods, taking them back, and leaving the marital house for her if it is not spacious enough for both of them. It is also intended to encourage revocable divorcees to wait for a specified waiting period and to stay in their marital houses. Thus, whoever fears Allah *the Almighty* is mindful of Him with regard to his actions and deeds and abstains from all that He prohibits, He makes all his affairs much easier and grants him success.

He *the Almighty* intends for us ease and does not intend for us hardship, a fact which is crystal clear in His saying: 'Allah desires ease for you, and He does not desire for you difficulty...' (*al-Baqara*: 185). What puts us in hardship and difficulty is our negligence in following His Way of Guidance and our failure to be mindful of Him.

In fact, a hardship that you may think unbearable is indeed accompanied with ease. In this regard, He *the Almighty* says: 'He has not laid upon you any hardship in religion' (*al-Hajj*: 78). Instead, He *Glorified is He* wants to make all your affairs easy for you and, therefore, He legislates concessions for you in order to relieve you of harm and hardship.

It is noteworthy that Allah *Glorified is He* asserts that He decrees this for the interest and benefit of people, saying: 'Allah makes things easy for those who are mindful of Him' (*at-Talaq*: 4). He *the Almighty* has no interest nor does He benefit from all of this. Instead, it is all about the interest and safety of people. Among the benefits the pious person acquires are that his affairs

are made easy; he is guided to goodness and is also led to the means of welfare in this worldly life and in the Hereafter alike. Thus, Allah *the Almighty* makes things easier for the pious person, protects him from hardships and difficulties, makes for him a way out of distress and provides him with an unexpected provision. That is why He *the Almighty* says: 'O you who believe! If you are careful of (your duty to) Allah, He will grant you a distinction and do away with your evils and forgive you...' (*al-Anfal*: 29); He also says: 'O you who believe! Be careful of (your duty to) Allah and believe in His Apostle: He will give you two portions of His mercy, and make for you a light with which you will walk, and forgive you...' (*al-Hadid*: 28). Thus, by virtue of piety, one's mind develops an enlightened insight which lightens one's dark way and with which one can distinguish between the truth and falsehood and between what is beneficial and what is harmful. In the first verse, Allah *the Almighty* promises the pious people that He will grant them Furqan⁽¹⁾ (that is, a criterion that distinguishes between right and wrong).

Further, piety helps one feel secure when people are fearful, be at ease when they are saddened and become optimistic when they feel despair, a fact which is crystal clear in His saying: 'Now surely the friends of Allah – they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve. [62] Those who believe and guarded (against evil): [63] They shall have good news in this world's life and in the Hereafter; there is no changing the words of Allah; that is the mighty achievement [64]' (*Yunus*: 62-64). It also helps in strengthening one's devotion to Allah *the Almighty* and helps the person to guarantee success and welfare in the worldly life and in the Hereafter.

In addition, piety makes one feel assured that one's offspring, especially the vulnerable among them, will be secured and protected after one's death, a point which is clearly manifested in His saying: 'And let those fear who, should they leave behind them weakly offspring, would fear on their

(1) In his *Tafsir*, Ibn Al-Jawzi relates that Ibn 'Abbas stated that Furqan means a way out and accordingly the verse means that Allah makes for you a way out from deviation. Qatada and As-Suddi said that it means salvation. Al-Farra' said that it means victory. Ibn Zayd and Ibn Ishaq said that it means guidance in their heart with which they distinguish between the truth and untruth. See Ibn Al-Jawzi, *Zad Al-Masir*.

account, so let them be careful of (their duty to) Allah, and let them speak right words' (*an-Nisa'*: 9).

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

ذَٰلِكَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ أَنْزَلَهُ إِلَيْكُمْ وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يُكَفِّرْ عَنْهُ سَيِّئَاتِهِ وَيُعْظِمْ لَهُ أَجْرًا ﴿٥﴾

**This is God's command, which He has sent down to you.
God will wipe out the sinful deeds and increase the rewards
of anyone who is mindful of Him [5] (The Quran, *at-Talaq*: 5)**

Here, the demonstrative pronoun 'this' refers to all the legal rulings which have been explained in the preceding verses, such as the rulings of divorce, taking one's revocable divorcee back in marriage, the waiting period, the prohibition of driving the revocable divorcees out of their marital houses as well as the rulings of the waiting periods of the women who go through menopause and those who have not yet menstruated.

It is noteworthy here that Allah *Glorified is He* uses the demonstrative pronoun 'this' to underline the great interest shown by the Legislator regarding these rulings. In addition, this demonstrative pronoun is stated in the singular form although the address here is directed to all the Muslims, as it is only intended to underline the great significance and importance of this issue, and not to specify the addressees. However, this demonstrative pronoun is mentioned in its plural form in many other Quranic verses as in His saying: '...so kill yourselves, that is best for you with your Creator: so He turned to you (mercifully), for surely He is the Oft-returning (to mercy), the Merciful' (*al-Baqara*: 54); 'O you who believe! Do not enter houses other than your own houses until you have asked permission and saluted their inmates; this is better for you, that you may be mindful' (*an-Nur*: 27); and: 'O you who believe! When the call is made for prayer on Friday, then hasten to the remembrance of Allah and leave off trading; that is better for you, if you know' (*al-Jumu'a*: 9).

Allah's saying: 'This is Allah's Command...' (*at-Talaq*: 5) is mentioned in many places in the Quran to signify different meanings, including Allah's Decree, a meaning which is clear in the following verse: 'O you who have been given the Book! Believe that which We have revealed, verifying what

you have, before We alter faces then turn them on their backs, or curse them as We cursed the violators of the Sabbath, and the command of Allah shall be executed' (*an-Nisa'*: 47). This verse relates the story of the children of Israel.

As a matter of fact, nothing in this universe can violate Allah's Decrees as He *Glorified is He* is the Omnipotent and the Only One entitled to all the Attributes of Perfection. Therefore, when He *the Almighty* promises us something, then His Promise will be fulfilled. This certainly differs from the human beings' promises which sometimes may be broken.

You, as a human being, may promise another person something good, but when the time is due to fulfil your promise, you may become unable to fulfil it. Likewise, you may threaten somebody that you will harm him in a certain way, but you may become ill and unable to carry out your threat. This is because your ability to do so is prone to change, and therefore it may exist or not exist.

On the contrary, when Allah *the Almighty* makes a promise or issues a threat, no one can change that. So, His Promise to reward someone will inevitably be fulfilled. As for His threatening, He may, out of His Generosity and Bounty, lift it except in the case of associating others with Him in worship.

'Allah's Command' may also refer to what will happen before and on the Day of Judgement as indicated in His saying: 'Allah's Commandment has come, therefore do not desire to hasten it...' (*an-Nahl*: 1). Besides, it refers to Allah's Decree that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the believers will undoubtedly be victorious and that the disbelievers will certainly be defeated if they insist on their disbelief.

When the Quranic verse: 'Allah's Commandment has come...' (*an-Nahl*: 1) was revealed, all the people became frightened as they knew that Allah's Command shall come true. In the same verse, He *the Almighty* says: '...therefore do not desire to hasten it...' (*an-Nahl*: 1). Here, He *the Almighty* orders them not to ask Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to bring it on sooner as its time is only known to Him *the Almighty*. The verb 'to come' is used in the past tense to express the inevitability and the nearness of its occurrence in the future. This indicates that time is absolute for Allah *the Almighty*; what is considered future for us is something real for Him *Glorified is He* as no one can

prevent something decreed by Him regarding the future. Accordingly, the disbelievers will be tormented and no one will be able to alleviate their pains.

Furthermore, Allah's Commands may also refer to something good decreed for a human being as was the case with the wife of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*. In this connection, He *the Almighty* says: 'And his wife was standing (by), so she laughed, then We gave her the good news of Ishaq (Isaac) and after Ishaq (Isaac) of (a son's son) Ya'qub (Jacob). [71] She said: O wonder! Shall I bear a son when I am an extremely old woman and this my husband an extremely old man? Most surely this is a wonderful thing. [72] They said: Do you wonder at Allah's Command? The Mercy of Allah and His blessings are on you, O people of the house, surely He is Praised, Glorious. [73]' (*Hud*: 71-73) Here, Allah's Command signifies good news for Prophet Ibrahim's (Abraham) wife, who was an old, infertile woman married to an aged man. He *the Almighty* reminds her that He is the Creator of causes and He Alone can give without causes.

Having elaborated on the different meanings of the expression 'Allah's Command' throughout the Quran, what is its meaning in His saying: 'This is Allah's Command, which He has sent down to you' (*at-Talaq*: 5)? It refers here to the rulings and legislations ordained by Allah *Glorified is He* to judge among people. It is He *the Almighty* alone Who judges between them, and, therefore, the Command here is attributed to Him.

He *the Almighty* legislated these rulings for the believers to be followed and applied without circumvention. Thus, they must not be like the children of Israel who used to circumvent His Commands in order to evade their application to their lives. In this vein, He *the Almighty* says: 'And ask them about the town which stood by the sea; when they exceeded the limits of the *Sabbath*, when their fish came to them on the day of their *Sabbath*, appearing on the surface of the water, and on the day on which they did not keep the *Sabbath* they did not come to them; thus did We try them because they transgressed' (*al-A'raf*: 163). This is the story of the inhabitants of a city⁽¹⁾ nearby the sea. They were Jews for

(1) In his *Tafsir*, Ibn Al-Jawzi mentions five different opinions regarding the specification of this city as follows: =

whom working on the *Sabbath* was forbidden. Allah *the Almighty* put them into a difficult test by prohibiting them from what was lawful for others. This was due to their extravagance and rebellion against His Rulings. Forbidding them from fishing the huge fish they used to see on the *Sabbath* was a test and a punishment for them, for on the other days of the week, they could not see even one fish.

They said, 'As Allah prohibited us from fishing on the *Sabbath*, then we should contrive to detain fish for the other days by putting fishnets which fish get into and cannot get out. Therefore, we can take it out of the sea on the next day.'

They used also to build basins with an inlet and without an outlet. Thus, Allah *the Almighty* put them to this difficult test because they transgressed His Command, disobeyed Him and made lawful what was prohibited for them. Consequently, He *the Almighty* prohibited them from what was lawful for others. However, they circumvented His commands by making fishnets to hold fish.

In fact, nothing can be hidden from Allah *the Almighty*; He knows the inner secrets of the people as well as their intentions. The similitude of the above-mentioned story is the circumvention of Allah's and Prophet Muhammad's command that, during congregational prayer, men shall stand in the front rows, followed by children and then women. Pious men are keen on standing in the front rows in order to avoid seeing women. By contrast, some other men may manage to stand in the rear rows in order to keep looking at women, as far as possible. All such misdeeds are not hidden from Him as He is fully Aware of all the secrets and what is even more hidden than the secrets.

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- = - *Ibn Mas'ud, Ibn 'Abbas, Sa'id ibn Jubayr say that it is Ayla, currently known as Eilat;*
 - *Ibn 'Abbas says also that it is Midyan;*
 - *Qatada says that it is the Coast of Midyan;*
 - *Az-Zuhri says that it is Tiberias; and*
 - *Abu Zayd says that it is a village called Miqna located between Midyan and Ainouna. See Ibn Al-Jawzi, Zad Al-Masir.*

As many people may try to circumvent the rulings of marriage, divorce, the waiting period and taking a revocable divorcee back in marriage, Allah *Glorified is He* asserts in this verse that all these rulings are from Him, saying: ‘This is Allah’s Command...’ (*at-Talaq*: 5). Accordingly, it is not allowable for anyone to circumvent or refrain from applying them. In fact, obeying His Commands with regard to the relationships between men and women helps people avoid many difficult problems which bring about hatred.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘O Allah, I declare inviolable the rights of two weak ones: the orphans and women.’⁽¹⁾ In this Hadith, he states that no one is allowed to infringe the rights of these two vulnerable kinds of people. As a matter of fact, the woman becomes more vulnerable when she is a widow or divorcee. In both cases, she loses her husband’s support. Therefore, the people should fear Allah *the Almighty* and refrain from harming her by infringing her rights. How can we stand before Him *the Almighty*, while we have harmed the women! I sternly warn against this wrongdoing. He *the Almighty* does not command the people to wrong others. Instead, He prescribes justice and good conduct. His Rulings and Legislations with regard to the marital relationship are not confined to marriage, but rather, they address the issues of divorce, the waiting period and how it is calculated. These are His commands that should not be transgressed.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘The most despicable amongst persons in the eye of Allah is one who tries to fall into dispute with others (for nothing but only to display his knowledge and power of argumentation).’⁽²⁾ This is because the one who confronts you with his enmity incites you to be cautious, whilst the one who shows you something other than what he really conceals is a hypocrite who wants to cheat you. His enmity for you is fierce because the outspoken opponent hides nothing from

(1) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him. Al-Hakim said, ‘It is authentic according to the conditions of Muslim.’ See Ibn Maja, Sunnan, Hadith no. 3678; see also Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 9664; An-Nasa’i, As-Sunnan Al-Kubra, Hadith no. 9104 and 9105; Al-Hakim, Al-Mustadrak, Hadith no. 2011; and Al-Bazzar, Musnad, Hadith no. 8483 and 8488*

(2) *See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 2457 and 7188; Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 6951; At-Tirmidhi, Sunnan, Hadith no. 2976; and An-Nasa’i, Sunnan, Hadith no. 5423*

you, but when you have an enemy who shows you love while concealing enmity, this will be hard for you because he wants to cheat and trick you.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...Allah’s Command which He has sent down to you...’ (*at-Talaq*: 5). Although the command is revealed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* He *the Almighty* asserts that He sent it down to the Muslims. This proves that He *the Almighty* addresses these legislations to all the Muslims as if they are revealed to each member of the *ummah*.

The Command here comes from Allah, the Creator and the Lord. The Arabic word *Rabb* (Lord) signifies the one who takes care of someone until he reaches a certain level of perfection so that he becomes able to fulfil his role in this worldly life. This can be clarified by the example of a father who educates and takes care of his son in order to qualify him for achieving a certain goal in his life. As Allah *Glorified is He* is my Lord, then He only orders me to do what serves me personally and the *ummah* in general. As a matter of fact, our obedience to Him *the Almighty* does not benefit Him, nor does our disobedience harm Him, as He is the Most Perfect and the Creator of the whole universe.

In fact, our natural disposition requires that we should fully surrender to and obey Allah’s Commands. Investigating this chapter from the beginning, we find that Allah *the Almighty* mentions the term ‘His Command’ in the first, the third, the fourth and the fifth verse. This signifies that His Legislations concerning the waiting period and taking the revocable divorcee back are intended to facilitate the matter for the people, and to ward off any difficulty. This is why He *Glorified is He* says: ‘Allah makes things easy for those who are mindful of Him’ (*at-Talaq*: 4). This chapter also mentions Allah’s Command afterwards in His saying: ‘Many a town that insolently opposed the command of its Lord and His messengers We have brought sternly to account: We punished them severely’ (*at-Talaq*: 8).

As He *Glorified is He* gives a warning to those who rebel against His Legislation and Command, it is suitable here that He *Glorified is He* for the fourth time, reminds the people to be pious and to fear Him, saying: ‘Allah will wipe out the sinful deeds and increase the rewards of anyone who is mindful of Him’ (*at-Talaq*: 5). For the third time, He *the Almighty* reminds us about the reward

of having piety; firstly, He says: ‘Allah will find a way out for those who are mindful of Him, [2] and will provide for them from an unexpected source...[3]’ (*at-Talaq*: 2-3); secondly, He says: ‘Allah makes things easy for those who are mindful of Him’ (*at-Talaq*: 4). He *the Almighty* promises the pious one that He will provide for him from where he does not expect and will make easy for him his affairs. This goodness is the worldly reward for the pious people.

As for Allah’s Reward for them in the Hereafter, He *Glorified is He* says: ‘Allah will wipe out the sinful deeds and increase the rewards of anyone who is mindful of Him’ (*at-Talaq*: 5). Thus, He *the Almighty* promises the pious people a great reward and also that he will remove their sins.

However, removing or wiping out the sinful deeds is conditional on one’s avoidance of the major sins like adultery and murder, a fact which is crystal clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘If you shun the great sins which you are forbidden, We will do away with your small sins and cause you to enter an honourable place of entering’ (*an-Nisa*: 31).

Avoidance of the major sins does not mean that one abstains from doing them, but rather that he should not draw nearer to the means which may lead him to commit these grave sins. Removing or wiping out the sinful deeds here means that even if one commits a punishable sin, Allah *the Almighty* protects him and shields him against His Punishment as long as he avoids the major sins. Accordingly, there are three types of sins: major sins, minor sins and slight sins.⁽¹⁾

Allah *the Almighty* states here that He wipes out the minor sins, not the major ones, because wiping out our sins is conditional on our avoidance of major sins. He *Glorified is He* will not only wipe out the punishment, but He will also

(1) Linguistically, *Al-lamam* (slight sins) means approaching something. There are six opinions concerning its meaning:

- The sins and misdeeds committed by the early Muslims in the pre-Islamic period are forgiven after Islam;
- That one commits a sin and repents and never returns to it again;
- Refers to the minor sins such as gazing at women and having kisses;
- When one becomes on the verge of committing a sin and abstains from it;
- The passing thoughts;
- Unintentional gazing at women.

See *Ibn Al-Jawzi*, *Zad Al-Masir*.

give them huge rewards, as He *the Almighty* says: ‘...and cause you to enter an honourable place of entering’ (*an-Nisa’*: 31); and He also says: ‘For those who do good is good (reward) and more (than this)...’ (*Yunus*: 26).

It would have been sufficient if He *the Almighty* only removes their sins and protects them from His punishment. However, when the Muslim abstains from the major sins, He *the Almighty* admits him to a noble entrance which suits His Power and Benevolence. So, how can one imagine Allah’s Promise in this regard?

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* states that Allah *Glorified is He* said, ‘I have prepared for My pious slaves things which have never been seen by an eye, or heard by an ear, or imagined by a human being.’ He *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘If you wish, you can recite this verse from the Holy Quran: “No soul knows what is kept hidden for them, of joy as a reward for what they used to do” (*as-Sajda*: 17).’⁽¹⁾

In this vein, we should take into account that Allah *Glorified is He* prescribed other rulings for wiping out people’s sins in order to purify them of their sins and to make matters easy for them on the Day of Judgement. These rulings include the illness and the death of the relatives. Therefore, when any one experiences any of these afflictions, one should think that He *the Almighty* wants the best for him. Such afflictions may be a reminder from Him or a way with which He *the Almighty* grants him huge rewards.

There are also many means for removing sins. Abu Hurayra *Allah be pleased with him* narrates that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘The five (daily) prayers and the Friday Prayer to the Friday Prayer expiate whatever (minor sins) may be committed in between, so long as major sins are avoided.’⁽²⁾ Thus, Allah opens many doors to Forgiveness and Mercy such as fasting on the day of ‘*Arafa* (the ninth day of the month of *Dhul-Hijja*). In this

(1) This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Abu Hurayra *Allah be pleased with him*. See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 3244; Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 7310; At-Tirmidhi, Sunnan, Hadith no. 3197; and Ibn Maja, Sunnan, Hadith no. 4328.*

(2) This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Abu Hurayra *Allah be pleased with him*. See *Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 572; At-Tirmidhi, Sunnan, Hadith no. 214; Ibn Maja, Sunnan, Hadith no. 1086, Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 10290; and Ibn Khuzayma, Sahih, Hadith no. 413.*

regard, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Fasting the day of 'Arafa wipes away the sins.'⁽¹⁾ Allah *Glorified is He* also says: 'And keep up prayer in the two parts of the day and in the first hours of the night; surely good deeds take away evil deeds this is a reminder to the mindful' (*Hud*: 114).

The first and foremost good deed is believing in Allah and testifying that there is no god worthy of worship except Him as this testimony negates disbelief. Wiping out sins is done through removing it from one's record of sins or by being pardoned by Allah *the Almighty* or by diverting one away from doing the sin. All what one does is preserved and written down by the angels assigned by Him *Glorified is He* a fact which is crystal clear in His saying: 'He utters not a word but there is by him a watcher at hand (*Qaf*: 18); and His saying: 'And most surely there are keepers over you [10] Honourable recorders [11]' (*al-Infitar*: 10-11).

This is how a misdeed could be forgiven and removed; either by erasing it from the record of deeds or by keeping it while waiving its punishment through Forgiveness. In fact, piety encompasses the good deeds which do away with evil ones, and that is why Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Allah will wipe out the sinful deeds and increase the rewards of anyone who is mindful of Him' (*at-Talaq*: 5). In addition, piety to Allah as regards your wife, children and household as well as treating them in a way that pleases Him, and sparing them difficulties and privation lead to the forgiveness and removal of your bad deeds.

The command to observe piety is addressed to the divorcing husband and the divorcee; the spouses should fear Allah *the Almighty* regarding the rulings of taking the revocable divorcee back in marriage and counting the days of the waiting period. Further, the wife should not lie about her menstrual period or pregnancy to take advantage of inheritance, for example. They are all addressed by His saying: 'Allah will wipe out the sinful deeds and increase

(1) Another Hadith was related by Al-Bayhaqi on the authority of Al-Fadl Ibn 'Abbas that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said 'Whosoever preserves his tongue, his hearing and his sight on the day of 'Arafa, Allah forgives his sins from that day of 'Arafa to the next year's 'Arafa day.' See Al-Bayhaqi, *Shu'ab Al-Iman*, Hadith no. 3490.

the rewards of anyone who is mindful of Him' (*at-Talaq*: 5), to be encouraged to observe piety in order to receive a big reward in return.

Thus, after the removal of the evil deeds and punishment, there comes the big reward, as Allah *the Almighty* says: 'For those who do good is good (reward) and more (than this)...' (*Yunus*: 26). The reward is made greater by multiplying one's good deeds ten to seven hundred times over, a fact which is crystal clear in His saying: 'Whoever brings a good deed, he shall have ten like it, and whoever brings an evil deed, he shall be recompensed only with the like of it, and they shall not be dealt with unjustly' (*al-An'am*: 160). This represents the absolute Mercy and Bounty of Allah *the Almighty*; hence the Hadith states: 'Indeed, your Lord is the Most Merciful; if someone intends to do a good deed, but does not do it, the reward of one good deed is recorded for him, and if someone intends to do a good deed and also does it, ten to seven hundred good deeds are recorded for him. If someone intends to do a misdeed, but does not commit it, one good deed is recorded for him, but if he committed that, it is recorded or removed. Allah does not put to destruction anyone except he who is doomed to destruction.'⁽¹⁾

But why is it that Allah *the Almighty* gives us rewards in return for doing good and observing piety? Is it not better to do good deeds and have piety without seeking any reward? By giving us rewards, He *Glorified is He* stimulates us to do good deeds, and such deeds will be a source of benefit to others. In pursuit of a greater reward, the one doing the good deed will be careful to have a sincere intention. In fact, most of the people like to get rewards for their deeds, and the greater the reward is, the harder they work. Such is the human nature.

Only few people do the good for the good itself out of love, and that because Allah *the Almighty* is worthy of love and obedience. Thus, he who obeys Him *Glorified is He* desiring to enjoy the delights of paradise will be admitted to it, and he who obeys Him because He is worthy of obedience will

(1) This Hadith is narrated on the authority of 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas Allah be pleased with him. See Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 2519; An-Nasa'i, As-Sunnan Al-Kubra, Hadith no. 7623 and 11801; Abu 'Uwana, Mustakhray, Hadith no. 187; At-Tabarani, Al-Mu'jam Al-Kabir; and Ibn Manda, Tawhid, Hadith no. 190.

be granted the delight of looking upon His Glorious Countenance. To the same meaning, Rabi'a Al-'Adawiyya ⁽¹⁾ puts it lyrically: 'All of them worship Allah for fear of hell, and see that salvation is a great reward. I am not one of them; I seek nothing at the expense of my love for Allah.' She also said, 'O Allah! If I worship You for fear of hell, burn me in hell and if I worship You in hope of paradise, exclude me from paradise. I only worship You because You are worthy of worship.'

Hence, it is but your love, obedience, and piety to Allah *the Almighty* which elevate you in the ranks of faith, not your love for rewards and recompense. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'Whoever possesses the following three qualities will have the sweetness (delight) of faith (1): The one to whom Allah and His Messenger become dearer than anything else; (2) Who loves a person and he loves him only for Allah's sake; (3) Who hates to revert to disbelief as he hates to be thrown into the Fire.'⁽²⁾ Further, in a Qudsi Hadith, Allah *Glorified is He* said: 'Even if I did not create Paradise and Hell, would I not be worthy of worship?'

Allah *Glorified is He* is Greater than anything is and meeting with Him is the greatest of all the rewards, as He *the Almighty* says: '...therefore whoever hopes to meet his Lord, he should do good deeds, and not join anyone in the service of his Lord' (*al-Kahf*: 110). Here, He does not say: 'Whoever hopes to get the Reward of His Lord, or the Delight of His Lord or to be admitted to Paradise,' for the true believer does not aim at delight but hopes to meet His Lord, the rovider of Blessings.

The reward could also be multiplied by changing evil deeds into good ones, a fact which is clear in His saying: 'Except him who repents and believes and does a good deed; so these are they of whom Allah changes the evil deeds to good ones; and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful' (*al-Furqan*: 70). Thus, the good

(1) Rabi'a Bint Isma'il Al-'Adawiyya Al-Qaysiyya Al-Basriyya, Umm Al-Khair, a famous female Muslim saint. She was born in Basra and known for her devotion and piety. She used to compose poetry and passed away in Jerusalem in 135 A.H.

(2) This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Anas ibn Malik Allah be pleased with him. See Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 16, 21 and 6914; Muslim, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 174 and 175; At-Tirmidhi, *Sunnan Hadith* no. 2624; and An-Nasa'i, *Sunnan*, Hadith no. 4987 and 4988.

deed could be multiplied ten times up to seven hundred times, whereas the evil deed is recorded as one only. Good deeds then ought to be manifold unlike the evil ones, and yet Allah *the Almighty* will change these few evil deeds into good ones. This is also a manifestation of His Exceeding Favour and Bounty and that He does not want to punish His servants as they are His creation. In this connection, He *the Almighty* says: 'Why should Allah chastise you if you are grateful and believe? And Allah is the Multiplier of rewards, All Knowing' (*an-Nisa'*: 147).

Then, Allah *the Almighty* says:

أَسْكِنُوهُنَّ مِنْ حَيْثُ سَكَنْتُمْ مِنْ وَجْدِكُمْ وَلَا تُضَارُّوهُنَّ لِتُضَيِّقُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ وَإِنْ كُنَّ
أُولَاتٍ حَمْلٍ فَأَنْفِقُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ حَتَّى يَضَعْنَ حَمْلَهُنَّ فَإِنْ أَرْضَعْنَ لَكُمْ فَآتُوهُنَّ
أُجُورَهُنَّ وَأَتَمِرُوا بِئِنَّكُم مَعْرُوفٌ وَإِنْ تَعَاَسَرْتُم فَاستَرْضِعْ لَهُ أُخْرَى ﴿٦﴾

House the wives you are divorcing according to your means, wherever you house yourselves, and do not harass them so as to make their lives difficult. If they are pregnant, maintain them until they are delivered of their burdens; if they suckle your infants, pay them for it. Consult together in a good way – if you make difficulties for one another, another woman may suckle the child for the father [6] (The Quran, *at-Talaq*: 6)

Allah *Glorified is He* regulates the rights of the divorcee in respect of housing and maintenance allowance in a way that is never done in any other religion or legislation. His Legislation considers the conditions of the woman with regard to revocable and irrevocable divorce, whether minor or major. He also regulates the rights of the pregnant divorcee because she has a prior right to be cared for and her child is entitled to be breastfed at his father's expense. He also enjoins both spouses, seeking Allah's Pleasure, to consult and confer with one another for the benefit of their baby.

In fact, Islam guards the rights of a divorcee on her husband, irrespective of the case of divorce. If she is divorced revocably, she becomes entitled to stay in the marital house and to receive maintenance allowance, hoping that this would bring them together and spur the husband to take his wife back.

In doing so, they will get their life back on track and provide a loving atmosphere for their children.

Moreover, Allah *the Almighty* forbids the husband to expel his revocably divorced wife, leaving her homeless or sending her to her family's house, except in case of open indecency which leaves no room for doubt or ambiguity. In this regard, He *the Almighty* says: '...be mindful of Allah, your Lord. Do not drive them out of their homes – nor should they themselves leave – unless they commit a flagrant indecency. These are the limits set by Allah – whoever oversteps Allah's limits wrongs his own soul...' (*at-Talaq*: 1). But what about the divorcee's right when her waiting period is over or when she is irrevocably divorced? In both cases, her husband can only take her back with a new contract and a new bride-gift. Until it happens, she has the right to housing, as Allah *Glorified is He* enjoins the husbands to 'house' the irrevocably divorced women who are neither pregnant nor in the waiting period. Were housing to be at the same place with the husband, the expression: 'House the wives...' (*at-Talaq*: 6) would not be used.

Besides, the Arabic word *as-sakan* (housing) connotes serenity and peace of mind, that is, to provide a safe house where one can rest and feel comfortable. This word is also used elsewhere in His saying: 'And We said: O Adam! Dwell you and your wife in the garden...' (*al-Baqara*: 35). Thus, the word 'house' denotes two elements: peace and serenity. In the absence of either element, the place where one resides cannot be called 'a house'. It provides stability and allows one to eat freely and comfortably. Thus, your true house is the place where you find serenity, comfort, privacy, and self-stability not shared by anyone.

As for Allah's saying: 'Wherever you house yourselves...' (*at-Talaq*: 6), the Arabic preposition *min* (of) is used to mean that the husbands should lodge their divorcees in any of their houses. Accordingly, Qatada said, 'If the husband has but one house, he should let her inhabit one of its parts.'⁽¹⁾ Such

(1) In his *Tafsir*, *At-Tabari* mentions this opinion as adopted by Sa'id ibn Jubayr, who said, 'If you cannot find but a corner of your house, let her dwell in it.' In their *Tafsirs*, *Ibn Kathir* and *Ash-Shawkani* ascribe this opinion to Qatada. See *Ash-Shawkani, Fath Al-Qadir*, 7/246.

is the case with the verse in which Allah *the Almighty* orders the Muslims to lower their gaze, saying: 'Say to the believing men that they cast down their looks...' (*al-Furqan*: 30). Here, the same preposition is used to imply that in some cases one is not to lower his gaze, as in the case of a judge deciding on a lawsuit and one of its parties is a woman.

If it is the right of the divorcee to have a serene and comfortable house for herself and her children, one's wife also has such right, for Allah *the Almighty* orders the husbands to treat their wives kindly, saying: '...and treat them kindly...' (*an-Nisa'*: 19). This entails offering them dwellings, without which they cannot protect themselves from people's gazes and manage their affairs freely.

The house should be equipped with the requirements of the age and have the basic necessities. However, this does not mean that a wife should burden her husband with unbearable demands that he cannot afford. For this reason, He *the Almighty* says: '...according to your means, wherever you house yourselves...' (*at-Talaq*: 6). This points out that the house is to be in proportion to his financial status so that she accepts to inhabit it and not find it repulsive.

In addition, Allah *Glorified is He* directs us to offer the housing according to one's financial abilities, saying: '...according to your means...' (*at-Talaq*: 6). A poor man builds a humble dwelling, whereas a wealthy man builds a large mansion. So, He *the Almighty* made housing obligatory for the divorcee according to the husband's means and to the extent of his ability. In the case of a rich husband, it is not proper that he houses his wife in a humble house that does not suit his financial abilities.

The Quranic restrictive phrase: '...according to your means...' (*at-Talaq*: 6) suggests a miraculous solution to many social problems between the spouses. It means that if the husband is rich, he should give housing and maintenance allowance in abundance and if he is poor, then he should provide her to the extent he can afford. So, the house should be in good condition according to what is recognised to be fair and according to the husband's financial status; if he is rich, he should give housing and maintenance allowance in abundance and if he is poor, then to the extent he can afford.

The same is the case with maintenance allowance; the rich husband should spend according to his means and so should the poor one, as Allah

the Almighty says: ‘...and make provision for them, the wealthy according to his means and the straitened in circumstances according to his means, a provision according to usage; (this is) a duty on the doers of good (to others)’ (*al-Baqara*: 236). The rich person has abundant means of provision unlike the poor one and according to the capability of each one, the compensation, housing, and maintenance will be evaluated.

Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Allah does not burden a soul with something that it cannot afford’ (*al-Baqara*: 286). Therefore, it should be noted that Allah’s Obligations are within one’s ability and he can bear them. Then, He *the Almighty* commands the husbands, saying: ‘...and do not harass them so as to make their lives difficult’ (*at-Talaq*: 6). Here, the Arabic word *daarra* (to harass) connotes intending to inflict harm on the woman. Whereas another word of the same root could have been used, but it would not convey the meaning of deliberation since the husband may do something with good intention, but it turns out to be harmful to his wife. The word in the verse, however, implies intentional harm done to the woman after exerting effort and spending money to achieve this purpose. This intentional harm has many forms which are intended, for example, to get a ransom from the woman or to waive her right to stay in his house. Such harms are perpetrated by those who lack the proper Islamic manners.

Intentional harm can have another form where the husband divorces his wife and takes her back in marriage when there are only two days left before her waiting period is over. He intends to go beyond Allah’s Limits by exerting every possible effort to deprive the woman of her rights, being negligent of the fact that He *the Almighty* watches over him.

Thus, it is as if Allah *the Almighty* is saying, ‘Do not harm your wives verbally or physically during their stay in the marital house after divorce in order to drive them out before the end of the waiting period as this is forbidden.’ That is why, He *the Almighty* says: ‘Do not drive them out of their homes – nor should they themselves leave’ (*at-Talaq*: 1). Thus, He *the Almighty* forbids the husbands from expelling their wives and likewise forbids the wives from leaving the house. In addition, He commands the husband to house the divorcee in a way that does not cause difficulty or pain for her.

So, with regard to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...and do not harass them so as to make their lives difficult’ (*at-Talaq*: 6), the husbands are ordered to observe Allah’s Limits as regards their divorcees who stay with them in their houses and not to force them to waive any of their rights by guile and skill.

The rights of the revocably divorced include housing and maintenance allowance. The dwelling provided for the divorcee should be, according to the husband’s means, akin to the one which he inhabits, even if he let her reside in one of the rooms of the house. Yet, it is forbidden to harm the divorcee, even verbally, to make her leave the house or discharge their right to maintenance allowance. Instead, the husbands should treat them kindly even during their waiting period and remember Allah’s Commandments in this regard. This requires nobility, mercy, kind treatment, and commitment to Allah’s Orders and Limits. Having these qualities prevents the intentional harm done to the divorcee which can take the form of either restraining them in the house or harsh treatment.

In fact, divorce cases are always surrounded by quarrels, rage, guile and plotting. To cure this with something above the authority of man-made laws, Allah *Glorified is He* kindly and mercifully takes the people to the springs of affection and kindness which gush forth in their hearts through the touches of piety and hope that He *the Almighty* facilitates their matter and grants them a way out of their difficulty. That is why He *the Almighty* says: ‘Allah will find a way out for those who are mindful of Him, [2] and will provide for them from an unexpected source...[3]’ (*at-Talaq*: 2-3); and also says: ‘Allah will wipe out the sinful deeds and increase the rewards of anyone who is mindful of Him’ (*at-Talaq*: 5). In this regard, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘Whoever causes harm, Allah harms him, and whoever causes hardship to others, Allah will punish him in the same way.’⁽¹⁾ Further, Abu Bakr As-Siddiq *Allah be pleased with him* said: ‘I heard Prophet Muhammad

(1) This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Qays Al-Ansari *Allah be pleased with him*. See Ahmad, *Musnad Hadith* no. 15793, *At-Tirmidhi, Sunnan, Hadith* no. 1940; Abu Dawud, *Sunnan, Hadith* no. 3637; Ibn Maja, *Sunnan, Hadith* no. 22342; and Al-Baghawi, *Mu‘jam As-Sahaba, Hadith* no. 1965.

peace and blessings be upon him saying, “Cursed are those who harm a believer, or plot to do so”; and he also said, “Cursed are those who harm a believer or deceive him.”⁽¹⁾

Then Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘If they are pregnant, maintain them until they are delivered of their burdens’ (*at-Talaq*: 6). The divorced woman could be pregnant, and to assert her right here a special part of the verse is assigned to address this issue. Allah, the Creator of mankind and the All Knowing of their intentions, knows that some men will withhold maintenance allowance from their divorced pregnant women in spite of their conceiving of their children. The waiting period of the pregnant divorcee extends to birth giving as He *the Almighty* says: ‘The waiting period of those who are pregnant will be until they deliver their burden...’ (*at-Talaq*: 4). If she is divorced in the first month of pregnancy, her husband will be obliged to maintain her until she delivers her baby by which her waiting period ends.

On talking about the housing rights, Allah *Glorified is He* mentions the divorced women in general but specifies maintenance allowance as a right for the pregnant ones. Thus, some scholars maintain that He *Glorified is He* mentioned the right to housing absolutely but restricted maintenance to the pregnant, implying that an irrevocably divorced woman has no right to maintenance allowance. This is evidenced by the Prophetic Hadith narrated by Fatima Bint Qays⁽²⁾ who said: ‘My husband, Abu ‘Amr ibn Hafs, sent ‘Ayyish ibn Abu Rabi’a to convey to me the news of my divorce, and he also sent with him five Sa’s⁽³⁾

(1) *This Hadith isnarrated by At-Tirmidhi who said, ‘This is Hadith Gharib.’ Al-Albani said it is a weak Hadith and so said Abu Bakr Al-Mawruzi. Al-Bazzar narrated it through a very long narration: ‘Flesh which has grown out of what is unlawful will not enter paradise and the one who treats his slaves badly will not enter paradise and cursed are those who harm a believer or deceive him.’ See At-Tirmidhi, Sunnan, Hadith no. 1941; Al-Maruzi, Musnad Abu Bakr, Hadith no. 100; and Al-Bazzar, Musnad, Hadith no. 43*

(2) *Fatima Bint Qays is the sister of Ad-Dahak ibn Qays the Qurashi, Al-Fihri, one of the early beautiful wise immigrants. She solely narrated the long story of the false Messiah and the Shura (consultative) council was held at her house when ‘Umar was killed. Ibn Sa’d said, ‘Her mother is Umayma Bint Rabi’a of Bani Kinan.’ See Ibn Sa’d, At-Tabaqat, 8/200; and Ibn Al-Athir, Usd Al-Ghaba, 3/400*

(3) *Sa’s is the plural of Saa’, which is a unit of measure which equals four Mudds. A Mudd, however, is the amount that can be scooped up when one puts his hands together. Major scholars in Saudi Arabia hold that Saa’ is equal to 2.6 kg on the basis that Mudd,=*

of dates and five Sa‘s of barley. I said, ‘Is there no maintenance allowance for me but only this, and I cannot even spend my waiting period in your house?’ He said, ‘No.’ She said, ‘I dressed myself and came to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who asked, “How many pronouncements of divorce have been made for you?” I said, Three. He said, “What he (‘Ayyish ibn Abu Rabi‘a) had stated was true. There is no maintenance allowance for you. Spend the waiting period in the house of your cousin, Ibn Umm Maktum. He is blind and you can put off your garment in his presence. When you have spent your waiting period, you inform me.”’⁽¹⁾ This woman was irrevocably divorced and accordingly she has no housing nor maintenance rights. Imam Abu Hanifa, though, opined that she has the right to housing and maintenance because depriving her of such rights will cause her harm, which is prohibited by Allah’s saying: ‘...and do not harass them so as to make their lives difficult’ (*at-Talaq*: 6).

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* speaks of the right of the infant, after the woman gives birth to him and her maintenance ceases, obliging the husband to pay for his breastfeeding: ‘If they suckle your infants, pay them for it’ (*at-Talaq*: 6). It is as if He *Glorified is He* gives the woman that right by virtue of the infant, even though she is his mother and she is going to breastfeed him anyway. However, He prescribes a payment to her for breastfeeding him. Moreover, He *the Almighty* creates milk in his mother’s breast to feed him whenever he is hungry until he feels satisfied. Though the infant is her own child and milk is Divinely created in her breasts, her ex-husband is required to pay for the breastfeeding of his infant. These verses point out the responsibilities of the husband towards his child’s breastfeeding and maintenance after the period of breastfeeding which may extend to two whole years, a fact which is clear in His saying: ‘And the mothers should suckle their children for two whole years for him who desires to make complete the time of suckling; and

= in their view, equals 650 gm. It is known that Mudd differs from one to another according to the size of his hands.

(1) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Fatima bint Qays Allah be pleased with her. See Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 3786; At-Tirmidhi, Sunnan, Hadith no. 1153; An-Nasa‘i, Sunnan, Hadith no. 3418; Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 27361; and An-Nasa‘i, As-Sunnan Al-Kubra. Hadith no. 5581.*

their maintenance and their clothing must be – borne by the father according to usage; no soul shall have imposed upon it a duty but to the extent of its capacity; neither shall a mother be made to suffer harm on account of her child, nor a father on account of his child...’ (*al-Baqara*: 233). Out of His Favour on the people, He *the Almighty* addresses the matter of suckling the infants after their mothers give birth to them. Considering the fact that divorce results in contention between the man and the woman, Allah, the Most Merciful, and the All Knowing of His creation, wants to protect the fruit of marriage, that is, the children. He orders us not to let the dispute between the spouses harm the infant. Had there been no divorce, a husband would have been only responsible for providing for the newborn baby according to what is commonly accepted. But in the case of the divorced wife, Allah *the Almighty* obliges the husband to pay for the baby’s breastfeeding. If there is no baby, such a divorcee will not be entitled to receive such payment.

Some people mistakenly inferred that maintenance and clothing are obligatory for the divorced women in general, but only the divorced women who breastfeed their children are intended. A divorcee may or may not breastfeed her baby. In case she suckles her baby, its father must pay her in return for suckling, by mutual agreement. If she agrees to breastfeed her baby for an appropriate payment, then the father should not bring a wet nurse. He is rather required to fully pay for her suckling and other forms of maintenance, for she has a prior right to her baby and feels more empathy for it than any wet nurse. Thus, an irrevocably divorced woman has the choice to breastfeed her baby or not after giving birth to it. It should be noted that suckling it with colostrum, the first milk produced in the early days of breastfeeding, is very important for the babies. On suckling it, she becomes entitled to a proper payment by an agreement with its father.

Further, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘If they suckle your infants, pay them for it’ (*at-Talaq*: 6). This means that the payment for breastfeeding, clothing and maintenance is to be incurred by the divorcing husband because unpaid breastfeeding is only obligatory on a woman joined in marriage to her husband. However, because her waiting period ends after childbirth, the father is responsible for paying her for suckling his infant. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* calls upon the man and the woman to confer among themselves concerning the

issue of breastfeeding their baby and other affairs relating to their children and what suits them best, saying: 'Consult together in a good way' (*at-Talaq*: 6).

Allah *Glorified is He* spurs both spouses to confer and deliberate the matter among themselves with kindness, decency, understanding, and forbearance. The husband should not deny his responsibility and the wife should not try to put the husband into difficulty and hardship. They should consult with each other to reach an agreement on a reasonable payment, without excessiveness nor negligence, neither harming nor reciprocating harm, as stated in Allah's saying: '...neither shall a mother be made to suffer harm on account of her child, nor a father on account of his child...' (*al-Baqara*: 233). Both spouses are ordered to enjoin one another to have tolerance, forbearance, and kindness. The husband is to be kind to his wife and she is to be obedient to him. Every one of them should do good as much as he can to the other; the favour of the woman is to breastfeed her child and that of the man is to offer her maintenance in return, with the overriding concern being the benefit of the child and protecting him from harm.

Justice alone is hard and may leave hard feelings, but graciousness eliminates rancour, contention, and hatred. Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* commands the spouses, saying: 'So do not forget to be generous towards one another: Allah sees what you do' (*al-Baqara*: 237).

Disputes happen when everyone deems himself the rightful owner, and circumstances may also tempt both parties. Upholding justice will lead humanity to the ultimate consent, but with graciousness there will be satisfaction and the matter will be settled.

Graciousness implies that everyone should waive his right to settle the issue. Allah *the Almighty* prescribes rights and legislates what guarantees will be fulfilled, but this is not to forbid graciousness between people. In most cases, the problem lies in the fact that excuses, obstinacy, dissention, and contention are what prevail among people, except those whom Allah *the Almighty* has excluded. Disagreement on the payment for breastfeeding and maintenance is possible if the husband does not intend to pay or if the payment is too little to suffice the baby and its mother. It may also be on the part of the divorcee by exceeding in her recompense for breastfeeding, burdening the husband with what he cannot afford, and causing him difficulty. It could be the husband who

exceeds the limit by refusing to pay for his wife. Regarding this case, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...if you make difficulties for one another...’ (*at-Talaq*: 6). Difficulty here is the opposite of ease and tolerance.

So, how could the husband deal with the excessiveness of the divorcee in her demands? He is allowed to hire a wet nurse to suckle his infant. In fact, Allah’s saying: ‘...if you make difficulties for one another, another woman may suckle the child for the father’ (*at-Talaq*: 6) is miraculous; it is as though He *Glorified is He* draws the woman’s attention to the fact that breastfeeding is not limited to her. Therefore, if she does not suckle her baby with kindness and goodness, its father can hire another woman to take up the job.

Allah’s saying: ‘...another woman may suckle the child for the father’ (*at-Talaq*: 6) notifies the woman that there is another solution in which she is not involved and which will result in her baby being taken away from her to be breastfed and embraced by another woman. The divorcee here is the one to be blamed because she is required to be lenient with her ex-husband and not to burden or restrain him. In any case, he is to bear the payment and, thus, the divorcee should not be obstinate with him. Instead, she should be content whether he pays little or much; otherwise another woman will suckle for him.

She is also required to breastfeed her child which costs her nothing, as Allah creates milk in her breasts without her having a hand in that except for consuming food to have enough of it for her baby. But what if the baby rejects breastfeeding from another woman? In this case, his mother is to be forced to nurse him in order that he not is harmed and she becomes entitled to an appropriate payment.

Further, the etiquettes of breastfeeding are stated in Allah’s saying: ‘...and if you wish to engage a wet nurse for your children, there is no blame on you so long as you pay what you promised for according to usage...’ (*al-Baqara*: 233). Hence, if they wish to suckle their children by a wet nurse, there shall be no blame on them. This wet nurse needs to feel the generosity of the father so as to suckle the child honestly and take care of it earnestly.

The husband should not deceive the community by pretending to implement Allah’s Laws with regard to breastfeeding, since He *Glorified is He* is Well Aware of his intentions, a fact which is crystal clear in His saying: ‘...and

be careful of (your duty to) Allah and know that Allah sees what you do' (*al-Baqara*: 233). You find that whenever this father sees his baby's nurse, he welcomes her warmly and claims to be spending and paying her dues in full, while this is not the case in reality. He should pay attention to the fact that it is Allah *Glorified is He* Whom he deals with and not the society.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

لِيُنْفِقَ ذُو سَعَةٍ مِّن سَعَتِهِۦ وَمَن قُدِرَ عَلَيْهِ رِزْقُهُۥ فَلْيُنْفِقْ مِمَّا ءَاتَاهُ
 اللَّهُ لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا مَّا ءَاتَاهَا سَبَّحَ لِلَّهِ مَا بَعْدَ عُسْرٍ يُسْرًا

**And let the wealthy man spend according to his wealth.
 But let him whose provision is restricted spend according
 to what God has given him: God does not burden any
 soul with more than He has given it – after hardship,
 God will bring ease [7] (The Quran, *at-Talaq*: 7)**

The human being should improve his means of provision and make a good income to suffice him and those under his care, and to give in charity. The difference between the believer and the disbeliever as regards seeking provision is that the disbeliever works to earn sufficient money for him and his dependents only, whereas the believer, in addition to this, gives of what he has to those who are unable to work for the sake of Allah *the Almighty*.

He *Glorified is He* does not stimulate the human being to earn money for himself alone; rather, He spurs him to multiply his sources of income to suffice himself and those under his care, extending his benefit to all circles around him. Such circles are mentioned in Prophet Muhammad's order to maintain yourself, your child, your household, your wife and your servant.

So long as Allah *Glorified is He* specifies for us the reasons for the continuity of life and thus established the way of going about in the spacious sides of the earth to seek the provision, He *Glorified is He* also established the honorary means to preserve the species. Furthermore, He *the Almighty* made the endeavour of someone return to his offspring.

As one of His signs, Allah *Glorified is He* instils within everyone the instinct of love and affection, and we see such instinct firmly established in the hearts of parents. Therefore, we see the father striving in this worldly life to sustain

himself and his children. When someone spares no effort to gain wealth, there may come the time when his gains suffice him for the rest of his life because he worked earnestly and honestly, and accordingly Allah *Glorified is He* bestowed upon him abundant provision. Other people strive and exert themselves to obtain money for their children and grandchildren, and thus we find that those who try their best to get their provision not only get benefit for themselves, but for the society in its entirety as well.

Allah *Glorified is He* orders every Muslim to take the responsibility of spending on the nearest circle to him so that everyone in life bears the responsibility for a part of the society, such as his parents and relatives. He *Glorified is He* even orders us to deem the helpless orphans a common responsibility upon the society as a whole, whether there is a blood relationship or not, since we are ordered to take care of them as our own relatives.

It should be noted that their provision could be directed to them through you. One may make a large sum of money, but he neither spends it nor benefits from it. Thereby, it is not really his provision, for he only keeps it well guarded without spending a penny of it. If a servant considers that he does you a favour, you would say, 'You only serve yourself and your children as you serve me to provide for yourself and for them, whereas I am the one who works hard to give you money to spend on your family.' So, everyone strives and exerts himself to make money and spend on his children. In this vein, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Allah amplifies and straitens the means of subsistence for whom He pleases' (*ar-Ra'd*: 26). So, He is the One Who restricts one's provision or gives him in proportion to his needs.

With regard to the saying of Allah *Glorified is He*: 'But let him whose provision is restricted spend according to what Allah has given him...' (*at-Talaq*: 7), it means that He *the Almighty* may provide but with restriction. This verse obliges the person, whether rich or poor, to spend according to his means. The letter '*Lam*' at the beginning of the Arabic word *liunfiq* (let him spend) is an imperative prefix marked by a *kasra*.⁽¹⁾ Its original diacritical marker is *sukun* (a marker of the jussive case), but it is marked by *kasra* for being at the beginning of a sentence which in Arabic cannot begin with *sukun*. In other

(1) Kasra: is a mark for words in the genitive case, which goes below the end of a word and is pronounced as a short 'i'.

positions of the sentence, however, it is to be marked by *sukun* as in His saying: 'But let him whose provision is restricted spend according to what Allah has given him' (*at-Talaq*: 7). He *Glorified is He* enjoins people to spend out of their wealth in order to promote social solidarity and improve the economic climate, for parsimonious attitudes lead to the opposite consequences.

So long as He *Glorified is He* orders us to spend out of our wealth, we need to know what to spend and who is worthy of charity. In this connection, Abu Hurayra *Allah be pleased with him* narrated: 'A man said, "Messenger of Allah, I have a dinar." He said, "Spend it on yourself." The man said, "I have another." He said, "Spend it on your child." The man said, "I have another." He said, "Spend it on your wife." He said, "I have another." He said, "Spend it on your servant." The man said, "I have another." He said, "On whomever you see fit."⁽¹⁾ Whenever Abu Hurayra narrated this Hadith, he used to say, 'Your child asks, "Spend on me, on whom can I rely?" Your wife says, "Spend on me or divorce me." Your slave says, "Spend on me or sell me."⁽²⁾ Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'They ask you as to what they should spend. Say: Whatever wealth you spend, it is for the parents and the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer, and whatever good you do, Allah surely knows it' (*al-Baqara*: 215).

We should spend out of the good things Allah *the Almighty* has given us, and those meant for spending on are one's closest relatives. This is so because He *the Almighty* wants to make the believer responsible for his own relatives so that such circles stick together. Accordingly, the responsibility of maintaining the welfare of the society is shared by all its members. Besides, spending constitutes a kind of protection for one's household. For example, my circle includes my parents and relatives and so does everyone's circle, therefore, the circles get wider to encompass even the orphans and the destitute. Thus, if we take into consideration the circles of parents and relatives and what they have

(1) This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Abu Hurayra *Allah be pleased with him*. See Ibn Hibban, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 3337; Ahmad, *Musnad*, 2/251 and 471; Abu Dawud, *Sunnan*, Hadith no. 1619; An-Nasa'i, *Sunnan*, 5/62; Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrak*, 1/415; and Al-Bayhaqi, *Sunnan*, 7/466

(2) This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Abu Hurayra *Allah be pleased with him*. They asked him, 'Is it of the sayings of Prophet Muhammad or is it your own saying?' He said: 'It is my own saying.' See Ahmad, *Musnad*, Hadith no. 7423.

of the orphans and the needy, we will find that the joined circles encompass all the poor and that the needs of the society are borne by all of its members, leaving no one unable to work or deprived of his needs.

Spending denotes giving out of your possessions by means of selling, or giving a gift or grant. If one would like to open the door of righteousness with Allah *the Almighty* he should broaden the circle of spending and he will find that righteousness has occupied a great deal of his spending, given that the giver spends on behalf of Allah *the Almighty*. He *Glorified is He* brought the human being into existence and guaranteed his sustenance. With you spending out on those under your care and by helping those whom you are not obliged to spend on, you draw near to Allah *the Almighty*. You need to strive in this worldly life so as to make money which suffices you and your dependents; otherwise you will find no money to cover your expenses. Every Muslim should take upon himself the responsibility of spending on his closest circle in order that everyone in this life assumes the responsibility of a part of the society to whom he is related by blood, such as parents and relatives.

The man is required to work hard and to do his best to earn a living from lawful and good sources, given the fact that it is prohibited to get money from unlawful sources. The person who spends out is either a rich one to whom Allah *Glorified is He* granted an abundance of wealth, or one whose provision is straitened. Spending according to one's means suits the previous verse in which He *the Almighty* says: 'House the wives you are divorcing according to your means, wherever you house yourselves, and do not harass them so as to make their lives difficult. If they are pregnant, maintain them until they are delivered of their burdens...' (*at-Talaq*: 6).

Allah *Glorified is He* does not want the woman to exceed the limit in her demand for maintenance, imposing on the husband that which he cannot afford and what is beyond his capacity and provision. Therefore, He *Glorified is He* makes clear that His Command to the man to provide maintenance is to be related to what he has of wealth and whether he is rich or poor. Maintenance, then, should be in accordance with the financial status of the husband; if he is rich, he should give in a way befitting to what Allah *the Almighty* has given him; and if he is poor, then he should give according to his means, as He *the Almighty*

says: '...and make provision for them, the wealthy according to his means and the straitened in circumstances according to his means' (*al-Baqara*: 236).

You should consider that provision is broadened by Allah *the Almighty*. However, He *the Almighty* requires you to broaden your means of obtaining provision and He will increase your provision in proportion to how expansive your sources are. 'The rich' refers to the one who has multiplied his sources of provision, whereas the 'straitened' refers to someone with a limited provision. Thus, spending out should be in accordance with one's financial state, whether he is rich or poor.

Allah *Glorified is He* is Limitless and All Knowing and His Dominion is boundless and His Provision is endless. Hence, one should never think that His Dominion will fall short of providing for the man who divorced his wife or for the divorced woman. Given that Allah *Glorified is He* allows divorce as a way out when dissention between spouses is at its utmost. At that point, He will give both spouses in abundance so that the husband spends on his divorcee and his infant of what He *the Almighty* has given him. Further, the wife should be sure that He *Glorified is He* will provide for her amply if she fears Him and is not excessive in the material demands she asks for herself and her infant. He *Glorified is He* says: 'Allah amplifies and straitens the means of subsistence for whom He pleases' (*ar-Ra'd*: 26) and He also says: 'Surely your Lord makes plentiful the means of subsistence for whom He pleases and He straitens (them); surely He is ever Aware of, Seeing His servants' (*al-Isra'*: 30).

He *Glorified is He* Whose Depositories never run out, provides for His creation in a measured amount; neither does He extend it completely nor restrict it completely. Instead, He extends provision to some people and restricts it to others so that the universe works in harmony. Were He *Glorified is He* to amplify it to all people abundantly, they would dispense with and abandon each other, leading to the corruption of their lives. There is a profound Divine wisdom behind this. Thereby, one has but to be content with whatever is destined for him and to lead a lifestyle in proportion to what is provided for him, as He *the Almighty* says: 'But let him whose provision is restricted spend according to what Allah has given him' (*at-Talaq*: 7).

Here, we find that Allah *Glorified is He* attributed the abundant provision to the wealthy person, whereas in the case of the restricted one, He *Glorified is He* states

that this is what He has given him. It is as though He *Glorified is He* represents and views wealth as a result of the human being's effort in spite of the fact that what he gains through his own effort is conferred to him by Allah *the Almighty*.

Furthermore, His saying: 'But let him whose provision is restricted' (*at-Talaq*: 7) draws the attention of the divorcee to the fact that if her divorcing husband cannot afford her demands, then it is not his fault; it is only what Allah *the Almighty* destined for him of provision. Using the passive form 'is restricted' here signifies that the husband has no hand in the matter of extending or restricting provision. Rather, this is purely a gift from Allah, and restraining one's provision is something predestined by Him *Glorified is He*.

In fact, the man only spends of what Allah *Glorified is He* has given him and provided for him; He *Glorified is He* decides whether he should be rich or poor, and thereby a father is required to spend out on the nursing mother, whom he divorced, according to his capability. However, one whose provision is restricted should only spend according to his means, since Allah *the Almighty* does not burden a person to maintain those under his care except in accordance with what He has given him. This depends on whether the person is rich or poor because He *Glorified is He* does not charge a soul except according to what He has given it of ability and finances. In the case of disagreement, the judge evaluates the maintenance according to the husband's income and wealth.

This ruling considers the condition of the poverty-stricken, if he is truthful, and spurs himself to exert himself to spend out in proportion to his means. 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* once asked about the condition of Abu 'Ubayda. He was told that he wore the coarsest of attire and ate the most frugal food. Thereby, 'Umar sent him one thousand *dinars*. On asking his messenger what Abu 'Ubayda did with them, he told him that he dressed himself in fine clothes and ate good food. Then, 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* said, 'May Allah have mercy upon him! He interpreted this verse: "And let the wealthy man spend according to his wealth. But let him whose provision is restricted spend according to what Allah has given him..." (*at-Talaq*: 7).'⁽¹⁾

(1) In his *Tafsir*, As-Suyuti attributes this Hadith to Ibn Jarir on the authority of Abu Senan. See As-Suyuti, *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur*, and Jame' Al-Ahadith, Hadith no. 4657; and At-Tabari, *Jame' Al-Bayan*, 34666.

Abu Malik Al-Ash'ari narrated that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'There were three people; one of them had ten *dinars*, so he gave a *dinar* in charity; the second one had ten *Uqiyyas* (One *Uqiyya* is equal to 40 *Dirhams*) so he gave an *Uqiyya* in charity, and the third one had one hundred *Uqiyyas*, so he gave ten *Uqiyyas* in charity.'⁽¹⁾ He *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'They will be equal in reward, for each gave the tenth of his money in charity.' Hence, the poor person is not to be charged the same as the rich, and that is why He *the Almighty* says: 'Allah does not burden any soul with more than He has given it...' (*at-Talaq*: 7). Thus, the one to whom Allah *the Almighty* extends the provision should spend out bountifully on housing, maintenance and breastfeeding payment, but the poverty-stricken should spend to the extent he can afford and is not to be blamed.

As a matter of fact, Allah *the Almighty* charges people only with what is within their capacity and ability. He *Glorified is He* does not impose upon a soul a duty but to the extent of its ability. This is presented in the fact that He *Glorified is He* gives a concession when the duty is beyond one's capacity. For example, He gives the order to the husbands to spend, saying: 'And let the wealthy man spend...' (*at-Talaq*: 7) and there comes the concession in the same verse: '...according to his ability...' (*at-Talaq*: 7). Duties are always related to capacity and ability; so He *the Almighty* guides the one who is straitened to a way out of dissensions and disputes, laying down the principle: 'Allah does not burden any soul with more than He has given it...' (*at-Talaq*: 7).

Thus, no one should think that He *the Almighty* imposes duties upon the human being to burden him; for it is the human being who burdens himself. Man should spend according to his income; he should not borrow except at times of dire need, not in order to lead a luxurious life. Consider your income and live according to it, without embezzling or bribing, assuming that this is what Allah *the Almighty* has given you. For example, if you earn 100 L.E, then live in proportion to it so that your expenses equal your income because He

(1) This Hadith is narrated by At-Tabarani on the authority of Abu Malik Al-Ash'ari. Al-Albani graded it as a weak Hadith. See At-Tabarani, *Al-Mu'jam Al-Kabir*, Hadith no. 3361, and Mu'jam Ash-Shamiyyin, Hadith no. 1662; Al-Albani, *As-Silsila Ad-Da'ifa*, Hadith no. 3449, and *Da'if Al-Jami'*, Hadith no. 2588

the Almighty does not charge you except with what He has given you. Accordingly, we should suffice ourselves to what is given to us and to seek only what He made lawful to us, avoiding stealing or plunder. So, we should take and benefit from that which He made lawful in order that He will help us satisfy our needs and manage our affairs. Living according to Allah's Way will rid you of the unforeseen misfortunes of life which require you to spend more than what He has given to you. For example, if you enter the market with a limited amount of money and see many good things, but you can only buy a few things, He *the Almighty* beautifies for you what is within your means and keeps you away from what you cannot afford because He does not charge a soul except with what He has given it and does not arouse one's desire for something beyond his limits.

Allah *Glorified is He* assures us, saying: '...after hardship, Allah will bring ease' (*at-Talaq*: 7). Therefore, as for the one whose provision is restricted, He *the Almighty* will make things easy for him and will change his misery into ease and comfort. Ibn Mas'ud *Allah be pleased with him* used to say, 'I do not care on which condition I will find my household; for if they are in difficulty, I will expect ease.'⁽¹⁾

After hardship comes ease; and after straitened circumstances comes comfort; and after poverty comes wealth. This is a promise to the poverty-stricken to wait for Allah's Provision and to make sure that ease will take the place of difficulty and it will improve his living conditions. Whenever it happens, he should not be parsimonious or niggardly.

This is good news for those in hardship, since Allah *the Almighty* will relieve their hardship and eliminate their difficulty. Even if they live in straitened circumstances, He will grant them ease and comfort. He *Glorified is He* mentions ease after hardship to indicate that anyone who is satisfied and content with the provision he has been destined with will be granted ease after hardship. In another verse, He *the Almighty* says: 'Surely with difficulty is ease. [5] With difficulty is surely ease [6]' (*ash-Sharh*: 5-6). Here, He *Glorified is He*

(1) Ibn Mas'ud said, 'I have never been in a condition and wished that this condition is different.' 'Umar said, 'I do not care if I become in difficulty or ease because I do not know which one is better for me.' See *Al-Ghazali, Ihya' 'Ulum Ad-Din*, 3/319.

makes ease accompany, not only follow, the difficulty. Furthermore, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* went out once while he was happy and said laughingly: 'A hardship will not overcome two eases.'⁽¹⁾

Using the Arabic letter 'Sin' (will), as a prefix to the Arabic verb *yaj'al* (bring), implies occurrence in the future. Allah *the Almighty* guides us not to be too hasty for ease, but rather to be sure that He *the Almighty* will fulfil His Promise to us. It is worth noting that He *Glorified is He* did not use the Arabic word *sawfa*, instead of the prefix *Sin*, because *sawfa* means that the action will happen in the distant future, whereas the prefix *Sin* indicates that it will happen soon in the near future if one fears Allah *the Almighty* and has patience.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَكَلَّيْنِ مِنْ قَرَبٍ عَنَّا عَنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّهَا وَرُسُلِهِ
فَحَاسَبْنَهَا حِسَابًا شَدِيدًا وَعَذَبْنَهَا عَذَابًا ثَقِيرًا

**Many a town that insolently opposed the command of
its Lord and His messengers We have brought sternly
to account: We punished them severely [8]
(The Quran, at-Talaq: 8)**

Here, He *the Almighty* states the consequence of rebellion against His commands. The Arabic word '*ka'ayyin*' (many) indicates multiplicity. For instance, when someone asks you, 'Why do you abandon me?' you reply, 'How many times did I visit you?' Here you do not intend to pose a question or to inquire about the number of visits; rather, this expression signifies the myriad visits you paid him. Moreover, you do not ask him such a question unless you are sure of the answer being, 'You visited me many times.' Therefore, when you use 'many' in similar question forms, it conveys the meaning of multiplicity. The same is the case in Allah's saying: 'And how many a Prophet has fought with

(1) Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him narrated that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Whoever takes the money of the people with the intention of repaying it, Allah will repay it on his behalf, and whoever takes it in order to spoil it, then Allah will spoil him.' See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 2387; Ibn Maja, Sunnan, Hadith no. 2411; Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 8718, Al-Bazzar, Musnad, Hadith no. 8158; and Al-Bayhaqi, As-Sunnan Al-Kubra, Hadith no. 11274.*

whom were many worshippers of the Lord...' (*Al-'Imran*: 146). This verse means that there were many Prophets with whom faithful believers fought, exactly as what happened with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and his Companions. Similarly, He *the Almighty* says: 'And how many a sign in the heavens and the earth which they pass by, yet they turn aside from it' (*Yusuf*: 105). So, once you hear this word '*ka'ayyin*,' you should know that it denotes something innumerable; too many to be counted, and we do not count things which cannot be enumerated such as sand in the desert. Not counting something means that it is infinite such as the stars in the sky. Hence, this word is used in His saying: 'And how many a sign...' (*Yusuf*: 105) to indicate that His signs in the heavens and the earth are too many to be counted. Accordingly, when Allah *Glorified is He* mentions this word, it indicates that what follows is too many that one is not to be blamed if he cannot enumerate it. Allah's signs, which are too many to be counted, signify something miraculous. Thus, the Arabic word '*ka'ayyin*,' (many) denotes multiplicity as when you say, 'How many times did I treat you kindly' to suggest that it happened so many times that it cannot be counted. It denotes exaggeration in number and quantity. This word recurs in His saying: 'And how many a living creature that does not carry its sustenance: Allah sustains it and yourselves...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 60). Here, it refers to the countless number of creatures that do not carry their own provision, and yet they are sustained and alive. Although flies and mosquitoes are weak, they feed on the blood of the powerful human being. So is the case with the microorganisms which destroy the human being, while they do not carry their provision. It is surprising that horses, donkeys, and cattle do not carry their provision despite their ability to carry different items. Therefore, when they satiate their hunger, they save nothing to eat later. Instead, they may step on the leftovers or urinate on them. This is common in all animals that it is said, 'Of all creatures, only the human being, the rats and the ants save their food.'

The word 'town' in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'How many a town...' (*at-Talaq*: 8) refers to a group of people living together in a limited place. It does not refer to the village as we know it nowadays. This is because the Arabs used to refer to the place which is synonymous with the city nowadays as 'town'. In the past, they used to inhabit the desert and to keep moving from

one place to another without settling in a specific area. Thus, the capital of the Bedouins was the 'town' which consisted of a small number of houses.

Accordingly, the Quran calls Mecca 'the Mother of Cities' in Allah's saying: 'This is a blessed Scripture that We have sent down to confirm what came before it and for you to warn the Mother of Cities...' (*al-An'am*: 92) and in His saying: 'And thus have We revealed to you an Arabic Quran, that you may warn the mother of cities and those around it...' (*ash-Shura*: 7). So, the Mother of Cities is Mecca which is the greatest of all places and the spotlight of those around it. It has all the requirements for life and anyone residing in it or staying in it to perform Pilgrimage can engage in commerce or other activities and thus can fully satisfy his needs.

Furthermore, Allah *Glorified is He* tells us about many towns such as the village of Ayla or Tiberias about which He says: 'And ask them about the town which stood by the sea; when they exceeded the limits of the *Sabbath*, when their fish came to them on the day of their *Sabbath*, appearing on the surface of the water, and on the day on which they did not keep the *Sabbath* they did not come to them...' (*al-A'raf*: 163). There is also the town of Jerusalem or Jericho which is mentioned in His saying: 'And when We said: Enter this city, then eat from it a plenteous (food) wherever you wish, and enter the gate making obeisance, and say, forgiveness' (*al-Baqara*: 58). While narrating what the brothers of Yusuf (Joseph) said after they left Egypt and went back to their father without their brother Binyamin (Benjamin), Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And inquire in the town in which we were...' (*Yusuf*: 82). With the 'town', they meant the capital of Egypt at that time, which was the city of Memphis⁽¹⁾ or what is known now as Al-Badrashein.

As the 'town' is mentioned in the Quran to refer to the civil societies at that time, the 'city' is used as well. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Pharaoh said: Do you believe in Him before I have given you permission? Surely this is a plot which you have secretly devised in this city...' (*al-A'raf*: 123);

(1) Memphis was an ancient city founded in 3200 BC by Narmer. It was the capital of Egypt during the old kingdom (dynasties 3-6) where they used to worship the god Ptah and is now located near to Saqqara in the town of Mit Rahina. It was the first capital of Egypt after unification and Manf is its Arabic name which means the white wall.

‘And he went into the city at a time of unvigilance on the part of its people...’ (*al-Qasas*: 15); ‘And he was in the city, fearing, awaiting...’ (*al-Qasas*: 18); and: ‘And from the remote part of the city there came a man running, he said: O my people! Follow the Messengers’ (*Ya Sin*: 20). In the last verse, the word ‘city,’ according to all the exegetes, is Antioch.

Even in its traditional usage, the city is distinguished from the village in that ‘cities’ are regulated by laws; have a king, ministers, officials, constitutional ruling and an army to defend it. Therefore, the word ‘city’ is used to refer to the city of Pharaoh, Antioch, and above all Prophet Muhammad’s City, which was named ‘*Yathrib*’ at the outset, then became ‘Medina,’ – being the capital of the new-born state. Medina is mentioned in many verses, as in Allah’s saying: ‘And from among those who are round about you of the dwellers of the desert there are hypocrites, and from among the people of Medina (also); they are stubborn in hypocrisy...’ (*at-Tawba*: 101) and in His saying: ‘It did not beseem the people of Medina and those round about them of the dwellers of the desert to remain behind the Messenger of Allah...’ (*at-Tawba*: 120).

So, with regard to the saying of Allah *the Almighty* in the verse in question: ‘Many a town that insolently opposed the command of its Lord and His Messengers...’ (*at-Talaq*: 8), it means that many towns rebelled against Allah’s Commandment; some of which are told to us, and the town most mentioned in the Quran is that of the people of Lut (Lot).⁽¹⁾ For example, He *the Almighty* says: ‘And (as for) Lut (Lot), We gave him wisdom and knowledge, and We delivered him from the town which wrought abominations; surely they were an evil people, transgressors...’ (*al-Anbiya*: 74); and He says: ‘Surely We will cause to come down upon the people of this town a punishment from heaven because they transgressed’ (*al-Ankabut*: 34). The town of Lut (Lot) was the most rebellious one against the Commands of Allah *the Almighty* thereby deserving His punishment: a rain of hard stones and the city was

(1) Sodom and Gomorrah are the cities of the people of Prophet Lut (Lot) which were swallowed by the earth owing to their practice of homosexuality. Many researchers and religious scholars believe that the swallowed villages are situated in the Dead Sea and Jordan Valley. According to Hebrew sources, the cities that were destroyed are: Sodom and Gomorrah, (Odomh and Sabim). They used to approach men with desire, instead of women.

turned upside down because they committed a flagrant indecency which none of the nations has ever done before.

As for Allah's saying: 'How many a town...' (*at-Talaq*: 8), He *the Almighty* does not intend the place with its buildings, streets and suburbs, but rather, He intends the people of the town and its inhabitants. This is because 'the town' is a name for the place well prepared for people to reside in. It is axiomatic that when Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And inquire in the town in which we were...' (*Yusuf*: 82), He means to ask the people of the town, not the buildings or the place itself. Thus, in the verse under discussion, Allah's saying: 'Many a town that insolently opposed the command of its Lord and His Messengers...' (*at-Talaq*: 8) means that the town itself did not rebel against His command, but it is its people who rebelled and transgressed. The Arabic word '*ata* (to oppose) connotes haughtiness and disobedience. In the context of this verse, it means to rebel against Allah's Commands and make corruption rampant. This was because they did not hope or wait for meeting Allah *Glorified is He* and therefore He describes them as haughty and rebellious in His saying: 'They are too proud of themselves and too insolent' (*al-Furqan*: 21). This verse means that they have exaggerated in their injustice and opposition and transgressed the limits. The people of these towns rebelled against the Commands of Allah *the Almighty*. Such a rebel is the one who goes to extremes in his injustice, such as a despot who inflicts much oppression and tyranny and gains more power when people are afraid of him.

To 'rebel,' then, is to reject, disobey and be haughty; thereby deserving Allah's Punishment. This verse, in question, is mentioned in two other positions in the Quran, which are His saying: 'And how many a town to which I gave respite, while it was unjust, then I overtook it, and to Me is the return' (*al-Hajj*: 48) and His saying: 'And how many a town which was far more powerful than the town of yours which has driven you out: We destroyed them so there was no helper for them' (*Muhammad*: 13). Thus, they deserved the punishment and destruction because they rebelled against the Commands of Allah and His Prophets.

With regard to His saying: 'The command of its Lord and His Messengers' (*at-Talaq*: 8), it presents a threat to those who go beyond Allah's Law as

regards divorce, the waiting period, driving the revocably divorced woman out of the marital house during her waiting period and non-compliance with the rulings of breastfeeding. In fact, disobeying Allah's Commands will result in manifold injustices, homelessness of children, depravation of women, obstinacy of men and rebellion of women. In such a case, the society would live in the darkness of misguidance that may end up with killing and shedding blood; it would certainly cause the society to lag behind, for being full of problems, disputes, discords, conflicts, plotting, and guile. The scholars state that His saying: 'Many a town that insolently opposed the command of its Lord and His Messengers...' (*at-Talaq*: 8) suggests that those people did not abide by the commands of Allah *the Almighty* and His Messengers, nor did they refrain from what they prohibited. In doing so, they rejected and rebelled against His commands.

Allah *Glorified is He* poses a grave threat to those who do not abide by His *Shari'a* and seek their laws from other systems and cultures which rebelled and transgressed against His commands. Further, He *Glorified is He* did not inflict His punishment on the people of these towns without previous warning, guidance and sending Prophets to guide them. Rather, He *Glorified is He* sent Prophets and revealed Scriptures to guide those people and gave them respite in order to be deterred from their transgression and be admonished. However, they insisted on doing injustice; hence He *Glorified is He* says: 'And how many a town to which I gave respite while it was unjust...' (*al-Hajj*: 48). Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* grants respite to the oppressor, but when He seizes him, He does not then let him off, as Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* clearly stated.

So, after respite and deferment, there comes the severe Account, as Allah *the Almighty* says: 'We have brought sternly to account...' (*at-Talaq*: 8). He *the Almighty* will take them to account sternly for all what they did, and their sins will be investigated. They will be held accountable for everything, be it small or great, without pardoning or overlooking their misdeeds. Calling to account entails discussion and investigation and He *the Almighty* has given the disbelievers the choice so as to decree a fair judgement regarding them. So, if someone chooses disbelief, he is not forced to be obedient. Thus, they were given the freedom of choice according to which they will be held accountable on the

Day of Judgement. The Arabic word *hisab* (account) signifies precision, and implies counting and numbers and sometimes refers to doubts and thoughts.

Furthermore, Allah *Glorified is He* gathers account and punishment together, saying: 'We have brought sternly to account: We punished them severely' (*at-Talaq*: 8). In this regard, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'He who is thoroughly examined in reckoning is put to torment.'⁽¹⁾ Thus, there is a relationship between reckoning one's deeds which he had done in the worldly life and asking him about his money and youth and between inflicting punishment on him, since no one is free from sin. 'Aisha narrated that 'he *peace and blessings be upon him* said, "Anybody whose account (record) is questioned will surely be punished." I said, Does Allah not say: "He surely will receive an easy reckoning?"' (*al-Inshiqaq*: 8) He *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, "This is not the actual reckoning but only the presentation of one's deeds to Him, whereas he who is thoroughly examined in reckoning is put to torment."'⁽²⁾

With regard to Allah's saying: 'He surely will receive an easy reckoning?' (*al-Inshiqaq*: 8), it refers to the people of paradise who will be given their record of deeds in their right hand, and that is why He *the Almighty* then says: 'And he shall go back to his people joyful' (*al-Inshiqaq*: 9). Thus, they will return to their people in happiness with Allah's Favour and Bounty. In the same connection, He *the Almighty* says: 'Then as for him who is given his book in his right hand, he will say: Lo! Read my book: [19] Surely I knew that I

(1) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of 'Aisha Allah be pleased with her who said, 'Has Allah Glorified is He not said this, "He will be made subject to an easy reckoning" (al-Inshiqaq: 8)?' Thereupon he peace and blessings be upon him said: "It is only the presentation of one's deeds to Him." ' This Hadith is also narrated by Al-Hakim; his narration reads, 'She said, I heard Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him saying in his prayer: "O Allah, judge me with an easy account!" When he finished his prayer, I said, O Messenger of Allah, what is reckoning? He said, "Allah looks in one's record and pardons him, but he who is thoroughly examined in reckoning is doomed, and never a believer is stricken by anything even the prickling of a thorn but Allah expiates of his sins." ' See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 6536; Al-Bazzar, Musnad, Hadith no. 199; Ahmad, Musnad Hadith no. 24958; and Al-Hakim, Mustadrak. Hadith no. 190*

(2) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of 'Aisha Allah be pleased with her. See Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 25002; and Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 7406.*

shall meet my account. [20] So he shall be in a life of pleasure, [21] In a lofty garden, [22] The fruits of which are near at hand [23]' (*al-Haqqa*: 19-23). Thus, he who is given his record in his right hand will call upon people to read his record, as it will be full of good deeds and a cause for being rescued from the fire. For this reason, his Account is easy, only to present his deeds to him and to let him read his record. It is as though this is an Account or torment for him; the torment of waiting for the Divine Decree. These decisive moments are what make it an Account for the believer. Yet, this is only the Account of presentation of one's deeds, not that of thorough examination. During such presentation, it is said to him, 'You made so and so,' then it is said, 'I covered it up for you in the worldly life, and I forgive you for it Today.' Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* grants him Forgiveness.

By contrast, the one who defied and rebelled against the commands of Allah *the Almighty* will be taken to a severe Account and will have his deeds, small and great, thoroughly examined and investigated, a fact which is clear in His saying: '...what a book is this! It does not omit a small one or a great one, but numbers them (all); and what they had done they shall find present (there)...' (*al-Kahf*: 49). A part of their reckoning may take place in this worldly life, so they are held accountable for their deeds and will be inflicted with a severe torment. In this regard, He *the Almighty* says: 'And how many a town to which I gave respite, while it was unjust, then I overtook it...' (*al-Hajj*: 48). In this worldly life, those rebels will be punished and destroyed, no matter how powerful they are, as He *the Almighty* says: 'And how many a town which was far more powerful than the town of yours which has driven you out: We destroyed them so there was no helper for them' (*Muhammad*: 13); and He also says: 'So each We punished for his sin; of them was he on whom We sent down a violent storm, and of them was he whom the rumbling overtook, and of them was he whom We made to be swallowed up by the earth, and of them was he whom We drowned...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 40). The first type of punishment is sending a storm of burning stones that injure them and burn their skin. Allah *Glorified is He* did not say that He sent upon them a fire, for instance because fire may burn them to death and thus pain ceases, while heated stones will cause them everlasting pain.

The second type of punishment is the high blast that seizes the ears, which was inflicted on the tribes of Thamud, as He *the Almighty* says: 'Then as to Thamud, they were destroyed by an excessively severe punishment' (*al-Haqqā*: 5). Allah *Glorified is He* gives respite to the rebels and transgressors and extends their period until He suddenly seizes them. The punishment may come from above them, such was the case with the people of Abraha who came to destroy the *Ka'ba*, thus He *the Almighty* sent against them birds in flocks, striking them with stones of hard clay, and rendered them like straw eaten up.

Besides, other people were seized by the high blast, and yet others were destroyed by a screaming, violent wind. Further, other people were destroyed by causing the earth to swallow them such as in the case of Qarun (Korah) who was swallowed along with his palace and his possessions. Moreover, others were drowned such as Pharaoh. All of these punishments were that of eradication.

Allah *Glorified is He* gives us another example in the story of the Kingdom of Bilqis (Sheba) in Yemen and how they were destroyed when they turned away from His Guidance, saying: 'Certainly there was a sign for Bilqis (Sheba) in their abode; two gardens on the right and the left; eat of the sustenance of your Lord and give thanks to Him: a good land and a Forgiving Lord! [15] But they turned aside, so We sent upon them a torrent of which the rush could not be withstood, and in place of their two gardens We gave to them two gardens yielding bitter fruit and (growing) tamarisk and a few lote trees [16]' (*Saba'*: 15-16).

Allah blessed the people of Bilqis (Sheba), but they turned with ingratitude and turned away from His commands. They used to take pride in the dam which preserved the rainwater and provided them with water throughout the year forgetting that He *the Almighty* is the real Provider. This very dam was the means of their destruction; it destroyed all their crops and fruits.

As they are taken to a severe Account, they are also punished with a painful torment that we do not know how terrible it is. Some scholars state that the verse: 'We have brought sternly to account: We punished them severely' (*at-Talaq*: 8) involves reversing the word order, which is an Arabic rhetorical style. Accordingly, the meaning is that Allah *the Almighty* punishes them in this

worldly life, through hunger, drought, humiliation, and destruction, and will take them to severe Account in the Hereafter.

It is narrated that ‘Aisha *Allah be pleased with her* asked Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* ‘Have you encountered a day harder than the day of Uhud?’ He replied, ‘Your tribes have troubled me a lot, and the worst trouble was the trouble on the day of ‘Aqaba when I presented myself to Ibn ‘Abd Yalayl ibn ‘Abd Kulal and he did not respond to my demand. So I departed, overwhelmed with excessive sorrow, and proceeded on, and could not relax till I found myself at Qarn Ath-Tha‘alib where I lifted my head towards the sky to see a cloud shading me unexpectedly. I looked up and saw Jibril (Gabriel) in it. He called me saying, “Allah has heard your people's saying to you, and what they have replied back to you, Allah has sent the Angel of the Mountains to you so that you may order him to do whatever you wish to these people.” The Angel of the Mountains called and greeted me, and then said, “O Muhammad! Order what you wish. If you like, I will let Al-Akhshabauyn (that is, two mountains) fall on them.”’” Prophet Muhammad said, ‘No, but I hope that Allah will let them beget children who will worship Allah alone, and will worship none besides Him.’⁽¹⁾

Allah *Glorified is He* decreed certain rules which govern the creation. We discussed the recompense of those who followed Allah’s Messengers and those who disobeyed them. The people of Mecca should have taken an example by the preceding nations and their responses to Allah’s Prophets as well as the torment which struck those who denied the Message and persecuted the Prophets.

Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* went through hard days. His own people were hostile to him and fought him. One of his hardest days was the battle of Uhud where his teeth were broken, and the battle of Hunayn in which the Muslims were startled by the disbelievers and therefore they fled, while he *peace and blessings be upon him* encouraged them to hold fast

(1) This Hadith is narrated on the authority of ‘Aisha *Allah be pleased with her*. See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih*, Hadith no. 3231; see also *Muslim, Sahih*, Hadith no. 4754; *Al-Bazzar, Musnad*, Hadith no. 103, *An-Nasa’i, Sunnan*, Hadith no. 7659; and *At-Tabarani, Al-Mu‘jam Al-Awsat*, Hadith no. 8902

and not to turn away saying, 'I am truly Allah's Prophet I am the [grand] son of 'Abd Al-Mutalib.'⁽¹⁾

What was harder than this was that he *peace and blessings be upon him* called people to Islam and to respond positively to Allah's Call, but they refused and turned away. Further, they incited the wicked people among them to hurt him. This was very hard on him as he knew the recompense which is destined for those who belie Allah's Prophets. Therefore, out of his mercy and fear for his people, he did not invoke Allah *the Almighty* to punish them. Instead, he supplicated, 'O Allah, guide my people for they do not know.'⁽²⁾

The Angel of the Mountains said to him, 'O Muhammad! If you like, I will let Al-Akhshabauyn (that is, two mountains) fall on them.' But he *peace and blessings be upon him* was a mercy to mankind and, therefore, he refused. In this situation, he did not only show mercy to the people of Mecca, but he also considered the interest of the coming generations, saying, 'No, but I hope that Allah will let them beget children who will worship Allah alone, and will worship none besides Him.' This came to happen afterwards as the sons of those disbelieving chiefs of Mecca embraced Islam and showed extraordinary courage in spreading its Message.

Allah *the Almighty* states clearly: 'And how many a town to which I gave respite while it was unjust, then I overtook it, and to Me is the return' (*al-Hajj*: 48). So, He gives respite to the unjust people in order that they may

(1) This is part of a long Hadith in which somebody asked Al-Bara' ibn 'Azib, 'Did you flee deserting Allah's Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* during the battle of Hunayn?' Al-Bara' replied, 'But Allah's Messenger did not flee. The people of the Tribe of Hawazin were good archers. When we met them, we attacked them, and they fled. When the Muslims started collecting the war booty, the pagans faced us with arrows, but Allah's Messenger did not flee. No doubt, I saw him on his white mule and Abu Sufyan was holding its reins and the Prophet was saying, 'I am the Prophet in truth, I am the son of 'Abd Al-Muttalib.' According to the narration of Muslim, Prophet Muhammad added, 'O Allah, descend Your Help.' Al-Bara' continued, 'When the battle grew fierce, we, by Allah, would seek protection by his side, and the bravest among us was he who confronted the onslaught and it was the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.' See, Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 2864; and Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 4716.

(2) This Hadith is narrated on the authority of 'Abdullah ibn 'Ubayd Allah be pleased with him. See Al-Bayhaqi, Shu'ab Al-Iman, Hadith no. 1375.

show repentance to Him. However, if they insist on their disbelief and injustice, He puts them into a severe torment. This is exactly what happened with the previous nations which showed disobedience and rebellion against Him *the Almighty*.

This is why Allah *the Almighty* then says:

فَذَاقَتْ وَبَالَ أَمْرِهَا وَكَانَ عَاقِبَةُ أَمْرِهَا خُسْرًا ﴿٩﴾

**To make them taste the ill effect of their conduct
the result of their conduct was ruin [9]
(The Quran, *at-Talaq*: 9)**

In fact, tasting is the strongest perception. Its linguistic meaning signifies the perception of the flavour of a foodstuff or a drink. Metaphorically, however, it signifies tasting anything, even if it is not food or drink. In another verse, He *the Almighty* says: ‘Taste; you forsooth are the mighty, the honourable’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 49). Here, it does not refer to perceiving the flavour of food or drink, which is the literal meaning of the word. One tastes food or drink in order to decide whether it is, for example sweet or sour. However, the taste intended in the last verse includes all the body; the hands, the legs, the chest, the neck and so on.

In this context, we understand the saying of Allah: ‘And Allah sets forth a parable: (consider) a town safe and secure to which its means of subsistence come in abundance from every quarter; but it became ungrateful to Allah’s favours, therefore Allah made it to taste the utmost degree of hunger and fear because of what they wrought’ (*an-Nahl*: 112). We know that hunger is the absence of food, but what would tasting the hunger be like? Neither the hunger nor the garment can be really tasted. The intended meaning is to show how strongly they feel that hunger.

Tasting is to perceive the flavour of something, not to eat or drink it. When you buy some fruits, the seller says to you, ‘Taste this one and you will find how tasty it is.’ Therefore, tasting, which is a sense shared by the whole body, means to perceive the flavour of something. You see with your eyes, hear with your ears, and smell with your nose, but tasting is shared by all these senses and is the strongest kind of perception.

Allah *Glorified is He* tells us here about the town that insolently opposed the Command of its Lord, saying: 'To make them taste the ill effect...' (*at-Talaq*: 9). He *Glorified is He* chose the sense of taste because every other means of perception may only be related to one kind of luxury in the worldly life, whereas tasting is related to food and drink which keep and sustain the human being's life. After all, they are part and parcel of one's life, not only a means of luxury. It is not only the tongue that tastes the food but also the whole body. In this connection, He *Glorified is He* says to the disbelievers: 'Taste the chastisement of burning' (*Al-Imran*: 181) and: 'And among men there is he who disputes about Allah without knowledge and without guidance and without an illuminating book, turning away haughtily that he may lead (others) astray from the way of Allah; for him is disgrace in this world, and on the Day of Resurrection We will make him taste the punishment of burning' (*al-Hajj*: 8-9). Burning is not a kind of food to be tasted, but rather, it causes pains to the skin and the soul. The human being may lose one of his senses like sight, touch or smell, but he never loses the sense of taste.⁽¹⁾ In this sense, taste supersedes the tongue and overwhelms all the organs of the body.

The expression 'tasting' is also used with regard to the punishment of the fire, as Allah *the Almighty* says to the disbelievers: 'Taste the chastisement of the Fire which you called a lie' (*Luqman*: 20). Tasting transcends the tongue and dominates all the organs so that every tiny part of the disbeliever's body tastes the chastisement of the fire.

When Allah (*Glorified is He*) uses the word 'taste' with regard to the punishment of the people of the town, He means that they felt this punishment with all their senses, even that of taste which is hidden in the soul. Thus, the punishment covers all the parts of their bodies.

In passing, it is good to know that tasting is something other than swallowing or feeling satisfied from the food. We see that in the commercial transaction

(1) From Proofreader: This information is according to the knowledge and belief of Sheikh Ash-Sha'rawi *may Allah rest his soul*, and it was stated by him to further clarify certain points, but it does not necessarily conform to the scientific facts and information proven true.

in our daily life. When you buy some fruits, the seller says to you, ‘This is a sweet fruit, taste it.’ He does not order you to eat it completely or to satisfy yourself. He rather asks you to only try its taste and then you can buy and eat according to your desire and ability.

If Allah *Glorified is He* has ordered them to taste the chastisement, can you imagine how painful that chastisement itself is? Concerning this punishment, He *the Almighty* says: ‘Surely the guilty are in error and distress. [47] On the day when they shall be dragged upon their faces into the Fire; taste the touch of Hell [48]’ (*al-Qamar*: 47-48). In another verse, He says: ‘I will cast him into Hell. [26] And what will make you realise what Hell is? [27] It leaves naught; nor does it spare aught [28]’ (*al-Muddaththir*: 26-28). The hellfire does not leave a piece of flesh or a nerve except that it destroys it and then it returns to its original state in order to taste the punishment again. If mere tasting or touching the hellfire is so terrible, ferocious and painful, what do you think of those inside the hellfire itself?

The tasting of the chastisement is the conclusion of the previous verse, in which He *the Almighty* says: ‘Many a town that insolently opposed the command of its Lord and His messengers We have brought sternly to account: We punished them severely’ (*at-Tahrim*: 8). Due to their opposition to and rebellion against the Command of Allah *the Almighty* they tasted the consequences of their misdeeds. Similarly, He *the Almighty* says: ‘Then it shall be said to those who were unjust: Taste abiding chastisement; you are not requited except for what you earned’ (*Yunus*: 52), and says: ‘On the day when the chastisement shall cover them from above them, and from beneath their feet; and He shall say: Taste what you did’ (*az-Zumar*: 55).

Allah *Glorified is He* has not been unjust to them as they taste the punishment for what they used to do, as if their misdeeds will be the hell that burns them. He *Glorified is He* does not charge them with what they did not do, and He does not compel them with His Dominating Power to disbelieve and thus deserve the punishment; rather, according to Allah’s Absolute Justice, they deserved that punishment for their actions. We notice that He *the Almighty* does not use the verb *taktasibun* with regard to their undertaking of misdeeds because they no longer exert any effort to do the misdeeds; rather, they

became part of their nature, so He uses the verb *taksibun* (to do). Thus, their pure nature has been corrupted out of their excessive sinning and opposition to the commands of Allah *Glorified is He*.

When you see a sentence starting with the Arabic particle *fa'* (then), you should know that the sentence is the outcome of what is before it. For example, the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Then He causes him to die, then assigns to him a grave' (*'Abasa*: 21) means that the putting of him in the grave came after death. Thus, what is before the particle *fa'* (then) is the cause of what is after it.

So, what did the people of the towns that opposed the command of its Lord taste? Allah *Glorified is He* provides the answer, saying: '...taste the ill effect of their conduct' (*at-Talaq*: 9). The 'ill effect' here is the bad consequences that happen to the one who opposes and rebels against the command of Allah *Glorified is He*. Such a person mistakenly thinks that this will be useful to him, but he does not realise the bad consequences of his action, even if he temporarily benefitted from his misdeeds. In this regard, He *Glorified is He* says: 'But when they neglected that with which they had been admonished, We opened for them the doors of all things, until when they rejoiced in what they were given We seized them suddenly; then lo! They were in utter despair' (*al-An'am*: 44). He *Glorified is He* has opened for those people the doors of everything: wealth, position and power, but this was not beneficial to them. They felt happy for these bounties and caused mischief on earth.

Therefore, He, says: '...until when they rejoiced in what they were given We seized them suddenly; then lo! They were in utter despair' (*al-An'am*: 44).

The 'ill effect' of their misdeeds is that Allah *the Almighty* has seized them suddenly. What He has bestowed on them at the beginning was not in their interest. So we should not be deceived by such bounties given by Allah *Glorified is He* to some people who exulted in them. Hereby, this was the cause of their punishment. The one who goes astray from the Truth and deviates from the Righteous Path only harms himself, and he will suffer the ill effect of his misdeeds, as he will abide in the hellfire eternally.

The Arabic word *al-wabal* (ill effect) linguistically is the infinitive of *wabeel*, which is the fatty food that causes harm to the one who eats it. This

word, therefore, suits Allah's saying: '...to make them taste the ill effect of their conduct' (*at-Talaq*: 9). The people of that town tasted the ill effect of their opposition to Allah's Command. Their conduct linguistically refers to one's condition, and it may refer to their misdeed of opposing Allah's Command and Ruling. They tasted the ill effect of their conduct like the one in this worldly life who eats a kind of food that would have bad effects on him.

Allah *the Almighty* then says: '...the result of their conduct was ruin' (*at-Talaq*: 9). They should have considered the consequences of their misdeeds, but their recklessness and foolishness diverted them from thinking about these consequences and made them have superficial views about these matters.

They looked at the temporal pleasure and forgot the ill effect that they will not be able to endure. If they had been rightly directed by Allah's Guidance or that of His Messenger and considered the veracity of the chastisement against which they had been warned, they would not have been inflicted with these serious consequences.

As a matter of fact, the returning of all the creatures will be to Allah *Glorified is He*. The problem with these people is that they neither considered the consequences of their actions nor reflected on Allah *the Almighty* Who manages all the affairs. That is why they were not deterred from committing misdeeds. By contrast, the one who considers the consequences and does good deeds in this worldly life will have the great reward and will be admitted to paradise. On the other hand, the one who does not consider the consequences and opposes, disobeys and rebels against Allah's Commands will be punished, a fact which is crystal clear in His saying: 'Then to Us shall be their return; then We shall make them taste severe punishment because they disbelieved' (*Yunus*: 70). If they had insight and reflected on these serious consequences, they would not have dared to disobey Allah *Glorified is He*.

Further, He *the Almighty* says: 'Whoever goes astray, to its detriment only does he go astray' (*al-Isra*': 15). This means that the person who deviates from His Divine Way will suffer the consequences of his action. The evil of the human being stems from not adhering to Allah's Way of Guidance, which causes harm for him and for the people around him; so he as well as the society will suffer.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'To Allah is the end of the affairs' (*al-Hajj*: 41). This means that the ultimate end will be to Him *Glorified is He*. In the verse in question, He says: '...the result of their conduct was ruin' (*at-Talaq*: 9). So, the ill effect of opposing Him and committing misdeeds is perdition. They mistakenly thought that their actions were beneficial for them, but they did not achieve anything for themselves except loss and perdition. This is not a temporal loss and it cannot be recompensed in a further bargain; rather, it is an eternal loss that incurs a great, eternal regret once the Day of Judgement comes. Their punishment starts when the Day of Judgement suddenly seizes them. They will be astonished for its coming which they used to deny, mistakenly believing that what they had done in the worldly life does not incur a punishment. It is the great loss that accompanies the person and never leaves him. It is not confined to this worldly life so that one can compensate or endure it patiently; rather, it will extend to the Hereafter where there is no compensation for the loss or any ability to endure the punishment.

Allah *Glorified is He* also says: 'In the Hereafter they shall be the greatest losers' (*an-Naml*: 5). Here, 'the greatest loser' is the superlative form of the 'loser' who loses the bliss of the paradise because he has not done good deeds in the worldly life. Not only will he be deprived of the bliss of the paradise, but he will also be punished in the hellfire. That is why He *Glorified is He* says: '...they shall be the greatest losers' (*an-Naml*: 5). This is because they do not enter the paradise, as they do not deserve it, which is a great loss. Moreover, they will be the companions of the hellfire which is another loss. Thus, they have lost their worldly life, the Hereafter and themselves; about those people Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Say [Prophet], "Shall we tell you who has the most to lose by their actions, [103] whose efforts in this world are misguided, even when they think they are doing good work? [104] These are they who disbelieve in the communications of their Lord and His meeting, so their deeds become null, and therefore We will not set up a balance for them on the Day of Resurrection[105]"' (*al-Kahf*: 103-105).

He *Glorified is He* has excluded the believers from the great loss, saying: 'Except those who believe and do good, and enjoin on each other truth, and enjoin on each other patience' (*al-'Asr*: 3). Thus, belief in Allah, His

Messenger and the Quran; doing righteous deeds; and enjoining the truth and patience on each other save the Muslim from the great loss about which He *Glorified is He* says: ‘I swear by the time, [1] Most surely man is in loss [2]’ (*al-’Asr*: 1-2). Thus, the human beings in general are in loss; so, what should the one who wants to be saved do? He *the Almighty* answers this question, saying: ‘I swear by the time, [1] most surely man is in loss, [2] except those who believe and do good, and enjoin on each other truth, and enjoin on each other patience [3]’ (*al-’Asr*: 1-3). Therefore, the one who deviates from the Way of Allah suffers a great loss, but he who adheres to it is protected from loss and humiliation.

Allah *Glorified is He* addresses the people in the way they understand, that is, gaining and losing; the believers gain in all their affairs, whereas the disbelievers and the disobedient ones who rebel against His Way are the losers, a fact which is clear in His saying: ‘They bought error with the right direction, so their bargain brought no gain, nor were they the followers of the right direction’ (*al-Baqara*: 16). Trade is to buy and sell, thus it implies gaining or losing. The seller’s interest is to gain from the commercial transaction. If he gains from his trade, he is successful. But if he does not gain anything, he is unsuccessful. Thus, Allah’s saying ‘...so their bargain brought no gain, nor were they the followers of the right direction’ (*al-Baqara*: 16) indicates that they have lost everything because they did not achieve a profit and they lost the right direction. Thus, they lost both the profit and the capital. If they had not gained anything, they, at least, should not have exchanged the right direction with error and therefore lost their capital. They suffered the consequences of the misdeeds that they had done, so their end was loss due to their opposing Allah’s Way and their haughtiness. So, they suffered unmatched loss and destruction.

With regard to what is prepared for such miserable losers, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ يَا أُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ
الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا قَدْ أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكُمْ ذِكْرًا

**God has prepared a severe torment for them.
So, you who have understanding, you who believe,
beware of God. He has sent you the Quran [10]
(The Quran, at-Talaq: 10)**

Allah, the All-Powerful and the Omnipotent, has prepared a severe torment for them according to His Power. He has prepared a very painful torment for them, a fact which is crystal clear in His saying: ‘We have prepared for the unbelievers a disgraceful chastisement’ (*an-Nisa*: 37). The matter has already been settled, for He *the Almighty* had previously prepared this punishment for them. With His Power and Wisdom, the Paradise and the Hellfire have already been created and prepared; they will not be prepared in the future.

To chastise someone means to hurt a living being in order to make him feel the pain; it does not mean to kill him, for death prevents feeling the pain of the chastisement. Every tyrannical town must suffer a certain kind of chastisement. In fact, the severity and the strength of that chastisement are proportional to the power of the one who undertakes it. By analogy, if the One Who punishes the people is Allah *the Almighty* can anyone bear that punishment?

The chastisement is described at one time as painful and another time as disgraceful and yet a third time as severe. Each of these kinds of punishment has its ill effect on the punished one. The disgraceful punishment is what humiliates the soul and the painful one is intended for the body itself. In fact, the human being has both a physical and a spiritual side. The painful punishment befalls the physical side and the disgraceful one befalls the spiritual side. As for the severe punishment, it is the unbearable torment. Evidently, the severity and the strength of the punishment differ according to the punisher; if he is weak, then his punishment is also weak, and if he has an average strength, then his punishment will be the same. But if the punisher is strong, then his punishment must also be strong and severe. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘If only the idolaters could see – as they will see when they face the torment – that all power belongs to Allah, and that Allah punishes severely’

(*al-Baqara*: 165). Hence, as soon as they see the punishment, they will know for sure that all the Power belongs to Allah and that He punishes severely. In this connection, He *the Almighty* says: ‘...and be careful (of your duty) to Allah, and know that Allah is severe in requiting (evil)’ (*al-Baqara*: 196).

The punishment will befall them on a Day when no one will have the power of money, rank, or lineage to protect himself from Allah’s punishment. So, if the corruption of the society stimulates you to disobey Him, you should fear His severe punishment in the Hereafter. Those who oppose Allah *the Almighty* and Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* deserve His unbearable punishment and chastisement. He says: ‘Allah destroyed them on account of their faults; surely Allah is strong, severe in requiting (evil)’ (*al-Anfal*: 52). Thus, Allah is Omnipotent over all what they are doing and His punishment is severe and painful.

As a matter of fact, the punishment befalls people inasmuch as they commit sins. So, Allah’s severe punishment does not befall the one who has committed a minor sin; rather, the repayment of everyone is proportional to his sin. Despite the fact that His Punishment for some people is easier than His punishing of others, it will also be painful.

One of His severe Punishments prepared for those who rebelled against Allah’s Way is *Az-Zaqqum* concerning which He *the Almighty* says: ‘It is a tree that grows in the bottom of the Hell; [64] its produce is as it were the heads of the serpents. [65] Then most surely they shall eat of it and fill their bellies with it [66]’ (*as-Saffat*: 64-66); and ‘Surely the tree of the *Zaqqum*, [43] is the food of the sinful [44] like dregs of oil; it shall boil in their bellies [45]’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 43-45).

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* gave us a hint about the severe punishment of eating *Az-Zaqqum*, saying: ‘If one drop of it fell on all the oceans of this worldly life, it would corrupt the livelihood of the people.’⁽¹⁾ Thus, one drop of *Az-Zaqqum* is enough to corrupt the sustenance of the

(1) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbas Allah be pleased with him. See Abu Dawud At-Tayalisi, Musnad, Hadith no. 276; At-Tabarani, Al-Mu‘jam Al-Kabir, Hadith no. 10905; Al-Mu‘jam Al-Awsat, Hadith no. 7525; and Al-Mu‘jam As-Saghir, Hadith no. 911.*

people because they would not benefit from the great, vast oceans, including their water and animals. So, what about the one whose food is *Az-Zaqqum*?

If Allah *the Almighty* has prepared a painful punishment, then it is fitting here that He commands them to fear Him, saying: 'Beware of Allah' (*at-Talaq*: 10). There is something wonderful about the issue of piety. You sometimes find Allah *the Almighty* commands the people to fear Him and sometimes to fear the fire. So, how can we have the same attitude towards Him and the fire in which He will punish the disbelievers, even though the fire is one of His creations? In fact, His command to fear the fire means that we should not do what provokes His Anger so that we avoid the punishment of the fire. It is as if you have placed a barrier between you and the fire by abandoning sins and doing good deeds. Fire is one of the soldiers of Allah Who wants us to guard ourselves against its punishment by placing a barrier between us and His Attributes of Majesty. As the fire is one of the soldiers of punishment and is relating to His Attributes of Majesty, His command to fear Him equals His commands to fear the fire. We should take into account that the fire does not intrinsically chastise the disobedient people; rather, it chastises them according to His command.

Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And be mindful to Allah, and know that you will meet Him, and give good news to the believers' (*al-Baqara*: 223). This means that we should beware of provoking His Anger by avoiding the misdeeds. The pious Muslim should be certain that he will meet His Lord and should have no doubt about that. By so doing, he is given the glad tidings of the paradise. Thus, you should place a barrier between you and the Majestic Attributes of Allah *the Almighty*. His Attributes of Majesty includes His Mightiness, Compelling, and Revenge; and His Attributes of Beauty includes His Forgiveness, Mercy, Enriching, and Wisdom. Thus, we should protect ourselves against His Majestic Attributes in order to guard ourselves against the soldiers of these Attributes, including the hellfire.

Only the people of understanding comprehend that and thus maintain righteous conduct and fear Allah *the Almighty*. They know for sure that believing in Allah and being mindful of Him saves them from the severe punishment prepared for the insolently rebellious people. So, the saying of Allah *the Almighty*:

‘So, you who have understanding...’ (*at-Talaq*: 10) refers to the people with sound minds. The Arabic word *lub* (mind) linguistically refers to the core of a thing. The mind is called so because it gives us the essence and benefits of the matters. The outer cover of something preserves its core and what is preserved is more valuable than what covers and preserves it. Thus, the people of understanding are those who perceive the issues of faith with their reason and employ their minds in order to always remember these issues, as the preoccupations, pleasures and desires of the worldly life may divert the human being from Allah’s Way of Guidance. That is why Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘That those who have minds may take heed’ (*Ibrahim*: 52). This means that the people of understanding remember that Allah is One God and there is no god except Him. The minds of such people guard them against following the whims, as the defect of the reason is following the whims and inclining towards what the soul desires. Thus, the mind judges the essence of the matter, not its exterior or inessential part. Thus, the people who employ their minds are those who can understand, think, and discern.

Further, Allah *the Almighty* addresses them in another verse, saying: ‘Most surely there are signs in this for those endowed with understanding’ (*Ta Ha*: 54). The mind is the faculty by which the process of sound selection is carried out. In Arabic, the word ‘*aql* (mind) is derived from the rope by which you tie a beast so that it does not go astray and, similarly, the mind protects the one from going astray and following his whims. It bridles one’s desires and disciplines them according to their mission in the worldly life. The mind forbids you from doing the evil actions and thus the person must have a sound mind that bridles his desires and stops them from transcending their assigned mission; otherwise, following these desires will cause mischief in the universe. Thus, the mind commands the person not to follow his desires because he is not alone in this worldly life; so, what would happen if all the people did the same?

Therefore, the mind tells you the realities of the matters so that you may have a deeper and a broader understanding. It is the scale that strikes the balance between all the matters and prevents the person from being superficial in his thinking.

Allah, Gloried is He, draws people’s attention to the importance of the minds so that they employ them in the matter of faith, for they support the

issue of believing in Him *the Almighty* and guide the human being to what is good for him. Employing the mind means to try to understand the laws of the universe in order to arrive at the Causer of these effects, that is, the Creator of this creation. That is why He *Glorified is He* says: 'Will they not understand?' (*al-Mu'minun*: 80) and says: 'Will they not come to know?' (*as-Sajda*: 4) Allah *Glorified is He* urges the human being to reflect, think and ponder. Had the Quran attempted to deceive the human being, it would not have attracted his attention to the necessity of reflection, thinking and pondering. Commanding them to use their intellectual capabilities affirms the fact that if they use their minds and follow the premises that they take for granted, they will attain to belief in Allah *the Almighty*.

The Arabic word '*aql* (mind) is derived from the word '*uqaal* which is the rope by which the legs of the camel are tied so that it does not stand up. Likewise, the mind's mission is to control the faculties of the body because every faculty has its inclinations. The eye, for instance, has the ability to see everything, so the mind prevents it from seeing certain harmful scenes. Likewise, the ear likes to hear everything, so the mind forbids it from listening to harmful things. Thus, the mind regulates the functions of the rest of the organs. Further, Allah *the Almighty* describes the mind as *lub* (core) because it is concerned with the important matters and judges the matters wisely to discover their essence.

So, who are the people of understanding? Allah *the Almighty* provides the answer, saying: 'You who have understanding, you who believe...' (*at-Talaq*: 10). Thus, they are the believers who have believed in Allah *the Almighty* and pledged the covenant of faith by believing in Him and in His Messengers without any doubt in their belief. They also believed that the Quran is a revelation from Allah *the Almighty* and that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the Messenger who conveys Allah's revelation.

They believed in Allah as a Lord, God and a Creator and therefore they deserved to be described as the people of understanding. So, following their belief in Him, they obeyed His commands and adhered to His Way, avoiding any unlawful activity. It is as if Allah *the Almighty* is saying, 'You who believed in Me, out of your own accord, as your God Who possesses the

Attribute of Knowledge, Power, Wisdom and Lordship; as long as you believed in Me, then obey My Commands.’ With regard to His saying: ‘...you who believe...’ (*at-Talaq*: 10), He does not specify the matters that they believe in because the person is a believer in Allah, and thus he is required to look for what He wants from him, which is conveyed by a Messenger from Him. Thus, believing in Allah entails believing in His Messenger because the ultimate of what the mind arrives at is that there is a God Who has created the universe and is managing it. Further, your belief in a Messenger entails believing in the Book that he brought as well as believing in the angels.

The believers are the people of understanding because they soundly used their minds to attain to their belief in Allah, His Messenger, and His Book. They did not allow their whims to divert them from the Truth. Allah *the Almighty* wants us to be restricted by our minds from the chaos in our pursuit to satisfy the desires of the soul. Thus, He stops you from following your desires by endowing you with intellectual capabilities.

Then, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘He has sent you the Quran’ (*at-Talaq*: 10). The Arabic particle *qad* is used for affirming an action if it is followed by a verb in the past tense. If it is followed by a verb in the present tense, then it means that the action is likely to happen if there are logical reasons to support that; otherwise, the action is deemed unlikely to happen.

Sending down the Quran means that it descended from on high. Everything has come into existence according to the Will of Allah *the Almighty* to directly or indirectly serve the interests of the human being.

You should not consider the term ‘sending down’ of the Quran in a physical sense, but consider its abstract meaning of supremacy. In truth, it is unlike sending down the rain from the sky. The latter is sensual as the water falls from the sky and mixes with the earth so that the plants grow. Sustaining the people by the rain and the earth is decreed by the Supreme Creator. In this vein, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘We sent Our Messengers with clear signs, the Scripture and the Balance so that people could uphold justice: We also sent iron, with its mighty strength and many uses for mankind’ (*al-Furqan*: 75). He *the Almighty* has sent His Messages to the Prophets in order to reform the life of the people. Further, He has sent iron that we extract from the mountains

and the earth, but sending here means to bring something into existence for the interest of the people.

Allah *the Almighty* has sent His Way of Guidance to straighten the life of the human being as well as the life of his offspring if they follow it. It shows us the good way and takes us away from the evil one. Besides, this Way of Guidance, conveyed by Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* informs us that Allah *Glorified is He* has created the universe for us and tells us about what He wants from us and how we should worship Him. It guides us to the right direction and draws up our lifestyle in order to ensure the good life of the human being on earth.

So, when you hear the word (sent down), you will find it always attributed to Allah, as in His saying: 'We sent it down on the Night of Glory' (*al-Qadr*: 1). The Arabic verb *anzal* (to reveal) is only attributed to Allah *the Almighty* but the verb *nazzal* (to descend) can be attributed to the angels, while the verb *nazzal* (to bring down) is attributed to the one trusted with revelation, that is, Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him*.

In Arabic, the verbs *anzal*, *nazal* and *nazzal* all mean to send down. However, each verb has an extra indication. The verb *nazal* refers to the revelation of the Scripture and to the One Who brought it down. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'The Faithful Spirit has descended with it' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 193), and He also says: 'And with truth have We revealed it, and with truth did it come...' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 193). The two verbs 'to reveal' and 'come down' show that the Quran was revealed from a high supreme position.

He *the Almighty* also says: 'And who believe in that which has been revealed to you and that which was revealed before you and they are sure of the Hereafter' (*al-Baqara*: 4); and He says in another verse: 'And We have not revealed upon you the Book except that you may make clear to them that about which they differ, and (as) a guidance and a mercy for a people who believe' (*an-Nahl*: 64). Sometimes, we find that the verb *anzal* (to reveal) is followed by the preposition '*ala* (upon) or *ila* (to). Some scholars say that when Allah *the Almighty* addresses Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the verb is followed by the preposition 'upon', as in His saying: 'And We have not revealed upon you the Book except that you may make clear to

them that about which they differ, and (as) a guidance and a mercy for a people who believe' (*an-Nahl*: 64). Those scholars, unintentionally, differentiate between Allah's Address to Prophet Muhammad and His Address to the *ummah*. They do not realise that the purpose of revealing it to him *peace and blessings be upon him* is only to guide the people. Therefore, we should consider that the purpose of the address – whether the verb is followed by the preposition 'upon' or 'to' – is that the Quran is revealed for both Prophet Muhammad and his *ummah*, as is the case in His saying: 'And We have not revealed upon you the Book except that you may make clear to them that about which they differ, and (as) a guidance and a mercy for a people who believe' (*an-Nahl*: 64).

In another verse, Allah *the Almighty* states: 'And indeed He has revealed to you in the Book that when you hear Allah's communications disbelieved in and mocked at do not sit with them until they enter into some other discourse...' (*an-Nisa*': 140). In this sense, the verse means that this Glorified Book was revealed from the heaven in order to serve the higher interests of people so that they show great reverence to it as it was only revealed for their best interest.

Accordingly, when the verb 'to reveal' is followed by the preposition 'upon', it signifies that the Book is revealed from a supreme position, the heaven; and when it is followed by the preposition 'to', it means that it is revealed by Allah *the Almighty* to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* so that he conveys it to the believers in order to serve their interests.

In the verse in question, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'He has sent you the Quran' (*at-Talaq*: 10). The Arabic word *Adh-Dhikr* (The Reminder or the Quran) linguistically means to recall or memorise something. It may also mean to say something as one cannot say anything unless he recalls it. Further, it may refer to the Glorious Quran, a fact which is clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...and We have revealed to you the Reminder that you may make clear to men what has been revealed to them, and that haply they may reflect' (*an-Nahl*: 44). Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was the first one who put the Quran into practice and his *Sunnah* is also considered a part of the Reminder. When the word 'Reminder' is stated without any other description, it then refers only to the Quran, as in Allah's saying: 'This We recite to you of the communications and the wise reminder' (*ar-Ra'd*: 9).

The Arabic word *adh-dhikr* may also mean reputation and fame. In this connection, Allah *the Almighty* addresses Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying: ‘And most surely it is a reminder for you and your people, and you shall soon be questioned’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 44). This means that the Quran is a great honour which shall give him and his people established reputation till the Day of Judgement. Further, He *the Almighty* addresses the believers, saying: ‘We have certainly sent down to you a Book in which is your mention’ (*al-Anbiya*: 10). The honour of the Quran is everlasting as it is continuously recited with different modes of recitation, a fact which is clear in His saying: ‘By the Quran with its reminding...’ (*Sad*: 1).

It may also refer to all the Scriptures revealed to all Messengers of Allah, as He *the Almighty* says: ‘Their reckoning has drawn near to men, and in heedlessness are they turning aside. [1] There comes not to them a new reminder from their Lord but they hear it while they sport [2]’ (*al-Anbiya*: 1-2); and He also says: ‘And certainly We gave to Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron) the *Furqan* and a light and a reminder for those who would guard (against evil)’ (*al-Anbiya*: 48).

Adh-Dhikr also means to remind. In this sense, Allah *the Almighty* has sent the Quran to remind the people about their Lord and Creator and to do what pleases Him. It attracts their attention towards believing in Him and obeying Him. Indeed, the Quran is an honour for them. Further, He *the Almighty* addresses Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying: ‘Alif Lam Mim Sad. [1] A Book revealed to you – so let there be no straitness in your breast on account of it – that you may warn thereby, and a reminder close to the believers. [2] Follow what has been revealed to you from your Lord... [3]’ (*al-A'raf*: 1-3). This Book was revealed to him because he was sent to the people to warn them if they deviated, and to remind, guide, help and give glad tidings for the believers.

Allah *the Almighty* says that He has sent the Quran to be followed because it is the Divine Way of Guidance that was prescribed for reforming the worldly life. So, the people should follow what was sent to them from their Lord. You should not follow any other path like what most people do through setting man-made laws according to their desires. For example, some governments attempt

to impose capitalism by force. These man-made legislations cannot be compared to the Legislations of Allah, because they are human ideas that contradict other human ideas. What is better than that is to receive our legislations from the One Whom we do not disdain to be His servants, that is, Allah *the Almighty*.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

رَسُولًا يَنْتَلُوا عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ مُبَيِّنَاتٍ لِيُخْرِجَ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ
مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ وَمَنْ يُؤْمِن بِاللَّهِ وَيَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا يُدْخِلْهُ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي
مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا قَدْ أَحْسَنَ اللَّهُ لَهُ رِزْقًا ﴿١١﴾

**And a messenger – reciting to you God’s revelations that
make things clear – to bring those who believe and do
righteous deeds from darkness into light. God will admit
those who believe in Him and do righteous deeds into
Gardens graced with flowing streams, where they will
remain for ever — He has made good provision for them[11]
(The Quran, *at-Talaq*: 11)**

The word ‘Messenger’ here is a substitution for the word *Dhikr* (Reminder). The messenger here is Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him*. So, both the Quran and Jibril (Gabriel) are sent down because the latter was sent with the Quran to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Thus, Jibril (Gabriel) is the Messenger of Allah from among the angels to the Messenger of Allah from among the human beings. He *the Almighty* describes him as: ‘The Faithful Spirit has descended with it’ (*ash-Shu’ara*: 193). Therefore, he is the Holy Spirit trusted with delivering the Quran to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

One of the great Bounties of Allah *the Almighty* is that He has sent Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to us to recite the verses of the Quran in order to attract people’s attention to the universal signs. He *the Almighty* says elsewhere: ‘...a Messenger from among themselves, reciting to them His communications and purifying them...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 164). Thus, Prophet Muhammad’s mission was not confined to reciting the verses of the Quran so that the people admire them; rather, he *peace and blessings be upon him* was assigned

to draw the listeners' attention to the One Who has created this marvellous universe and its wonderful signs. There is a difference between the recitation of the verses and teaching them. The recitation means that he *peace and blessings be upon him* reads the Quran to them, but teaching it entails that the listeners become able recite it themselves. So, He *the Almighty* says: '...and teaching them the Book and the wisdom...' (*Al-'Imran*: 164). Teaching means to transmit knowledge from the teacher to the student.

The revelation used to descend to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with some revelations up to forty verses or three-quarters of a *hizb* (section). When the revelation of these verses ends, he recites them to his Companions in order that they write them down and memorise them. So, the scribes write them down and they, along with other Companions, memorise them. So, they were the *ummah* of memorisation and narration.

Thus, the recitation of the Quran is just to read it, whereas teaching its verses means to know their meaning and the commands they carry in order to apply them. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was brought up among the people of Mecca and it is known that he could neither read nor write, and that he did not go to a teacher. Reading is the synonym of recitation because we do not recite except what is written down and is meaningful. Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* commands him *peace and blessings be upon him* to recite the Quran to all people whether they believe in him and in the Quran or not. This recitation constitutes a Call to Islam.

When Allah *the Almighty* says: 'These are the revelations of Allah which We recite to you [Muhammad] with the truth' (*al-Baqara*: 252), He refers to His wonderful signs. The signs of Allah *the Almighty* are of three kinds:

- 1- The universal signs that are the wonderful phenomena in the cosmos about which He *the Almighty* says: 'And from His signs is the night and day and the sun and the moon...' (*Fussilat*: 27); and: '...one of His signs is that He created mates for you from yourselves' (*ar-Rum*: 21).
- 2- The miracles that prove the veracity of the Messengers while conveying the Divine Messages. The miracles go against the laws of nature that the people are familiar with and that is why

they attract people's attention. An example of this is when Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was thrown into the fire, and then Allah *the Almighty* saved him. The primary purpose of this incident is not to save him from the fire because Allah *the Almighty* could have made them unable to catch him in the first place. Further, if He had willed, He could have quenched the fire with rain. However, this was intended to be a miracle to prove his truthfulness. He *the Almighty* has ordered the fire, saying: 'O fire! Be a comfort and peace to Ibrahim (Abraham)' (*al-Anbiya*: 69).

- 3- The verses of the Holy Quran are also called signs. As long as the Quranic verses, the miracles and the universal signs are all from Allah *the Almighty* then no contradiction can happen among them. This is due to the fact that the One Who has created the universe, sent the Messengers with the miracles, and revealed the Quran is One God. If this were not the case, the contradiction would happen among these signs.

The word 'sign' is used to refer to the wonderful and attractive things. You may say, for example, that so and so is a sign in beauty, which means that his beauty is attractive. You may also say, 'So and so is a sign in smartness,' which signifies that his smartness is wonderful. Thus, the sign is that the human being reflects on its wonderfulness for a long time.

Thus, the signs are either seen in the cosmos or recited in the Quran. The Quran explains the signs of the universe and the universe reciprocally explains the verses of the Quran. Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came with the verses of the Quran to attract people's attention to the seen signs in the universe. The wonderfulness of the signs of the universe is represented in the precision of the creation.

Thus, he *peace and blessings be upon him* has a religious mission which is to attract the attention of the listeners of the Quran to the Creator of this marvellous universe which is full of wonderful signs. Then, he *peace and blessings be upon him* should inform them about the Way of Guidance that corresponds with the marvelousness of the universe. By so doing, he *peace and blessings be upon him* conveys the Divine Way that purifies and elevates the human being.

In fact, Islam is the path of light whose principles are clear. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has conveyed it perfectly, clearly and comprehensively in a way that encompasses all the matters of life. With regard to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...that make things clear...' (*at-Talaq*: 11), it means that the Quranic verses prove for the one who listens to and reflects on them that they are Allah's revelations. These verses are clear in themselves and illustrate for the people the rulings that they need to regulate their lives.

Hafs recited the Quranic word *Mubayanat* as *Mubayinat* (clarifying) which means that the Quranic verses clarify the rulings that the people need. The majority of the reciters of the Quran recited it as *Mubayanat* (clarified) which means that these verses are clarified by Allah *the Almighty* as He says elsewhere: 'We have made the communications clear to you...' (*Al-'Imran*: 118). This means that He *the Almighty* clarifies through these verses what is lawful and what is unlawful. Furthermore, He *the Almighty* says: 'And certainly We have sent to you clear communications...' (*an-Nur*: 34). So, these clear verses guarantee a life of honour and purity for Allah's Vicegerent on earth. They address and regulate all the matters of life; there is no matter that the Islamic legislation does not regulate, so no one is excused for violating it.

In this regard, 'Ali ibn Abu Taleb said about the Quran, 'It contains the rulings that judge between you; the news of what happened before you; and what will happen after you. It is the Criterion (between right and wrong) without jest. Whoever among the oppressive abandons it, Allah crushes him and whoever seeks guidance from other than it, Allah leaves him to stray.'⁽¹⁾ The time keeps confirming this statement. Consider the fate of all the ideas, ideologies, parties and the capitalist and the communist states that attempted to destroy the religion of Islam; all of these ideologies, beliefs, and states declined before people's eyes.

Indeed, whoever among the oppressive people abandons it, Allah *the Almighty* crushes him, and whoever seeks guidance from a source other than it, He *the Almighty* leaves him to stray. He *the Almighty* is your Creator and He knows

(1) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of 'Ali ibn Abu Taleb Allah be pleased with him. See: At-Tirmidhi, Sunnan, Hadith no.2906; Al-Bazzar, Musnad, Hadith no. 636; Ad-Darimi, Sunnan, Hadith no. 3331; and Ibn Abu Shayba, Musannaf, Hadith no. 30629.*

best what is in your interest. So, it is not appropriate to be one of His creatures and then you become arrogant and set laws for yourself.

The meaning of the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...that makes things clear...’ (*at-Talaq*: 11) is that His revelations are the clear verses that straighten the movement of life. In fact, life necessitates that everyone undertakes his mission and that people’s activities become supportive not conflicting. What causes people to suffer is that some of them build, while others destroy. The intended outcome of these verses is stated in His saying: ‘...to bring those who believe and do righteous deeds from darkness into light...’ (*at-Talaq*: 11).

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent to bring the people out of the darkness of disbelief into the light of belief. In order that his people could understand his Message, he was selected from among them and shared their cultural norms. For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* states: ‘Certainly Allah conferred a benefit upon the believers when He raised among them a Messenger from among themselves, reciting to them His Messages and purifying them, and teaching them the Book and the wisdom, although before that they were surely in manifest error’ (*Al-Imran*: 164).

Thus, the Quran was revealed to bring the people out of the darkness of disbelief into the light of belief in order to lead their lives upon guidance and insight. Allah *Glorified is He* makes a comparison between the believers and the disbelievers, saying: ‘Allah is the guardian of those who believe. He brings them out of the darkness into the light; and [as for] those who disbelieve, their guardians are the devils who take them out of the light into the darkness’ (*al-Baqara*: 257). The Lord *Glorified is He* is the Ally of the believers Who cannot leave them in the darkness of polytheism and disbelief; rather, He brings them out of that darkness into the light of belief, monotheism and obedience. Hence He *the Almighty* is the Guardian of the believers in all their affairs; He loves, supports and grants them victory. Accordingly, He *Glorified is He* brings them out of the darkness of ignorance into the light of belief. On the other hand, the allies of the disbelievers, that is the false gods and the devils, take them out of the light into the depths of darkness.

Hence, the believers followed the way of peace and pleased Allah *Glorified is He*. In this regard, He *the Almighty* says: ‘Allah guides those who follow what

pleases Him to the ways of peace and brings them out of darkness [lit. darknesses] into light' (*al-Ma'ida*: 16) meaning, whoever follows what pleases Him *the Almighty* Allah will be pleased with him and will guide him to the ways of peace as a reward for him. Such good people are brought out of darkness into light. Darkness, as we know, is the state where collision is likely to happen.

When Allah *Glorified is He* brings them out of darkness into light, the believers are able to distinguish between the Righteous Path leading to goodness and the other paths that lead to evil. We should take into account that He *the Almighty* says that He brings the believers out of darkness using the plural 'darknesses', but He does not say He brings them into lights, that is He does not use 'light' in the plural form; rather, He uses it in the singular form, 'light'. This is due to the fact that light is only one and cannot be numerous. The darkness, on the other hand, overwhelms any place devoid of light and it can be found everywhere. Not only the material side but also the spiritual side of the worldly life needs to be illuminated by the spiritual light of guidance. The light with which Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came simultaneously enlightens the material and the spiritual sides for us not to collide with anything hidden in the darkness and for us to move on a clear path without colliding with any barriers.

Someone may ask, 'Why do people live in darkness? Why do they not incline towards the light?' We respond to this question, saying, 'Some people derive benefits when the rest of the people live in darkness. Such people, who forcibly appropriate people's properties and cause mischief on earth, are afraid of the callers who forbid them from doing injustice and call them to guidance using logic and reason. In fact, the unjust person hates the Call to faith as well as its callers. Such people have become accustomed to living in darkness and chaos, and causing mischief to others. When the true religion came, they turned away from its light because it deprives them of their delusive pleasures of living in darkness and error, and because it guides other people from whose misguidance they derive benefits'.

Darkness is the place where collision is likely to happen. When Islam brings the people out of darkness into the light, they are able to see the Righteous Path leading to goodness and the other paths leading to evil. Besides, their

movements and activities will be supportive, not conflicting. Hence, all the causes of rancour and hatred among those who embrace Islam will come to an end. As a matter of fact, the spiritual darkness is stronger than the material one and, similarly, the spiritual light is stronger than the material one.

Allah *Glorified is He* brings only the believers who do righteous deeds out from darkness. Thus, every good deed must stem from one's Belief, that is, the believer's activities in life should be consistent with the Will of Allah *the Almighty* and with his Belief. Consequently, Belief is the source of every righteous deed.

When Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Those who believe...' (*at-Talaq*: 11), He refers to the actions of the heart, and when He says: '...do righteous deeds...' (*at-Talaq*: 11), He refers to the actions of the limbs. The actions of the heart along with that of the limbs achieve together a righteous behaviour that complies with Belief. In fact, having a profound Belief makes the toil of doing righteous deeds acceptable and easy for the believer. Thus, doing righteous deeds is the fruit of having a strong belief. The righteous deeds are the actions that comply with Allah's Way of Guidance. The opposite of righteousness is corruption. The least form of righteousness is to leave what is good in the same state if you cannot make it better. As a matter of fact, no one can do all the righteous deeds, a fact which is clear in the saying of Allah *Glorified is He*: 'But he who has done [whatever he could] of righteous deeds and has faith need have no fear of injustice or deprivation' (*Ta Ha*: 112). But the Muslim is required to do righteous deeds to the best of his ability.

The lowest rank of righteousness is to leave what is good in the same condition by refraining from corrupting it. As a matter of fact, any action that serves man's vicegerency on earth is a righteous deed. For example, paving the roads for people not to be tired; providing transportation for them to reach their destinations easily, and working on ending their concerns about the necessities of life are all forms of righteous deeds.

Allah's Reward in the Hereafter will be on the grounds of believing and doing righteous deeds, a fact which is clearly manifested in His saying: 'Allah will admit those who believe in Him and do righteous deeds into Gardens graced with flowing streams, where they will remain forever...' (*at-Talaq*: 11).

In the worldly life, He *Glorified is He* wants us to lead the good life that He grants to those who obey Him by believing and doing righteous deeds. In fact, the believer lives in a state of tranquility due to his Belief. In addition, He *Glorified is He* will admit him into Gardens with flowing rivers.

The rivers flow from beneath the Gardens, indicating that the source of these rivers is under these Gardens which are full of plants and sublime buildings. According to human estimation, the water which the plants need causes harm to the buildings; but the Estimation of Allah *Glorified is He* is different as He prepares everything according to what befits His Omnipotence.

In the worldly life, people's buildings are harmed by water, but on the contrary, Allah designs, due to His Omnipotence, Gardens with flowing rivers without these rivers causing any harm either to the buildings or the plants. With regard to the rivers of the Gardens, He *the Almighty* says: '...and He has prepared for them Gardens beneath which rivers flow...' (*at-Tawba*: 100) and He also says: 'Gardens graced with flowing streams, where they will remain forever...' (*at-Talaq*: 11).

These rivers flow by themselves and they have no banks. They consist of numerous things that the human being desires, a fact which is crystal clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Here is a picture of the Garden promised to the pious: rivers of water forever pure, rivers of milk forever fresh, rivers of wine, a delight for those who drink, rivers of honey clarified and pure, [all] flow in it...' (*Muhammad*: 15).

The problem with the water of the river in this worldly life is that it may become stagnant and, consequently, its smell changes and algae appear on it. That is why Allah *Glorified is He* says about the water of paradise: '...rivers of water forever pure...' (*Muhammad*: 15). He *Glorified is He* removes from the water of the Gardens all the defects that we see in the water of our worldly life. Moreover, the water of the Gardens flows forever without the banks that restrain it.

In this vein, Anas ibn Malik *Allah be pleased with him* narrated that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'You think that the rivers of the Garden flow in river beds dug in the earth. This is not true, for, by Allah, these rivers flow without river beds. One of their two banks is made of pearls

and the other is made of rubies. The mud of these rivers is pure musk'. He was asked, 'What is pure musk?' He responded, 'It is the musk that has not been mixed with anything'.⁽¹⁾

As far as the rivers of milk are concerned, they will be forever fresh. In this connection, the Arabs used to milk the she-camels and store the milk in containers made of goatskin. When the she-camels went far away for grazing or travelling and the Bedouin needed milk, his only option was to drink the stored one. He used to find its taste had altered, but he could not find anything else to drink. For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* grants the believers rivers of milk which are forever fresh because they will live forever in these Gardens, as He says in the verse we are discussing: '...they will remain forever...' (*at-Talaq*: 11).

With regard to the rivers of the Garden, Allah *the Almighty* also says: '...rivers of wine, a delight for those who drink...' (*Muhammad*: 15). That wine is different from the wine of the worldly life which takes away one's reason. The wine of the Garden is delightful for those who drink it, unlike the wine in this worldly life. This is evident when you see the one who drinks wine, as he consumes the whole glass all at once. By contrast, when you drink a cup of mango juice, for example, you do not drink it all at once in order to enjoy its taste. The one who drinks wine in this worldly life, though, drinks it all at once. This is because if it is consumed quickly, its bitter and sour taste is less. Moreover, unlike the wine in the Hereafter, the wine of the worldly life takes away one's reason.

The fourth of these rivers is that of clarified honey. It is clarified and pure from any sand, pebbles, impurities or any other defects. It will be granted to the believers without any effort on their part. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* will provide us in the Hereafter with the best kind of honey that we used to desire in this worldly life, but without its defects.

In the verse under discussion, Allah *the Almighty* says: '...they will remain forever (*khalideen*)...' (*at-Talaq*: 11) meaning the believers will dwell in the Gardens forever, for neither will the Gardens vanish nor will the believers be

(1) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Anas ibn Malik Allah be pleased with him. See Abu Nu'aym, Hilyat Al-Awliya', 6/205; Ibn Abu Ad-Dunya, Sift Al-Janna, Hadith no. 66; and Ad-Daylami, Al-Firdaws Bi Ma'thur Al-Akhbar, Hadith no. 5412.*

driven away from them. The Arabic word '*al-khulud*' (eternity) which is derived from '*khalideen*' (remain forever) means to live for a very long time and endlessly; it implies that living in the Gardens is not just for a long time, but it is endless. This fact is further illustrated in the saying of Allah *Glorified is He*: 'And as to those who are made happy, they shall be in the Garden, abiding in it as long as the heavens and the earth endure, except as your Lord please...' (*Hud*: 108). Here, about what heaven and what earth does Allah *Glorified is He* speak? Is it the heaven that we see and the earth that we live on? This is not possible as He says in another verse: 'On the Day when the earth shall be changed into a different earth and the heavens (as well)' (*Ibrahim*: 48). The earth on which we live, and the heaven that shadows us, will be destroyed on the Day of Judgment. This means there is no eternal or immortal life on this earth, and that is why we should neglect this fleeting worldly life and focus on the eternal life of the Hereafter. Paradise is the Promised Land where you live without means of sustenance; you will not cultivate, harvest or do anything to earn your provision. Rather, once you think about something, you will find it before you without any effort or toil.

Allah *the Almighty* concludes the verse in question, saying: 'He has made good provision for them' (*at-Talaq*: 11). The word 'provision' here reminds us about the Promise that Allah *Glorified is He* has made for the pious people, saying: 'Allah will find a way out for those who are mindful of Him, and will provide for them from an unexpected source' (*at-Talaq*: 2-3). Thus, the pious person is provided abundantly in this worldly life from an unexpected source. The Lord *the Almighty* grants him provision for himself, the maintenance of his wife under his guardianship—or the alimony of his divorced wife—and for his children.

Furthermore, in the Hereafter, Allah *Glorified is He* will give the believers another provision, namely, Gardens with flowing rivers where they will remain forever. Concerning this abundant provision, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'He has made good provision for them' (*at-Talaq*: 11). Hence, He *the Almighty* will provide the believer abundantly with endless bliss in the Gardens of Paradise that contain many kinds of food, drinks and all what He has prepared for His righteous slaves.

Therefore, Allah, the Most Merciful, made a generous Promise, to reward those who believe in Him and do righteous deeds, of Gardens with flowing rivers where they will remain forever. The bliss of these Gardens will never run out or come to an end. No reward or provision is better than paradise, for it is incomparable with any bliss in this worldly life. He *Glorified is He* bestows His provision in both this worldly life and in the Hereafter, but His provision in the former is deemed little when compared with that of the latter, that is, paradise.

Allah *Glorified is He* does not say that He gave good provision to ‘them’, but He uses the singular form ‘him’ to indicate that every believer who does righteous deeds will have a special provision; it is not a general provision shared by all the believers. As a matter of fact, people vary concerning the provisions they receive in this worldly life and this will also be the case with the regards to their provision in paradise; they will have different food, drinks and houses. They will share, however, the state of eternity in paradise, and that is why Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...they will remain forever...’ (*at-Talaq*: 11), using the plural ‘they’. Hence, all of them will live eternally.

In many Quranic verses, Allah *Glorified is He* speaks about the provision in paradise; He, says, for example: ‘And convey good news to those who believe and do good deeds that they shall have gardens in which rivers flow. Whenever they shall be given a portion of the fruit thereof, they shall say, “This is what was given to us before”, and they shall be given the like of it’ (*al-Baqara*: 25). Both the chapter of *at-Talaq* and *al-Baqara* talk about the rivers and the provision of the Gardens whose fruits differ in taste and scent from that of the worldly life, although they share the same name. The people of the paradise will guess that this fruit may be a mango and that one may be a fig that they had eaten in the worldly life, but the fruits of paradise are totally different from that of the worldly life.

Moreover, the food of the people of paradise does not produce any wastes and the one may eat as much as he likes without discharging anything. This is because the fruits of this worldly life are different from that of the Hereafter with respect to how they are formed. Besides, while gaining the provision of this worldly life could be tiring, the provision of Allah *Glorified is He* in paradise is granted without having to rely on any means, and it is better than the provision of the worldly life that comes from pursuing means.

Inasmuch as Allah *Glorified is He* tells the believer that He has made for him a good provision, the believer should do righteous deeds. In this vein, the people of Qarun (Korah) advised him, saying: 'Do not exult, surely Allah does not love those who exult [in riches]; And seek, by means of what Allah has given you, the abode of the future' (*al-Qasas*: 76-77). Inasmuch as Allah *the Almighty* treats you benevolently, you should deal with other people kindly. You should forgive their faults and give good things to them to the same extent as you like Allah *Glorified is He* to forgive you your sins and give you of His Bounty.

Refraining from causing mischief on earth is an act of righteousness. In fact, corruption results from violating Allah's Way of Guidance. In this connection, the Lord *Glorified is He* says: '...and do not corrupt the earth after it has been set right' (*al-An'am*: 56). Allah *the Almighty* has created everything in a good state in order to delight His creation. For this reason, you should abstain from corrupting anything in the universe. His Way of Guidance is needed to establish a good spiritual life which takes precedence over the material one. Thus, you should be disciplined towards the universe around you to the extent that if you could not increase its goodness, at least leave it as it is, without corrupting it.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ وَمِنَ الْأَرْضِ مِثْلَهُنَّ يَنْزِلُ الْأَمْرُ بَيْنَهُنَّ لِتَعْلَمُوا
 أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ أَحَاطَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا ﴿١٢﴾

**It is God who created seven heavens and a similar
 [number] of earths. His command descends throughout
 them. So you should realize that He has power over all
 things and that His knowledge encompasses everything [12]
 (The Quran, at-Talaq: 12)**

The Divine Way of Guidance that the Lord *the Almighty* revealed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* teaches us that He has created the human beings as well as the universe. In fact, the precision of creation indicates the Existence of a Great Creator.

Here, Allah *Glorified is He* reminds us about the greatness of the creation. In this regard, He says: ‘Allah has raised up the heavens with no visible supports and then He established Himself on the Throne; He has subjected the sun and the moon each to pursue its course for an appointed time; He regulates all things, and explains the signs in detail so that you may be certain of meeting Him’ (*ar-Ra’d*: 2), and: ‘Allah, to Whom belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth; and woe to the unbelievers on account of the severe chastisement’ (*Ibrahim*: 2), and: ‘Allah is He Who created the heavens and the earth and sent down water from the clouds, then brought forth with it fruits as a sustenance for you. And He has made the ships subservient to you, that they might run their course in the sea by His command, and He has made the rivers subservient to you. He has made subservient to you the sun and the moon pursuing their courses, and He has made subservient to you the night and the day. He gives you all that you ask Him; and if you count Allah’s Favours, you will not be able to number them; most surely, man is very unjust, very ungrateful’ (*Ibrahim*: 32-34).

Allah *Glorified is He* tells us that He has created the heavens and earth and explains that the heavens are seven, and that is why they are used in the plural form, while the word ‘earth’ is used in the singular, a point which is clear in His saying: ‘Surely your Lord is Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth in six Days...’ (*al-A’raf*: 56). However, in the chapter of *at-Talaq*, He *the Almighty* says: ‘It is Allah who has created seven heavens and of the earth the like of them’ (*at-Talaq*: 12). Here arises a question, which is, ‘Why does He mention the heavens in the plural, while the earth is mentioned in the singular? Why does Allah not say, ‘seven earths’ using the plural form?’ He *Glorified is He* does not use the Arabic word ‘*aradin*’ (earths) because it is heavy on the tongue and difficult to pronounce, but He mentions the Arabic word ‘*as-samawat*’ (the heavens) in the plural form because it is light and easy to pronounce. This is why, when Allah *Glorified is He* mentions the heavens, He says: ‘seven heavens’ (*at-Talaq*: 12). On the contrary, He does not say, ‘seven earths’; rather, He says: ‘...and of the earth the like of them’ (*at-Talaq*: 12). This indicates that the earths are seven like the heavens, even if we literally consider that the heaven is what shadows you and that the earth is what you live on.

But where are the seven earths? The Quran tells us that the heavens are seven and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* told us that he passed by them on the Journey of Ascension. He said that there is so-and-so in the first heaven and so-and-so in the second one, and so on. Given that the heaven is what shadows you and the earth is what carries you, then the heaven of the creatures living in the lowest heaven is the heaven that is immediately higher than theirs. Likewise, the lowest heaven is the heaven of those living on earth, and so on and so forth.

The heaven is a canopy, as Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And We made the heaven a well-secured canopy, and yet they turn away from its wonders' (*al-Anbiya'*: 32). Thus, the Great Creator made the heaven a canopy that covers the whole earth and it is preserved without any visible supports. Accordingly, the Lord *the Almighty* says: 'Allah has raised up the heavens with no visible supports' (*ar-Ra'd*: 2), and He says: 'He created the heavens without any pillars that you can see, and put mountains upon the earth lest it might shake with you...' (*Luqman*: 10). Hence Allah *Glorified is He* has created high heavens which are sustained by His Omnipotence without any supports. Another possible interpretation is that the verse implies the existence of supports for the heavens, but they are different from the ones that we are familiar with. That is to say that Allah *the Almighty* has raised the heavens using the laws of gravity. The verse could also mean that the heavens' supports are invisible; when we look to the horizon, we find that the heaven has no supports.

The creation of the heavens and the earth is not an easy action except for Allah, the Omnipotent, Who has created mankind wonderfully. However, the creation of the heavens and the earth is more wonderful than the creation of man, as He says: 'Surely the creation of the heavens and the earth is greater by far than the creation of mankind' (*Ghafir*: 57).

Consequently, we come to know that Allah *Glorified is He* might have raised the heavens by so subtle and fine supports that our eyes cannot perceive them. These supports may be existent, but we cannot see them because we are restricted by the limitations of our sight. You should not be surprised to know that there could be invisible creatures because the eye, which is one of the means of perception, has its special law that enables it to see things and not see others.

Allah *Glorified is He* Who has created the seven heavens, is not one of the false gods or idols worshipped by the polytheists. These gods and idols cannot create anything, and that is why the Lord *Glorified is He* says to the polytheists: 'Have you considered your associates which you call on besides Allah? Show me what part of the earth they have created, or have they any share in the heavens' (*Fatir*: 40).

Allah's Perfect Omnipotence is evident in the creation of the heavens and earth; He says: 'Do you not see how Allah has created the seven heavens one above another' (*Nuh*: 15). He has created them one over the other with precision to the extent that the beholder sees no flaw in them, a fact which is crystal clear in His saying: 'Who created the seven heavens one above another; you see no incongruity in the creation of the Most Gracious. Then look again and again, can you see any disorder?' (*al-Mulk*: 3) If the beholder looks again and again to the heaven, he finds no defects, cracks or flaws. This is the creation of the Creator Who wonderfully builds designs and adorns.

To continue, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...and of the earth the like of them. His Command descends throughout them.' (*at-Talaq*: 12) His command descends throughout the seven heavens as well as the seven earths. The command can refer to the revelation or the Divine Decree and the Predestination about who will live or die and who will become rich or poor. Allah's Command regulates all things; He, for example, sends water from the sky, causes the plants to grow and brings the day and night and summer and winter. Some scholars said that in every earth and heaven, there are some of Allah's Creatures, Commands and Decrees.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'So you should realise that He has power over all things' (*at-Talaq*: 12). Hence, Allah's Decree and Command descends throughout the heavens and earths in order for us to know the reality of His Power and Control and that He is Able to do anything He wants, for nothing can stop Him. Everything is subjected to His Will and Omnipotence, and to Him belongs the control of the heavens and earth as His Power is over all things. He has absolute Power over His Dominion so that if He wills to do something, it will definitely happen. There is no absolute power in the universe except Allah's Power, and only what He wills takes place. He is Able

to eternalise His Divine Laws because no power can change this reality, as these Laws are prescribed by Allah *Glorified is He* Himself, and thus no one has the power to change them.

In fact, Allah *the Almighty* is eternally Powerful; He possessed this Attribute even before anything existed for Him to have power over. That is to say that He did not become powerful only after the creation of mankind; rather, He was Omnipotent even before creating them, and by virtue of His Power, they were created. He is unchangeable, and as a result He will remain Powerful and Existent in every moment and forever.

Allah *the Almighty* is eternally omnipotent. He has been Able to bring all His creation into existence and to give them what maintains their lives and preserves their species. Out of His Bounty, He provides everyone with provision, principles and morals they need. His command descends between the heavens and the earths in order for the people to know the reality of His Power and Control, and to know also that nothing is beyond His Power.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says: ‘...and that His knowledge encompasses everything’ (*at-Talaq*: 12). He *the Almighty* is fully aware of everything, even one's thoughts. He knows what the ears hear, what the eyes see and what is in the people's chests. As His Knowledge encompasses all things, He knows all the feelings of human beings.

This all-inclusive Knowledge entails having Knowledge and Power over the people; they will not escape from either His Knowledge or His Power. The knowledge is required along with the power, and that is why He *Glorified is He* says: ‘Surely, your Lord encompasses men’ (*al-Isra*’: 60). This comprehensive knowledge means that Allah *the Almighty* is fully aware of the people and is able to impose His commands on them.

the chapter of

at-Tahrim

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

The chapter of *at-Tahrim* ⁽¹⁾.
Allah ⁽²⁾ *Glorified is He* says:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ لِمَ تُحَرِّمُ مَا أَحَلَّ اللَّهُ لَكَ تَبْتَغِي مَرْضَاتَ
أَزْوَاجِكَ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١﴾

**Prophet, why do you prohibit what God has made
lawful to you in your desire to please your wives?
Yet God is forgiving and merciful [1]
(The Quran, *at-Tahrim*: 1)**

What links Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to his followers is not his name, Muhammad; rather, it is his being the Prophet and Messenger of Allah. Thus, every Muslim should call him with that title. Allah *Glorified is He* Who has created and selected him, distinguished Prophet Muhammad from other Prophets and even from the Messengers of firm resolve by addressing them with their names while addressing him *peace and blessings be upon him* with the honorary title of prophethood or Messengership. For example, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘O Adam! Dwell you and your wife in the garden...’

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- (1) The chapter of *at-Tahrim* was revealed in Medina. It is chapter number 66 in the Quran and number 107 in terms of its revelation. It consists of 12 verses and was revealed after the chapter of *al-Hujurat* and before the chapter of *al-Jumu'a*. It is also called ‘*Lima Tuharrim*’ (Why do you prohibit).
- (2) The Islamic conception of ‘Allah’ is not the same as the Christian and Jewish conception of ‘God’. However, the word ‘Allah’ does not refer to a tribal god or the God of only Muslims; it refers to the Creator of the whole world, the One God (who has no son). We prefer, however, to use ‘Allah’ rather than ‘God’ as it has a unique character: it cannot be used to refer to any false gods and does not have any derivatives like goddess, gods, etc. It is a unique word used solely to describe the One God of this universe.

(*al-Baqara*: 35), and: 'O Nuh (Noah)! Descend with peace from Us...' (*Hud*: 48), and also: 'O Ibrahim (Abraham)! You have already fulfilled the dream...' (*as-Saffat*: 105), including: 'O Musa (Moses)! I am Allah...' (*al-Qasas*: 30), and: 'O 'Isa (Jesus), son of Mary, did you say to men...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 116), as well as: 'O Dawud (David)! Surely We have made you a ruler in the land...' (*Sad*: 26).

By contrast, Allah *Glorified is He* did not address Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by his name; rather, He called him by his honorary title as a Messenger and a Prophet. Thus Allah *Glorified is He* has not made the way of addressing Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* like the way of addressing other Prophets and Messengers. If this is the case, we should not call him by his name; rather, we should call him by his title as a Prophet and a Messenger because these are the honorary titles that befit him.

When He *Glorified is He* addressed the most honourable people from among His creation, that is, His Messengers, He used their personal names. The personal name does not give any description because it only serves to specify the person, apart from his qualities. Thus Allah *Glorified is He* has addressed His Messengers with their names which only define their persons, but He has never called Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by his personal name, as He used the title of prophethood or Messengership that gives an additional description about him. The reason is that Allah *the Almighty* wanted to tell us that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* believes in all the Messengers and that his Message abrogates theirs. Moreover, Prophet Muhammad deserves to be called by the title of the Messenger as it gives another description about him: he will remain the Messenger of Allah until the coming of the Hour.

In the verse in question, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'O Prophet...' (*at-Tahrim*: 1). The Quran mentions that Prophet Muhammad's personal name is Muhammad and Ahmed. When someone is born, he is given a name. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has a name, a *kunya* (tecknonym) and a title. His name is Muhammad, which is mentioned four times in the Quran; firstly: 'Muhammad is only a Messenger before whom many Messengers have gone...' (*Al-Imran*: 144); secondly: 'Muhammad is not the father of anyone from the men; he is Allah's Messenger' (*al-Ahzab*: 40); thirdly: 'Muhammad is the

Messenger of Allah...' (*al-Fath*: 29); and lastly: 'He will overlook the bad deeds of those who have faith, do good deeds, and believe in what has been sent down to Muhammad' (*Muhammad*: 2). In the Quran, he was called Ahmed only one time in Allah's saying: '...giving the good news of a Messenger who will come after me ['Isa (Jesus)], his name being Ahmad...' (*as-Saff*: 6).

Prophet Muhammad's *kunya* (teknonym) is Abu Al-Qasim and his honorary title is the 'Messenger of Allah'. When he was born, his grandfather named him by the most beloved name to him; He said that he named him 'Muhammad' (the praiseworthy) in order for him to be praised on earth and in the heaven.⁽¹⁾ When Prophet Muhammad's son, Al-Qasim, was born, his *kunya* (teknonym) became Abu Qasim (the father of Al-Qasim). Further, when Allah *Glorified is He* selected him to convey His Message to the creation, He gave him the title of Prophet and Messenger. These two titles are greatly dignifying for anyone if the people called him by them, let alone Allah *Glorified is He*. When we want to dignify the person we are addressing, we put some titles before his name, saying, for example, 'Your Master', 'Your Excellency', and, 'Your Majesty'.

In the verse under discussion, the Arabic word '*iyyoha*' (O you!) preceded the name of the person who is being called, that is, '*an-Nabyy*' (the Prophet) because it starts with the article '*al*' (the). This is because in Arabic it is not possible to call someone by their name without mentioning the word '*iyyoha*' (O you!) first. However, this does not apply to the Name Allah, as we call Him *the Almighty* with this Name without inserting the word '*iyyoha*' in front of it, although His Name has the article '*al*' at the beginning. It is as if He *Glorified is He* is Unique is everything, even in the way of calling Him.

Allah *Glorified is He* addresses Muhammad as a Prophet and a Messenger because he is like an ambassador between Him *the Almighty* and His creation; Prophet Muhammad was sent to convey the Divine Way of Guidance to the people in order that they follow it in their lives. In fact, a Messenger is the one who conveys a Divine Message, whereas a Prophet is the one sent by Allah *the Almighty* without any new laws, as he follows the laws of the Messenger who preceded him. A Prophet constitutes a role model and a good example for his

(1) See Ibn 'Ashur, *At-Tahrir wa At-Tanwir*, 3/237.

people. In this regard, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* deserves the two titles. He is a Prophet because he was commanded to do certain acts of worship but he was not commanded to impose them on the people, and he is a Messenger because he was ordered to do certain obligations and was commanded to convey and impose them on the people.

The scholars said that a Messenger is necessarily a Prophet, but a Prophet is not necessarily a Messenger. This is true if the terminological meaning is considered; however, they are all sent by Allah *Glorified is He*. The Arabic word 'Nabi' (Prophet) is derived from the word 'naba'' (an important announcement) which refers to a great matter of which we should be heedful. The root of the word 'naba'' is 'nabwa', which refers to a high circular area in the middle of a flat place. When you say, for example, that you have seen so-and-so today, this is not called a 'naba'' because it is not an important piece of news. For this reason, Allah says about the Day of Judgment: 'What are they asking about? The momentous announcement (*an-naba'*)' (*an-Naba'*: 1, 2). '*An-naba'*' is a momentous announcement that reaches all people.

As a matter of fact, Prophet Muhammad's prophethood is a mercy in itself and is the reason Allah keeps sending down His Mercy on the creation. He is a supreme example of good manners and ethics. Those who obey Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* are his true followers. A Prophet only comes to direct people's attention towards Allah's Way of Guidance that properly regulates their activities in the universe. The people themselves are the ones who benefit from it, and they suffer only when they deviate from the Divine Way.

Allah is the One Who selects His Prophets, and prophethood is superior to any worldly position. It is a Mercy from Allah *the Almighty* as He says about Al-Khidr (Khidr): 'They found one from among Our slaves on whom We had granted mercy from Us...' (*al-Kahf*: 65). Moreover, when the polytheists asked, 'Why was this Quran not revealed to a man of importance in the two towns?' (*az-Zukhruf*: 31), Allah *the Almighty* responded to them saying: 'Will they distribute the Mercy of your Lord?' (*az-Zukhruf*: 32) Here, mercy refers to prophethood. He *the Almighty* also says: 'Those who disbelieve from among the followers of the Book do not like, nor do the polytheists, that good should

be sent down to you from your Lord, and Allah chooses whom He pleases for His special Mercy, and Allah is the Lord of Mighty Grace' (*al-Baqara*: 105).

Allah *Glorified is He* grants prophethood and shows His Mercy to whom He wills. Prophethood is a Divine Bounty and is considered the highest form of His Mercy which has been given to the people, being represented in the Prophets. It is a Mercy that He *Glorified is He* has distributed among the offspring of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*.

How can the polytheists distribute Allah's Mercy represented by prophethood while He is the One Who distributes even what is lower than it, that is, their provisions and livelihood in this worldly life? Therefore, His saying about Prophet Lut (Lot) *peace be upon him*: 'And We admitted him into Our Mercy; surely he was of the good' (*al-Anbiya*: 75) means that He *the Almighty* selected him as a Prophet because he was qualified for this mission. After all, He *Glorified is He* knows best where to place His Messages.

However, the climax of Allah's Mercy is embodied in sending the seal of the Prophets and the Messengers, namely, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. For this reason, He *the Almighty* addresses him, saying: 'We have not sent you except as a mercy to all people' (*al-Anbiya*: 107). This means, while the Messengers before him *peace and blessings be upon him* were a mercy to their people, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is a mercy to all people. Hence, Allah's Message is a Mercy for which He singles out whoever He wills from among His slaves, a fact which is clear in His saying: 'Allah knows best where to place His Messages' (*al-An'am*: 124).

In order to differentiate between a Prophet and a Messenger, we say that both of them are sent by Allah *the Almighty*, but a Prophet does not come with a new Law; he is sent with the Law of the Messenger who preceded him. Proving that a Prophet is different from a Messenger, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And We did not send before you any Messenger or Prophet, but when he desired...' (*al-Hajj*: 52). A Prophet is only sent to be a practical example for the implementation of the teachings conveyed by the Messenger who preceded him.

A Messenger sent by Allah *the Almighty* bears a new Message that includes new rulings and addresses new issues which were not addressed by the Message

that preceded it; but a chosen Prophet is the one who applies what came in the previous Message. That is, the Prophets are practical examples who implemented the previous Messages, but they do not come with new Messages. By contrast, a Messenger is sent with a new Law to adhere to and apply; this is his additional mission. To sum up, the Lord *Glorified is He* has sent Messengers to convey and apply a Message and He has sent Prophets to be ideal examples of applying these Messages with which the previous Messengers were sent.

Back to the verse in question; Allah *Glorified is He* reproaches Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying: 'O Prophet [Muhammad], why do you prohibit what Allah has made lawful to you...' (*at-Tahrim*: 1). Allah *the Almighty* has reproached him many times in the Quran. This reproach, in fact, is in his interest and not against him, just like the father who reproaches his son for exhausting himself with studying, out of fear for him. An illustrative example for this is when the Lord *the Almighty* says in the chapter of '*Abasa*: 'He frowned and turned away when the blind man came to him. And what could make him know that he will purify himself?' (*Abasa*: 1-3) Here, Allah has reproached Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* because he left the believing man who came to ask him about some religious matters, calling instead the disbelievers, who denied his Message, to Islam; as if he chose the hard choice and left the easier one.

Thus, this reproach is in the interest of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and not against him, as some people mistakenly think when they try to understand this verse. Similarly, Allah *the Almighty* reproaches him, saying: 'O Prophet [Muhammad], why do you prohibit what Allah has made lawful to you...' (*at-Tahrim*: 1). This is because Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* made matters difficult for himself by prohibiting what is lawful for him. As we have said previously, this reproach is beneficial for him *peace and blessings be upon him*.

With regard to the case of Ibn Umm Maktum, for which Allah *Glorified is He* reproached Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in the chapter of '*Abasa*, we find that the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* realised that the weak people easily accepted his Message. And for this reason, he pre-occupied and exhausted himself by calling the disbelieving, arrogant

masters of Quraysh, hoping that they might taste the sweetness of Belief. Thus, the reproach is in his best interest. Out of his keenness on guiding all the people to Islam, he used to deal with arrogant people kindly and leniently, hoping that he may win over their hearts.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘O Prophet [Muhammad], why do you prohibit what Allah has made lawful to you...’ (*at-Tahrim*: 1), it means that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* prohibited himself from what is lawful for the rest of the believers. The Lord *the Most High* explains to Prophet Muhammad that he should not prohibit what He has made lawful for him, which is in his interest. Of course, only He *the Almighty* is entitled to make something lawful or unlawful; no one should intervene in this matter. The human being, however, sometimes intervenes in Allah's Ruling by prohibiting what He made lawful or by permitting what He made unlawful. For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘O you who believe! Do not forbid the good things which Allah has made lawful for you...’ (*al-Ma‘ida*: 87).

But the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘O Prophet [Muhammad], why do you prohibit what Allah has made lawful to you...’ (*at-Tahrim*: 1) alludes to something that made Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* so angry that he refrained from certain lawful matters which he desired. We should note that he *peace and blessings be upon him* did not permit what the Lord *the Almighty* had made unlawful; rather, he prohibited for himself what Allah *Glorified is He* made lawful, which is not in his interest. It is as if Allah *the Almighty* is reproaching Prophet Muhammad for exhausting himself by doing this. That is, this reproach is in his interest.

As prohibition constrains the person, Allah *the Almighty* reproached Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* for constraining himself by prohibiting what He has made lawful for him, just as you may reproach your son who exhausts himself by staying up to study. Consequently, the reproach is beneficial to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. We should note that Allah *Glorified is He* made things lawful and others unlawful; consequently, you should not make what is unlawful permissible or what is lawful prohibited, as He *the Almighty* says: ‘Who has prohibited the embellishment of Allah which He has produced for His slaves and the good provisions?’ (*al-A‘raf*: 32)

We see that Allah *the Almighty* forbids Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* from constraining himself by prohibiting what Allah has made lawful for him in the same way that He will blame him if Prophet Muhammad—Allah forbid—permitted what He has made unlawful. Regarding this incident, ‘Aisha *Allah be pleased with her* said that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* used to visit Zainab Bint Jahsh and to have honey there. So, ‘Aisha and Hafsa agreed that the one whom Prophet Muhammad visited first should say, ‘I notice that you smell of the *Maghafir* (gum of mimosa)’. Prophet Muhammad visited one of them and she said that to him, whereupon he said, ‘I have had honey in the house of Zainab Bint Jahsh and I will never do that again’. Afterwards, the following verses were revealed: ‘O Prophet [Muhammad], why do you prohibit what Allah has made lawful to you in your desire to please your wives? Yet Allah is Forgiving and Merciful. He has ordained a way for you [believers] to release yourselves from [such] oaths—Allah is your Helper: He is the All Knowing, the All-Wise. Prophet [Muhammad] told something in confidence to one of his wives. When she disclosed it [to another wife] and Allah made this known to him, he confirmed part of it, keeping the rest to himself. When he confronted her with what she had done, she asked, “Who told you about this?” He replied, “The All Knowing, the All-Aware told me”. If both of you [wives] repent to Allah—for your hearts have inclined [away from/to what is right]—[all will be well]; but if you collaborate against him, [be warned that] Allah, He is his Protector, and so are Jibril (Gabriel) and all righteous believers, and furthermore, the angels will be his supporters. His Lord may well replace you with better wives if the Prophet [Muhammad] decides to divorce any of you: wives who submit to Allah, true believers, devout, who turn to Him in repentance and worship Him, given to Fasting/travelling [for their faith in Islam], whether previously married or virgins’ (*at-Tahrim*: 1-5).

Thus, this story begins when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was in the habit of visiting all his wives after the Dawn Prayer. One narration states that Hafsa Bint ‘Umar *Allah be pleased with her* was gifted a bottle of honey and she used to give some of it to Prophet Muhammad when he visited her. Therefore, ‘Aisha became annoyed because Prophet Muhammad used to stay a long time with Hafsa. She asked a slave girl from Abyssinia called

Khadra' to see what he was doing when he went to Hafsa. The slave girl told 'Aisha about the matter of the honey, which made her jealous. She sent to the other wives of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and asked them to tell the Prophet that they smell *Maghafir* (gum of mimosa) on him, which Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* hated because of its bad smell and because it harmed the angel who used to bring the revelation to him. Thereupon, all his wives told him that they smelt the gum of mimosa on him. When he visited 'Aisha, she put her hand on her nose, whereupon he asked her, 'What is the matter with you?' She replied that she smelt the gum of mimosa. When she asked him if he had eaten it, he answered her negatively and told her that Hafsa had given him honey. She replied, 'You have had the honey of the bees which took their nectar from the gum of mimosa'. Thus, he took an oath to refrain from eating honey and he made it unlawful for himself.⁽¹⁾

Allah *the Almighty* does not want Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to do the same as Prophet Ya'qub (Jacob) *peace be upon him* who prohibited some matters for himself which Allah *the Almighty* had made unlawful. In this regard, the Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'All food was lawful to the children of Israel except that which Israel had forbidden to himself, before the Torah was revealed. Say, "Bring, then, the Torah and read it, if you are truthful"' (*Al-'Imran*: 93). That is, Israel, Prophet Ya'qub (Jacob) *peace be upon him* made unlawful for himself some kinds of food because he was allowed to do that or because He *the Almighty* approved his action.

When someone makes a vow, he commits himself to do what Allah *the Almighty* has not imposed on him. Israel only prohibited himself from some kinds of food before the revelation of the Torah, and these then became unlawful for the children of Israel as well. By contrast, the Lord *the Almighty* reproached Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* for prohibiting himself from what is lawful. His prohibition was not imposed on the believers; rather, Allah *Glorified is He* has established the following maxim: 'Who has prohibited the beautiful [gifts] of Allah which He has produced for His slaves and the

(1) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of 'Aisha Allah be pleased with her. See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 5268 and 6972; and Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 3752.*

provisions [which are] clean and pure?' (*al-A'raf*: 32). As long as Allah *the Almighty* has brought forth the adornments and good provisions, then He allows His slaves to enjoy them.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...in your desire to please your wives?' (*at-Tahrim*: 1), it indicates that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* prohibited what was lawful for him in order to please his wives. The word '*azwaj*' (mates) is the plural of '*zawj*' (mate), which means one mate that has something similar to the other mate. For this reason you should not think that it refers to two mates; rather, it refers to only one mate, as the Lord *the Most High* says: 'Then He made of him two mates (*az-zawjain*), the male and the female' (*al-Qiyama*: 39) meaning the male is one '*zawj*' (mate), and the female is also one '*zawj*'.

In fact, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was the best one among the people, especially in terms of good treatment of his household and wives. To the best of his ability, he was keen on pleasing and treating them benevolently. However, Allah *Glorified is He* willed to correct the matter of his making what is lawful prohibited for himself. The husband should not prohibit what He *the Almighty* has made lawful for him in order to please his wives.

Allah *Glorified is He* concludes the verse, saying: 'Yet Allah is Forgiving and Merciful' (*at-Tahrim*: 1). This is a proof that He has forgiven Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* for prohibiting himself from what He has made lawful. The Lord *the Almighty* is Forgiving and Merciful; He forgives people's sins if they seek His Forgiveness. The Lord *Glorified is He* is so merciful that He does not hasten to punish the people for their sins out of His Compassion for them, and He loves those who repent to Him.

This means that Allah *the Almighty* is Forgiving and Merciful even to the one who delays repentance for a while, in order for him to join those who have faith and make up for what he has lost. Allah *the Almighty* forgives the previous sins of His slave if the slave wants to make amends for them. Allah *Glorified is He* is eternally All-Forgiving and All-Merciful; He possesses these Attributes even before anyone existed to forgive or for Him to show mercy to. His Attributes have been affirmed and He is the Unchangeable One Who can

change anything. Time does not change Him; He is eternally All-Forgiving, All-Merciful, All Knowing and All-Wise.

In their absolute sense, the Attribute of Forgiveness and Mercifulness are only attributed to Allah *the Almighty*. These Attributes are manifested in accepting the repentance of the guilty and showing mercy to the wronged person. That is, Allah *the Almighty* is the All-Forgiving and the All-Merciful.

You should never say that so-and-so does not deserve Allah's Forgiveness and Mercy because He *the Almighty* controls the affairs of the heavens and earth, and He is the One Who has made it obligatory on Himself to justly recompense the human beings with what they deserve. He has Absolute Power over the universe, and His Forgiveness and Mercy precede His Anger and Punishment. In this regard, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Before Allah created the creations, He wrote a Book [wherein is written], "My Mercy has preceded My Anger". That Book is written with Him on His Throne'.⁽¹⁾

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

قَدْ فَرَضَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ تَحِلَّةَ أَيْمَانِكُمْ وَاللَّهُ مَوْلَاكُمْ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٢﴾

He has ordained a way for you [believers] to release you from [such] oaths — God is your helper: He is the All Knowing, the Wise [2] (The Quran, *at-Tahrim*: 2)

Prescribing the expiation for one's broken oaths preceded Prophet Muhammad's oath to prohibit for himself some of what is lawful. We know that the Arabic particle '*qad*', written before 'has ordained' in this verse, is used to affirm the action when it precedes a verb in the past tense. However, when it is used with the present tense, it indicates that the action is likely to happen if there are logical reasons to support that; otherwise, the action will be deemed unlikely to happen. This particle, however, affirms the action, even if the verb is in the present tense, when it is pertinent to any of the Attributes of Allah *the Almighty* as in His saying in the chapter of *al-An'am*: 'We know indeed that what they

(1) This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him. See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 7554; Abu Ya'la, Musnad, Hadith no. 6432; and Ibn Manda, Tawhid, Hadith no. 714.

say certainly grieves you...' (*al-An'am*: 33), where the verb 'know' is preceded by the particle '*qad*'.

Thus, Allah's Knowledge is eternal and no power or matter goes beyond His Knowledge. In the verse in the chapter of *al-An'am*, the particle '*qad*' preceded the present tense, but it was used to affirm the action, as it is attributed to Allah *the Almighty*. Here, He *Glorified is He* wants to tell us that He eternally knows all that will happen.

Obligatory acts are what Allah *the Almighty* has imposed on us, like praying five times a day, fasting the month of *Ramadan*, giving *zakat* (prescribed alms) of 2.5% of one's property that reaches a certain amount after the lapse of one year, and performing the major Pilgrimage to the Sacred House once in a lifetime if the person is able to do this.

However, it is not obligatory that the Muslim does the supererogatory Prayers, fasts some days other than the month of *Ramadan*, gives more than the prescribed alms, or performs the major Pilgrimage more than one time or the optional minor pilgrimage. These are good deeds that the Muslim does out of his own accord and are the same type as the obligatory rites.

So, when Allah *the Almighty* says: 'They used to sleep but little in the night. And in the morning they asked forgiveness' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 17-18), does He make it obligatory on the believers to pray at night and sleep only a little? No, but whoever wants to attain to the level of excellence should do this. The ordinary Muslim has to only perform the obligatory prayers like the Evening Prayer, and he can sleep until the Dawn Prayer of the following day. On the contrary, the one who attained the level of excellence sleeps only a little at night.

The obligatory matter requires the existence of the one who ordains it, i.e. Allah *the Almighty* and the one on whom it is imposed. There is a subtle difference between *fard* and *wajib*, which both refer to an obligatory act. The former is imposed by Allah *the Almighty*, while the latter may be imposed by the person on himself. The person may oblige himself to do something that Allah *the Almighty* has not imposed on him.

An illustrative example of an act ordained by Allah (*fard*) is the dowry. The Lord *Glorified is He* made it obligatory for the husband to give the dowry

to his wife, saying: ‘And to those, with whom you desire to enjoy marriage, give them their dowries (*faridah*) as appointed...’ (*an-Nisa*: 24), using the word ‘*faridah*’ (dowries) which is derived from the word ‘*fard*’ (obligatory act ordained by Allah). Therefore Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who made it obligatory for the husband to give the dowry to his wife. After that, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...and there is no blame on you if, after [having agreed upon] this lawful due (*faridah*), you mutually agree upon something [else]...’ (*an-Nisa*: 24). We notice here the difference between the rights imposed by Allah *the Almighty* and the matters for which He has left the door of generosity open. The wife is entitled to take the dowry, but she can willingly refuse to take it. Besides, the husband can give her more than the dowry. These cases are addressed in His saying: ‘Do not forget to be generous towards one another’ (*al-Baqara*: 237). Thus, the husband and the wife are not blamed for what they mutually choose to do after fulfilling the obligation.

Furthermore, Allah *the Almighty* says at the beginning of the chapter of *an-Nur*: ‘(This is) a chapter which We have revealed and made obligatory (*faradna*)...’ (*an-Nur*: 1). The obligatory act (*fard*), from which the word ‘*faradna*’ (We made obligatory) is derived, is one of His Rulings that the person is obliged to do. Moreover, He *the Almighty* says: ‘And if you divorce them before you have touched them and you have appointed (*faradtum*) for them a portion, then (pay to them) half of what you have appointed’ (*al-Baqara*: 237). In this case, the husbands have to give half of what they had fixed. Therefore, every matter has a ruling in the Islamic *Shari’a* which is ordained wisely by Allah *the Almighty*. What the husband has imposed on himself in this case is different from Allah’s Obligation of the five pillars of Islam, for example.

The meaning of Allah’s saying: ‘(This is) a chapter which We have revealed and made obligatory (*faradnaha*)...’ (*an-Nur*: 1) is that He made the rulings mentioned in this great chapter obligatory. He has sent it down and obligated us to act on its rulings. With regard to His saying: ‘Allah has ordained a way for you (*farada...lakum*) [believers] to release yourselves from [such] oaths...’ (*at-Tahrim*: 2), it means that Allah has ordained this obligation to achieve the interest of the Muslims in order for them to find a

way to release themselves from the oaths that they took but then caused hardship for them.

Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* clarified the way for the Muslims to release themselves from the oaths that they have taken. Some scholars said that if the verb '*farad*' (to obligate) is followed by the preposition '*'ala*' (on), then the command only indicates an obligation, as when He *the Almighty* says: 'We know what We have obligated on them (*faradna 'alaihim*)' (*al-Ahzab*: 50). But if that verb is followed by the preposition '*'lam*' (for), as in the verse under discussion in the chapter of *at-Tahrim*, then the command may indicate either a clarification or an obligation.

We should take into account that Allah's saying: 'O Prophet [Muhammad], why do you prohibit what Allah has made lawful to you...' (*at-Tahrim*: 1) addresses Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* specifically, but when He talks about the obligatory expiation of the broken oath, He addresses all the Muslims. For this reason, the scholars held different views about whether Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* expiated for his broken oath or not, and whether the command is directed to only the rest of the Muslims.

In this regard, Al-Hasan Al-Basri maintained that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not expiate for his oath because Allah *the Almighty* had forgiven his past and future sins.⁽¹⁾ This verse carries certain teachings to the believers in general. Was Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* taking the oath of refraining from eating honey to please his wives a sin? And is it right to say that it is a sin, but Prophet Muhammad was not required to expiate for it because Allah *the Almighty* had forgiven his past and future sins?

In the same vein, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to a few men from the Ash'ariyyin tribe, 'By Allah, I will not give you any mount; besides, I do not have anything to mount you on'. But after that a few camels from the war booty were brought to him, and he asked about them, saying, 'Where are the group of the Ash'ariyyin?' He ordered for five fat camels to be given to them, and then they set out. But they said, 'What have we done? We made Prophet Muhammad forget his oath. By Allah, we will

(1) See *Al-Razi, Mafatih Al-Ghaib*, 30/270.

never be successful'. Consequently, they returned to him and reminded him of his oath. He said, 'I have not provided you with the mount, but Allah has provided you. By Allah, I may take an oath to do something but on finding something else which is better, I do that which is better and make an expiation for my oath'.⁽¹⁾

Allah *Glorified is He* revealed the following verse concerning them: 'Nor (is there blame) on those who, when they came to you to be provided with mounts, you said, "I cannot find that on which to carry you"; they went back while their eyes overflowed with tears on account of grief for not finding that which they could spend' (*at-Tawba*: 92). Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not have mounts for them to ride, so they turned away with their eyes shedding tears, being grieved because they had nothing to contribute regarding the battle of Tabuk.

They did not shed tears in front of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*; rather, they shed tears after turning away. They were pushed to the point of tears due to their grieving for not participating in fighting. But had they shed tears before the Prophet, the hypocrites will have claimed that they were shedding crocodile tears and trying to show-off. Thus, they expressed their strong feelings of grief away from him.

Moreover, as the Quran recounts their story, this proves the truthfulness of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and that the Quran is a revelation from Allah *the Almighty* for how could he *peace and blessings be upon him* know about this incident while it did not happen before him.

As for the expiation of the broken oaths, it is ordained for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the Muslims alike, as Allah *the Almighty* says: 'O Prophet [Muhammad], why do you prohibit what Allah has made lawful to you...' (*at-Tahrim*: 1); and He says: 'He has ordained a way for you [believers] to release yourselves from [such] oaths—Allah is your Helper: He is the All Knowing, the All-Wise' (*at-Tahrim*: 2). When we

(1) This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari Allah be pleased with him. See Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 3133, 4385 and 5518; and Muslim, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 4354 and 4358.

reflect on these two verses, we find that the first one only talks about Prophet Muhammad's prohibition for himself of what is lawful and that the second one talks about Allah's Ordainment for the Muslims to expiate for their oaths. As such, does this mean that the mere prohibition of what the Lord *the Almighty* made lawful without taking an oath necessitate expiation? The scholars held different stances about this issue. However, whether his prohibition of what is lawful alone necessitated expiation or it was combined with an oath, as some narrations confirm, the verse obligates releasing oneself from one's broken oath. In other words, it prescribes expiation for the broken oath.

Allah *the Almighty* clarifies this expiation, saying in the chapter of *al-Ma'ida*: 'Allah does not call you to account for your inadvertent oaths, but He calls you to account for the oaths you make deliberately. The expiation in that case is the feeding of ten poor men with the average amount (of food) you feed your families, or clothing them, or the freeing of a slave; but whosoever cannot find (means) to do this should fast for three days. This is the expiation of your oaths that you have sworn. And guard your oaths. In this way Allah makes His Commandments clear to you that you may be thankful' (*al-Ma'ida*: 89).

As a matter of fact, the expiation wipes out the penalty, but this does mean that the one is required to expiate for a binding oath that he fulfills. Rather, the expiation is only required when the person breaks his oath. The expiation should be one of four kinds: firstly, feeding ten poor people with food equivalent to what the person normally gives his own family; secondly, clothing poor ten people; thirdly, setting free a slave if this is possible; and lastly, fasting for three days if the person cannot find the means for the above.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'He has ordained a way for you [believers] to release yourselves from [such] oaths...' (*at-Tahrim*: 2), it refers to the way of expiating for the broken oath mentioned in the chapter of *al-Ma'ida*, as it preceded the revelation of the chapter of *at-Tahrim*.

The expiation has two aspects; it is a deterring measure for the person and it also wipes out the sin of breaking the oath. When an Andalusian caliph took an oath and wanted to make an expiation for it, Mundhir ibn Sa'id, who was a judge at the time, gave him a religious verdict that the expiation for his broken oath was fasting for three days, even though fasting is only the last

resort for the one who does not have money to feed or clothe ten poor people or free a slave. Did the caliph have no money? Of course not, but Mundhir ibn Sa'id considered for the expiation the aspect of being deterred from breaking another oath. That is why he responded to the one who asked him about this verdict, saying, 'How can the Commander of the Faithful be deterred by freeing a slave or feeding ten poor people?'

Someone may ask, 'Why was Prophet Muhammad obliged to expiate for his oath even though he did not break it?' Yes, he did not break his oath; he did not take honey or have sexual intercourse with Mariya. This second point is according to the narration that stated that the cause of revelation for this verse is that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had sexual intercourse with Mariya in the room of his wife Hafsa, which provoked Hafsa's anger. After this, he took an oath to refrain from having sexual intercourse with Mariya and made her unlawful for him. Thereafter, this verse was revealed.

In fact, Allah *Glorified is He* has not prescribed the expiation only as a penalty for the one who breaks his oath, but as a way of releasing the person from his oath even before breaking it. That is, He prescribed what releases us from our oaths before and after breaking them. Everyone who prohibits himself from what Allah *the Almighty* made lawful or takes a binding oath can release himself.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not break his oath. This is because the Arabic word '*tahilla*' (release) indicates that the releasing from an oath does not take place after breaking it, which obligates expiation. The release, however, takes place when you dissolve yourself from the oath before breaking it. The dissolution of the oath after breaking it is expiation because it wipes out the sin of breaking it.

The miraculous style of the Quran is clearly manifested here, as it did not mention anything about the expiation by saying, for example, that Allah *the Almighty* had ordained for them the expiation for their oaths. Rather, He *the Almighty* says: 'He has ordained a way for you [believers] to release (*tahilla*) yourselves from [such] oaths...' (*at-Tahrim*: 2). We have said previously that this obligation is in the interest of the believers; for if it had been a penalty, Allah *the Almighty* will have said that He has obligated that as a punishment for the

sin that they have committed. We also notice that the following verse indicates that the believer should reduce the number of oaths he takes. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And keep your oaths' (*al-Ma'ida*: 89).

Keeping an oath means that the person should not break it. Therefore, the person should reduce the number of oaths he takes as much as possible, as Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'No Muslim whose three children die will go to the hellfire except for Allah's Oath that has to be fulfilled'.⁽¹⁾ Allah's Oath is mentioned in His saying: 'And there is not one of you but will pass over it [Hell]; this is [a promise] from your Lord that has to be fulfilled' (*Maryam*: 71). This Hadith means that if the one whose three children die remains patient and does not despair or disbelieve, he will not enter the hellfire, but he has to pass over it.

Allah *Glorified is He* gives us an example of releasing oneself from an oath in the story of Prophet Ayyub (Job) *peace be upon him* saying: 'And take in your hand a green branch and beat her with it, and do not break your oath' (*Sad*: 44). Ayyub *peace be upon him* took an oath to strike his wife one hundred lashes if he recovered from his illness. Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to release him from that oath, commanding him to take a bunch of grass that consists of one hundred rods and to strike his wife lightly with it one time.

This was a mercy that Allah *the Almighty* showed to Prophet Ayyub *peace be upon him* and his wife who had taken care of him during his illness. Ayyub *peace be upon him* was thankful to Allah *the Almighty*. It was as if the one strike equalled one hundred. By taking this concession, he released himself from the oath.

The expiation is sufficient for preserving the sublime position of taking an oath by Allah *the Almighty*. For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* recommends the Muslims to accept the concession in order to release themselves from the oaths which were taken due to sincere intentions.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Allah is your Helper (*mawla*)...' (*at-Tahrim*: 2), it means that He *the Almighty* is the Supporter of the believers

(1) This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him. See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 1251 and 6656; and Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 6865.*

Who takes care of their affairs. The Arabic word '*mawla*' (helper) could mean a relative, a supporter, and a helper on whom one relies in times of hardship.

You may have a helper in this worldly life but he may not always remain your helper, and he may not be able to support you if your calamity is beyond his capacity. Furthermore, he may refuse to support you against your proponent because the latter has a stronger relationship with him. In this case, your helper will take the side of your opponent and may delude you into believing that he is on your side. By contrast, Allah *Glorified is He* is the True Helper; no power is greater than His and He, unlike His creation, is Unchangeable.

Allah *Glorified is He* concludes the verse in question, saying: 'He is the All Knowing, the All-Wise' (*at-Tahrim*: 2). Here, Allah *the Almighty* describes Himself with two Attributes: Knowledge and Wisdom. He *Glorified is He* knows everything, be it visible or invisible, and He is the Bestower of knowledge. He knows our intentions, how sincere we are and what is in our chests, even before we utter anything. Therefore, His Knowledge encompasses everything, for nothing can escape from Him.

Furthermore, Allah *the Almighty* knows the people's secrets and properly legislates what is necessary for them. Besides, He knows what the human soul can withstand and does not charge it with more than what it can bear. He *Glorified is He* also knows what is suitable in every condition a person may be in and what benefits all the people. Therefore, His Knowledge encompasses all matters and He even knows what we are thinking of in our minds.

Allah *the Almighty* is also the Wise One Who does not undertake any action except for a profound wisdom. He is Wise in His Actions, Determinations and Decrees. He puts everything in its right place and only prescribes what is in our interest. He *the Almighty* does not look to the apparent aspects of something, neglecting the harm that it may cause. On the contrary, you yourself may think that something will save you from your problems, but it turns out to be harmful.

Allah *Glorified is He* organises everything in the right way. His Knowledge encompasses what the people reveal and conceal. He *Glorified is He* is wise with His Creation and Directives, and that is why He laid down for us the rulings that ensure our interests and suit our conditions.

Allah then says:

وَإِذْ أَسَرَّ النَّبِيُّ إِلَى بَعْضِ أَزْوَاجِهِ حَدِيثًا فَلَمَّا نَبَّأَتْ بِهِ وَأَظْهَرَهُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ عَرَفَ بَعْضُهُ
وَأَعْرَضَ عَنْ بَعْضٍ فَلَمَّا نَبَّأَهَا بِهِ قَالَتْ مَنْ أَنْبَأَكَ هَذَا قَالَ نَبَّأَنِيَ الْعَلِيمُ الْخَبِيرُ ﴿٣﴾

The Prophet told something in confidence to one of his wives. When she disclosed it [to another wife] and God made this known to him, he confirmed part of it, keeping the rest to himself. When he confronted her with what she had done, she asked, ‘Who told you about this?’ and he replied, ‘The All Knowing, the All Aware told me’ [3] (The Quran, *at-Tahrim*: 3)

The secret is what you tell someone confidentially; it is to be known only by two people, you and the one to whom you disclosed it. There is, however, what is more hidden than the secret, namely, what you keep only to yourself; it remains in your heart and you share it with no one. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And if you utter the saying aloud, then surely He knows the secret (*as-sirr*), and what is yet more hidden' (*Ta Ha*: 7). This means that what you confidentially tell someone is a secret, but what you hide in your heart without telling anyone about it is what is even more hidden than the secret.

The secret only becomes a secret when you tell another one about it, but what the person hides in his heart and no one knows except Allah *the Almighty* is what is more hidden than the secret. In fact, you only confer your secret to the one whom you trust, as if the secrets are kept in a safe and no one knows what is inside it. When you tell someone a secret, you consider him like yourself, believing that he will not reveal it.

The Arabic word '*najwa*' (secret counsels) means to speak privately with someone when you are with other people. The secret (*sirr*), when mentioned with the word '*najwa*', is what you conceal inside yourself. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Do they not know that Allah knows their secret [thoughts] (*sirrahum*) and their secret counsels (*najwahum*)' (*at-Tawba*: 78). In this context, the secret thought (*sirr*) is what you conceal and do not tell anyone about it. Here, the secret does not refer to the private discussions in which you tell someone about a certain matter apart from other people sitting

with you. He *the Almighty* knows both the secret that you entrust someone with and what you hide inside yourself.

With regard to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'The Prophet told something in confidence (a secret) to one of his wives...' (*at-Tahrim*: 3), 'the secret' belongs to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who shared it with one of his wives.

What is more hidden than the secret is what you keep to yourself, but Allah *Glorified is He* knows the secret as well as what you do not disclose to anyone. He *the Almighty* is fully aware of it even before it is a secret. We know that the secret can mean what you keep to yourself without telling anyone about it. It also refers to the confidential matter about which you inform someone, but in this case it is not really a secret anymore. If you cannot keep something in your heart, others will be more unlikely to keep it in their heart without disclosing it to others.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'The Prophet told something in confidence (a secret) to one (*ba'd*) of his wives...' (*at-Tahrim*: 3), Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* told a secret to only one of his wives. If he had shared it with all his wives, it will have not been a secret anymore. The Arabic word '*ba'd*' (one) may refer to one male or female. Here, it refers to Hafsa Bint 'Umar, Prophet Muhammad's wife.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had sexual intercourse with his concubine, Mariya, in Hafsa's room *Allah be pleased with her*. On seeing Mariya with him, she said, 'O Prophet Muhammad, why did you do that in my house and not in any other one of your wives?' Whereupon he told her that he made Mariya unlawful for him and asked Hafsa to keep the matter secret.

Additionally, Hafsa went to meet 'Aisha and said to her, 'Daughter of Abu Bakr, shall I tell you good news? Prophet Muhammad, may my mother and father be sacrificed for him, told me that your father will succeed him and that my father will succeed your father. He asked me to keep that a secret and I promised him to do so'.⁽¹⁾

(1) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him. See At-Tabarani, Al-Mu'jam Al-Kabir, Hadith no. 504; and Al-Awsat, Hadith no. 2316.*

Mariya was Prophet Muhammad's concubine that Al-Muqawqas, the leader of the Coptic in Egypt, gave to him as a present after Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had sent him a message calling him to Islam. Subsequently, Al-Muqawqas gave her to him. She became his concubine and gave birth to his son Ibrahim. As she became the mother of his son, he freed her and she became one of his wives.

The Arabic word '*zawj*' (a spouse, wife or mate) refers to something which has a mate. Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And We said, "O Adam! Dwell you and your wife (*zawjuka*) in the garden..."' (*al-Baqara*: 35). Here, Huwwa (Eve) is called a '*zawj*' (a spouse), literally '*zawjuka*' which means 'your spouse'. That is, Adam is a '*zawj*' (a spouse) and Eve is also a '*zawj*'. Every one of Prophet Muhammad's wives is his spouse. You should not think that the word '*zawj*' refers to two mates; rather, it refers to one mate only. Allah *the Almighty* also says: '...and created its mate (*zawj*) of the same (kind)...' (*an-Nisa*': 1).

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* made Mariya unlawful for himself in order to please Hafsa. That is why Allah *the Almighty* reproached him just as He *the Almighty* reproached him for prohibiting honey for himself in order to please his wives. In this vein, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'O Prophet [Muhammad], 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). The matter of honey was known to most of his wives as they agreed to ask him when he arrived at anyone of them if he had eaten honey. As for the case of prohibiting Mariya for himself, it was only known by Hafsa and so was the matter of her father's succession after Abu Bakr, the father of 'Aisha. These two matters were what Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had told her secretly, but she soon disclosed them to 'Aisha.

We have said that the Arabic word '*naba*' (announcement) is only used with important news. Therefore, we do not refer to any normal piece of news as a '*naba*'. '*Naba*' means very important news that has a great impact, and that is why Allah *the Almighty* uses it in this verse. Its importance here is presented in Hafsa's carefulness about disclosing the information to 'Aisha.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says: '...and Allah made this known (*azhhara*) to him...' (*at-Tahrim*: 3). This means that Allah *the Almighty* informed Prophet

Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that Hafsa had disclosed to 'Aisha what he had secretly told her. Linguistically, the Arabic word '*azhhara*', the verb in the present being (*yazhharo*), has two meanings. The first one is to come to know about something, as in Allah's saying: 'If they come to know (*yazhharo*) about you, they will stone you' (*al-Kahf*: 20). The meaning is that if their enemies knew their place, they will stone them. The second meaning of '*azhhara*' is to scale something high and to defeat someone; this meaning is found in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'So they were not able to scale it (*yazhharo*) or could make a hole in it' (*al-Kahf*: 97). This means that Yajooj (Gog) and Majooj (Magog) could not scale the barrier of Dhu Al-Qarnayn, nor could they pierce it.

The first meaning applies to Allah's saying: '...the children who have not attained knowledge (*yazhharo*) of what is hidden of women...' (*an-Nur*: 31). They do not know about women's private aspects or cannot enter into marriage because they are not aware of them. As such, '*azhhara*' means to know something, but it here implies that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* overlooked what had happened, namely, Hafsa's disclosing the secret that he had confided to her and ordered her to keep secret.

For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* says afterwards: '...he confirmed part of it, keeping the rest to himself...' (*al-An'am*: 3). That is, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* confirmed part of what Hafsa disclosed, keeping the rest to himself. He rebuked Hafsa for revealing some of what he had confided to her, but he did not rebuke her for revealing the other part, due to his noble character. In this regard, some scholars said that the noble person never investigates people's faults.

It is said that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* informed her about her revealing what happened with Mariya and making her unlawful for himself. However, he avoided rebuking her for disclosing the secret that Abu Bakr and 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* will succeed him.

If you had talked in confidence with someone and then found that he had revealed your secret, you will find him confused when you encounter him. He tries to know if you had discovered that the whole secret was revealed or only

part of it. If you informed him about only one thing he has revealed, you will find him anxious, confused, and ashamed that he revealed it, especially if you had asked him to keep it a secret.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* ordered Hafsa to keep the matter secret. When he confronted her with what she had done, she asked, 'Who told you about this?' She thought that 'Aisha had informed him that she, that is Hafsa, had disclosed the secret to her. She did not imagine that Allah *Glorified is He* had informed Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* about what he does not know regarding his followers. She asked him *peace and blessings be upon him* about the one who had told him, thinking that 'Aisha had told him. She wondered how he knew about her disclosure of the secret even though she talked with 'Aisha in private; she wondered, 'Had 'Aisha told him?' But Prophet Muhammad told her that it was Allah *Glorified is He* Who had told him, as He is the All Knowing, the All-Aware. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: '...she asked, "Who told you about this?"' and he replied: 'The All-Knowing, the All-Aware told me' (*at-Tahrim: 3*).

Allah *the Almighty* is the Omniscient Who knows everything be it hidden or apparent, and all knowledge comes from Him. He is the All-Hearing of what is said and the fully Aware of what in the chests, even before it is said. In fact, every movement is known by Him *Glorified is He* even before it takes place.

Allah's Attribute of being fully aware indicates that He possesses comprehensive knowledge; He is the Omniscient Who possesses subtle knowledge about hidden matters. In the important worldly problems, we call an expert to solve them because the normal specialist cannot solve them, for the expert has in-depth knowledge; we should not ask those who only have basic knowledge, but we should ask an expert who has detailed knowledge.

Thereupon, Allah *Glorified is He* addresses Hafsa and 'Aisha *Allah be pleased with them* saying:

إِنْ تَوْبَا إِلَى اللَّهِ فَقَدْ صَغَتْ قُلُوبُكُمَا وَإِنْ تَظَاهَرَا عَلَيْهِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ مَوْلَاهُ
وَجِبْرِيلُ وَصَالِحُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ ظَهِيرٌ

**If both of you [wives] repent to God — for your hearts have deviated — [all will be well]; if you collaborate against him, [be warned that] God will aid him, as will Gabriel and all righteous believers, and the angels too will back him [4]
(The Quran, *at-Tahrim*: 4)**

Allah *Glorified is He* has commanded His slaves to repent to Him as accepting repentance is a Mercy that He *the Almighty* shows to His slaves. In fact, prescribing repentance is a Mercy not only to the sinner but also to the whole society. If it had not been prescribed, the whole society will have suffered. That is to say that if Allah *the Almighty* had not prescribed repentance and given us the glad tidings of Him accepting it, the sinner will not have stopped committing sins. In fact, He *Glorified is He* accepts the repentance in order for the person not to despair; the person will feel that the doors of Mercy are always open and that Allah, his Creator, is Merciful to him. Hence, if he commits a mistake, the Lord *the Almighty* opens for him the doors of repentance and forgives him. In this way, the person feels the Care that Allah *Glorified is He* provides for him.

The way Allah *Glorified is He* acts is already set for the one who wants to believe; and repentance is legislated for every sinner. It results in Allah forgiving you, for if you repent from your sin and are determined never to repeat it, Allah *Glorified is He* accepts your repentance and pardons you. Allah *the Almighty* delights at His slave's repentance and He is more pleased with it than the one who found his camel after he had lost it in a waterless desert.⁽¹⁾

As such, the verse means that if Hafsa and 'Aisha repented to Allah *the Almighty* and regretted doing what they had done, their repentance will be accepted. When the Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'If both of you [wives] repent to Allah...' (*at-Tahrim*: 4), this is a way of urging and offering repentance to them

(1) A Hadith to that effect has been narrated on the authority of Anas ibn Malik Allah be pleased with him. See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 6309; Muslim, Hadith no. 7137.*

because He *Glorified is He* says after this: '...but if you collaborate against him, [be warned that] Allah, He is his Protector...' (*at-Tahrim*: 4).

With regard to the saying of Allah *Glorified is He*: 'If both of you [wives] repent to Allah—for your hearts have inclined (*saghat*) [away from/to what is right]—[all will be well]...' (*at-Tahrim*: 4), the Arabic word '*al-isgha*' (listening attentively), from which the word '*saghat*' (deviated) comes, means to listen attentively to the speaker, as you may not be able to hear the speaker without listening attentively. For example, when one of us walks in the street, he hears a lot of sounds, but he listens attentively to what he thinks is important. In this connection, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And that the hearts of those who do not believe in the Hereafter may incline (*tasgha*) to it and that they may be well pleased with it and that they may earn what they are going to earn (of evil)' (*al-An'am*: 113). It is true that the ears hear, but the hearts may or may not listen and incline to what is being said.

When Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'If both of you [wives] repent to Allah—for your hearts have inclined (*saghat*) [away from/to what is right]—[all will be well]...' (*at-Tahrim*: 4), He moves the sense of listening from the ears to the heart. This means that their hearts inclined to Prophet Muhammad's prohibition of Mariya for himself, even if he hated that. Some scholars said that they inclined to repentance. As a result, this part of the verse means that Hafsa and 'Aisha wanted to repent for what they had done because their hearts inclined to the right way which required refraining from doing what displeased Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him*.

As for the saying of Allah *Glorified is He*: '...if you support each other (*tazhahara*) against him...' (*at-Tahrim*: 4), the Arabic word '*al-zhahir*', from which the verb '*tazhahara*' (support each other) is derived, means the supporter, as He *Glorified is He* says: 'Those who have not supported anyone (*yuzhahiro*) against you...' (*at-Tawba*: 4). Etymologically, the root of the verb '*yuzhahir*' (to support) is '*al-zhahr*' (back), which can bear more than the hand. The person, for instance, may not be able to carry a certain measure of wheat with his hand, but he can carry it by means of his back. There is the Egyptian proverb that says, 'Whoever is supported by a powerful figure, he cannot be harmed'. Likewise, the Lord *Glorified is He* says: '...then We

aided those who believed against their enemy, and they became the ones that prevailed (*zhahireen*)' (*as-Saff*: 14).

This means that the meaning of His saying: '...if you support each other against him...' (*at-Tahrim*: 4) is that if they collaborated to harm Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by supporting each other with regard to their excessive jealousy and disclosing his secret, Allah *the Almighty* will aid him with His unlimited Omnipotence. He *Glorified is He* it the True Ally; there is no greater power than His and He is Unchangeable.

Allah *Glorified is He* stresses the fact that He Himself is the Ally of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying: 'Allah, He is his Protector...' (*at-Tahrim*: 4). The Lord *the Almighty* mentions the pronoun 'He' after His Majestic Name to emphasise His Support and Help for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Not only Allah *Glorified is He* is his Ally but also the angel Gabriel and the righteous believers, as He then says: '...and so are Jibril (Gabriel) and all righteous believers...' (*at-Tahrim*: 4). Here, He *Glorified is He* especially mentions Jibril (Gabriel) even though He then mentions the angels' protection of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying: '...and furthermore, the angels will be his supporters' (*at-Tahrim*: 4). Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* is the one trusted with the revelation and the closest angel to the Prophets and Messengers, especially Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. As such, every Messenger was supported by Jibril (Gabriel), the Holy Spirit.

He *Glorified is He* tells us about Jibril, saying: 'Say [Prophet Muhammad], "If anyone is an enemy of Jibril (Gabriel)—who by Allah's leave brought down the Quran to your heart confirming previous scriptures, as a guide and good news for the faithful— if anyone is an enemy of Allah, His angels and His Messengers, of Jibril (Gabriel) and Mikail (Michael), then Allah is certainly the enemy of such disbelievers"' (*al-Baqara*: 97-98); and: 'He was taught by one mighty in power. [An angel] Endowed with surpassing power, who manifested himself in his true state' (*an-Najm*: 5-6); and saying: 'Most surely it is the Word of an honored Messenger, the processor of strength, having an honorable place with the Lord of the Dominion, one (to be) obeyed and faithful to his trust' (*at-Takwir*: 19-21). As such, Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be*

upon him possesses a hidden and an apparent mighty power for him to be able to do what Allah *Glorified is He* commands him and deliver the revelation to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Allah *the Almighty* then says: '...and all righteous believers...' (*at-Tahrim*: 4). As such, not only will Allah *the Almighty* and Jibril support Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* but also the righteous believers, namely, Abu Bakr and 'Umar *Allah be pleased with them*. The quality of righteousness, however, refers to every righteous believer. In this connection, 'Umar used to support Prophet Muhammad's position and reproach his daughter, Hafsa, for arguing with him, that is, Prophet Muhammad, although the Prophet thought this arguing had never occurred. 'Umar said, 'Once, while I was thinking over a certain matter, my wife said, "I advise you to do so-and-so". I said to her, "What have you got to do with this matter? Why do you poke your nose in a matter which I want to see fulfilled?"' She said, "How strange you are, O son of Al-Khattab! You do not want to be argued with whereas your daughter, Hafsa, surely argues with Prophet Muhammad so much that he remains angry the whole day!"' 'Umar then related how he immediately put on his outer garment, went to Hafsa and said to her, 'O my daughter! Do you argue with Prophet Muhammad to the extent that he remains angry the whole day?' She said, 'By Allah, we argue with him'. 'Umar said, 'Know that I warn you of Allah's Punishment and the anger of Allah's Messenger . . . O my daughter! Do not be deceived by the one who is proud of her beauty and of the love of Prophet Muhammad for her (that is, 'Aisha)'.

Allah *Glorified is He* concludes this verse, saying: '...and furthermore, the angels will be his supporters' (*at-Tahrim*: 4). The Arabic word '*malai'ka*' (angels) is feminine, but Allah did not say '*zhaheerah*' (supporter), which matches this feminine form in the Arabic language. Rather, Allah *Glorified is He* uses the word, '*zhaheer*' (supporter). This is because the support entails power, determination and strength, and therefore this word is used to imply possessing power. That is, the word '*zhaheer*' in this noble verse refers to the supporter. If it is said that so-and-so backs someone, this means he supports him powerfully. If so-and-so '*zhahara*' (defeated) so-and-so, this means that the former defeated and overpowered the latter. The word '*zhaheer*' is used equally to

refer to the masculine and the feminine, just like the word ‘*qareeb*’ (near), which is used with the feminine word ‘*rahma*’ (mercy) in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...surely the Mercy (*rahma*) of Allah is near (*qareeb*) to those who do good (to others)...’ (*al-A’raf*: 56). To sum up, Allah, Jibril, the righteous believers and the angels are all supporters of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* against those who harm him or intend to offend him. Here, the word ‘*zhaheer*’ (supporter) is used to refer to the plural, ‘*zuhara*’ (supporters), just like when He *the Almighty* says: ‘What excellent companions (*rafeeq*) these are!’ (*an-Nisa*: 69), where the word ‘*rafeeq*’ (companion) is used to refer to ‘*rufaqa*’ (companions).

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

عَسَىٰ رَبُّهُ إِنْ طَلَّقَكُنَّ أَنْ يُبَدِّلَهُ أَزْوَاجًا خَيْرًا مِنْكُنَّ مُسْلِمَاتٍ مُّؤْمِنَاتٍ
فَإِنْ تَبَيَّنَتْ تَبَيَّنَتْ عِدَاتٍ سَخِرَتْ نَيْبَتٍ وَأَبْكَارًا ﴿٥﴾

His Lord may well replace you with better wives if the Prophet decides to divorce any of you: wives who are devoted to God, true believers, devout, who turn to Him in repentance and worship Him, given to fasting, whether previously married or virgins [5] (The Quran, *at-Tahrim*: 5)

Linguistically, the Arabic word ‘*asa*’ (‘may’ or ‘hope’) has different meanings. It could signify hoping for something; when you say, for instance, ‘So-and-so may come’, and when someone says to his friend, ‘So-and-so may bring something good for you’. This means that these actions are possible. Further, someone may say to his friend, ‘I may bring something good for you’. Here, the occurrence of what is hoped for is higher than in the first example because its occurrence depends on the speaker. Can the speaker, nevertheless, guarantee the ability or even that he will still be alive to bring that good thing for the addressee? If someone says, ‘I hope that Allah relieves you of your condition’, is his hope stronger? Is the speaker certain of Allah's Acceptance for what he is hoping for? He *the Almighty* may or may not accept that, according to His Will, not according to the will of the one who hoped that or the one for whom he wished that relief. However, when Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘His Lord may well...’

(*al-An'am*: 5), this implies that what He wills attains the highest rank of being a certain hope. The word '*asa*' ('may' or 'hope'), with its different levels, reaches its highest level when Allah *the Almighty* uses it. What He hopes will inevitably come to pass. He says in another verse: 'Allah may well (*asa*) pardon them' (*an-Nisa*': 99). This is what we hope from our Generous and Powerful Lord. Nothing can challenge or disobey Him *the Almighty* and hence when He says that He may do such-and-such, then what He has promised will be fulfilled. Thus, the verse means that Hafsa and 'Aisha should be in awe of Allah *Glorified is He* because He may well replace them with better wives.

In this connection, we notice Ya'qub's (Jacob's) confidence that Allah *Glorified is He* will achieve His Promise to bring all of his sons back to him, saying: '...maybe Allah will bring them all together to me; surely He is the Knowing, the All-Wise' (*Yusuf*: 83). In this verse, he hoped for an alleviation which actually took place later. He did not say, 'Maybe they will all come', rather, he attributed this action to Allah *the Almighty* saying: '...maybe Allah will bring them all...' (*Yusuf*: 83). This means he wished that Allah *the Almighty* will bestow His Bounties on him. When you say that Allah *the Almighty* may give you, this constitutes a high hope because you ask for the bounty from the One Who is Omnipotent and Unchangeable. That is, your hope, which depends on Him, will inevitably happen.

Similarly, the matter in the verse in question has nothing to do with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*; rather, it is handled by Allah *the Almighty* as He *the Almighty* says: 'His Lord may well replace you with better wives...' (*at-Tahrim*: 5). Moreover, He *Glorified is He* does not say: 'Allah may well', rather, He says: 'His Lord may well...' (*at-Tahrim*: 5). As such, it is Prophet Muhammad's Lord who may well replace them with good wives because they did not preserve his status of messengership and prophethood. Using the word 'his Lord' instead of 'Allah' reminds us about the Hadith in which Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'I have been educated by My Lord and He has educated me properly'.⁽¹⁾ This means Allah *Glorified is He* is his Lord Who educated him properly.

(1) In his book, *Al-Albani grades this Hadith as weak*. Ibn Taymiya said, 'The meaning of this Hadith is correct, but it has no authentic chain of narrators'. This opinion is supported=

The perfection of education is proportional to the perfection of the educator. It is as if Allah *the Almighty* said to him, 'I am your Lord Who has perfected your education. Therefore, if anyone wants to see the Omnipotence of My Lordship, let him witness it in you'. If the educator is perfect, the educated person achieves the highest level of education. Clearly, Prophet Muhammad's Lord will not forsake him and He is not displeased with him.

Similarly, Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* took refuge with his Lord and invoked Him, saying: 'My Lord! I prefer prison to what these women are calling me to do' (*Yusuf*: 33). He supplicated Allah *the Almighty* referring to His Attribute of Lordship as recognition of His Favours, for Allah had educated and put him under His Care. Invoking Allah *the Almighty* to not abandon him in his calamity, Prophet Yusuf *peace be upon him* uses the Attribute of Lordship. It is clear that the Lord is the One in charge of educating and bestowing Bounties. Besides, His Divinity dictates that we worship Him and carry out His Obligations. For this reason, the believer invokes his Lord during times of hardships, saying, 'My Lord', recognizing Him as his Creator Who cares for him and bestows the means on him.

This idea is referred to in the Hadith when 'Aisha said to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'O Messenger of Allah, I see that your Lord hastens in fulfilling your desires'.⁽¹⁾ He told her, 'If you are pious, He will hasten to fulfill your desires'. That is, Allah *the Almighty* fulfills what you desire if you fulfill His Purpose; if you obey His command, He gives you what you desire, even before asking Him.

Allah *Glorified is He* refers to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* using the third person singular, saying: 'His Lord may well replace you with better wives...' (*at-Tahrim*: 55). This is because He *the Almighty* is addressing his wives in order to defend Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as the Prophet did not do anything wrong to them. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is entitled to eat whatever he desires with whoever he wants from among them. Furthermore, he is entitled to have

= by As-Sarkhasi and As-Suyuti. See Al-Albani, *As-Silsila Ad-Da'ifa*, 1/172; Ibn Taymiya, *Majmu' Ar-Rasa'il Al-Kubra*, 2/236; and Al-'Ajluni, *Kashf Al-Khafa*, 1/70.

(1) See Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 4788.

sexual intercourse with any of them and wherever he wants from among his homes. However, he conceded to them by prohibiting himself from taking honey and having sexual intercourse with Mariya, the mother of his son Ibrahim. What do his wives want after all of this?

Allah's Discourse in this verse is directed to Prophet Muhammad's wives, presenting to them that He was Prophet Muhammad's Lord and that He never forsakes him. Consequently, He *the Almighty* says: 'If both of you [wives] repent to Allah— for your hearts have inclined [away from/to what is right]— [all will be well]; but if you support each other against him, [be warned that] Allah, He is his Protector, and so are Jibril (Gabriel) and all righteous believers, and furthermore, the angels will be his supporters' (*at-Talaq*: 4).

We have said that His saying: '...the righteous believers...' (*at-Tahrim*: 5) refers to Abu Bakr and 'Umar *Allah be pleased with them*. 'Umar said, 'I came to know that some of the Mothers of the Believers caused troubles to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and therefore I talked to each one of them and admonished them to refrain from causing troubles to him, saying, 'If you refuse, Allah will replace you with wives better than you'. Zaynab came to him and said, 'O son of Al-Khattab, is Prophet Muhammad able to admonish his wives?' Thereupon, Allah revealed the verse: 'His Lord may well replace you with better wives if the Prophet decides to divorce any of you...' (*at-Tahrim*: 5). This means replacing his wives was to be through divorcing them. The word '*asa*' (may) does not connote that this replacement is obligatory, as Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not actually divorce them. The verse is only intended to frighten and admonish his wives.

The first attribute of the wives with whom Prophet Muhammad's wives may be replaced is their submission to Allah *the Almighty* in all His commands, as Allah says: '...wives who submit to Allah...' (*at-Tahrim*: 5). Secondly, they are described as believing in Allah and Prophet Muhammad. This means that they possess the same attributes of his wives and even more because they are true believers who do not submit and believe only by words.

The third of their attributes is their devotion to Allah *the Almighty* which indicates their permanent obedience to Him. *Qunut Al-Fajr* in the Dawn Prayer, in which we invoke Allah *the Almighty* and prolong our standing in prayer, is

derived from the same Arabic word of '*qanitat*' (devout). The devoted woman is the one who submits to Allah *Glorified is He* out of her righteousness. He *the Almighty* says: '...the righteous women are therefore devoutly obedient (*qanitat*)...' (*an-Nisa*: 34). Clearly, the righteous women are those who adhere to the Divine Path that their Creator set for them.

Devotion to Allah *the Almighty* is an act of worship accompanied by permanent humbleness and submission. He *the Almighty* addresses the wives of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying: 'O wives of the Prophet [Muhammad]! Whoever of you commits an open indecency, the punishment shall be increased to her doubly; and this is easy for Allah. And whoever of you devoutly obeys and submits (*yaqnut*) to Allah and His Messenger [Muhammad] and does good, to her We will give a reward twice over, and We have prepared for her an honorable sustenance' (*al-Ahzab*: 30-31), where the word '*yaqnot*' (is obedient) is derived from the word '*qanitat*' (devout). As such, devotion means excessive righteousness and fear to the extent of humbleness and submission. It refers to complete submission to Allah *the Almighty* and humbleness and submission while supplicating Him. He *the Almighty* for instance, commands Mary, saying: 'O Mary, devoutly obey and submit (*uqnuti*) to your Lord and humble yourself, and bow down with those who bow' (*Al-Imran*: 43), where the word '*uqnuti*' (devoutly obey and submit) is derived from the word '*qanitat*' (devout). This means that she should be excessively humble and submissive to Allah by prostrating and putting her forehead, which is the most honourable part of the person, on the ground, as prostration is the highest level of submission.

Allah *the Almighty* does not want the bodies; rather, He wants the devoted and submissive hearts. Concerning the one who is obedient to Allah but then stops being obedient, it is as though he experienced closeness to Allah but did not find his Lord qualified for that closeness—Allah forbid. On the contrary, the truly obedient slave devotes himself to Allah and as a result does not abandon the acts of worship, as he has tasted the sweetness of worshipping Him. As long as he has tasted the sweetness of worshipping Allah, he will always do the acts of worship with humbleness and serenity to be a devout slave.

The wives who could replace Prophet Muhammad's wives will also be ones who repent to Allah *the Almighty*. Repentance requires a determination to not commit sins again. The Lord *Glorified is He* opened the gates of repentance, and He is slow to punish us, deprive us of His Bounty or cause us to perish for disobeying Him.

It is out of Allah's Mercy to us that He has prescribed repentance to protect us from the ferocity of evil and disobedience. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'All the sons of Adam are sinners, but the best of sinners are those who repent often'.⁽¹⁾ If Allah *Glorified is He* had not prescribed repentance and had not given us the glad tidings of accepting our repentance, every sinner will have never stopped his disobedience, and the whole world will have suffered.

Allah *Glorified is He* is pleased with the truthful and sincere repentance after which the persons does not return to the sin. It requires that the sinner stops doing the sin, regrets committing it and is determined not to return to it once again. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Allah *the Exalted* will continue to stretch out His Hand in the night so that the sinners of the day may repent, and He will continue to stretch His Hand in the daytime so that the sinners of the night may repent, [and this will continue] until the sun rises from the west'.⁽²⁾ The repentant women are those who repent from their sins and abide by Prophet Muhammad's orders, leaving what they desire if he hates it.

Allah *the Almighty* also describes these wives, saying: '...and worship Him [Allah]...' (*at-Tahrim*: 5). This attribute is implicitly included in describing them with the character of being devoted, but the Lord *the Most High* emphasises this attribute, proving that the acts of worship are not confined to praying, fasting and being humble and submissive in doing these rites. Rather, worshipping Allah *the Almighty* entails obeying Him by following His commands and refraining from His prohibitions. Consequently, describing them as worshippers

(1) See Ibn Maja, *Sunnan*, Hadith no. 4251; Al-Bazzar, *Musnad*, Hadith no. 7236; and Abu Ya'la, *Musnad*, Hadith no. 2922; Al-Hakim, *Mustadrak*, Hadith no. 7617; Ad-Darimi, *Sunnan*, Hadith no. 2727; and Al-Bayhaqi, *Shu'ab Al-Iman*, Hadith no. 6725.

(2) This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari Allah be pleased with him. See Muslim, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 7165; Ahmad, *Musnad*, Hadith no. 19547 and 19635; Al-Bazzar, *Musnad*, Hadith no. 3021; and At-Tayalisi, *Musnad*, Hadith no. 492.

here implies that they obey Him as the God Who is worshipped in His universe. This entails obeying Him by doing what He has commanded and refraining from what He has prohibited.

In this connection, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'I only created jinn and mankind to worship Me' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 56). Clearly, the human beings should worship Him, but not only through sitting in the mosques and remembering and exalting Him; rather, worship is a path that includes the whole life, it includes your home and work. This means worshipping Him *the Almighty* means to obey Him by doing what He has commanded and refraining from what He has prohibited. If Allah *Glorified is He* commands me to do something, I should do it, and if he prohibits me from doing something, I should refrain from it; this is the meaning of worshipping Him.

Allah *Glorified is He* prohibits the believers from offending Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying: '...and it does not behove you that you should cause trouble to the Messenger of Allah [Muhammad]' (*al-Ahzab*: 53). Therefore, if Prophet Muhammad divorced his wives, Allah *the Almighty* will replace them with ones who will worship Him and submit to His commands. They will refrain from offending Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and will submit to what he wants.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* mentions another attribute, saying: '...given to fasting/travelling [for their faith in Islam] (*sa'ihat*)...' (*at-Tahrim*: 5). The Arabic word '*al-sa'ih*', from which the word '*sa'ihat*' (given to fasting/travelling) is derived, refers to the one who leaves his country in which there are his home, family, children and friends from among his people. He leaves all these and goes to a potentially dangerous place bereft of all such comforts. The word '*as-siyaha*' means to travel for far distances to ponder over the dominion of the heavens and the earth and to deduce from the signs of Allah what strengthens your belief in you Lord. But a man may travel for worldly interests, like travelling through the land seeking Allah's Bounty. However, travelling for reflection is shared by men and women, as He *the Almighty* describes women, saying: 'His Lord may well replace you with better wives if the Prophet [Muhammad] decides to divorce any of you: wives who submit to Allah, true believers, devout, who turn to Him in repentance and worship Him, given to

fasting/travelling [for their faith in Islam]...' (*at-Tahrim*: 5). Describing the women as ones who travel is meant for travelling for reflection, while she is with her husband who travels through the land to seek His Bounty.

The word '*as-siyaha*' also refers to fasting because travelling takes you out of your country where you used to stay and where your property and family are, and likewise fasting deprives you of having what you are familiar with, namely food, drinks and sexual intercourse. That is, what is common between men and women is travelling for refection and fasting. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* wanted to divorce Hafsa *Allah be pleased with her*, but Jibril came to Prophet Muhammad and said, 'Do not divorce her as she habitually fasts and prays at night and she will also be your wife in Paradise'.⁽¹⁾ When the news reached 'Umar that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* wanted to divorce his daughter, he put dust on his head and said, 'If this happens, Allah will not care about you, O son of ibn Al-Khattab'. Thereupon, Jibril went to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and said, 'Allah commands you to keep Hafsa as a mercy for 'Umar'.

'Umar narrated this situation, saying, 'When Prophet Muhammad left his wives, I entered the mosque and found people striking the ground with pebbles and saying, "Allah's Messenger has divorced his wives". That was before they were commanded to observe seclusion, and therefore I went to 'Aisha and said to her, "Daughter of Abu Bakr, have you reached the extent of causing trouble to Prophet Muhammad?" Thereupon she said, "Son of Al-Khattab, you have nothing to do with me, and I have nothing to do with you. You should look to your own receptacle"'. He ('Umar) said, 'I visited Hafsa, daughter of 'Umar, and said to her, "Hafsa, the (news) has reached me that you cause Prophet Muhammad trouble. You know that Allah's Messenger does not love you, and had I not been (your father) he will have divorced you". (On hearing this) she wept bitterly. I said to her, "Where is Prophet Muhammad?" She said, "He is in the store room". I went in and found Rabah, the servant of Allah's Messenger, sitting on the threshold of the window

(1) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of 'Ammar ibn Yasir Allah be pleased with him. See Al-Bazzar, Musnad, Hadith no. 1401; At-Tabarani, Al-Mu'jam Al-Kabir, Hadith no. 18827; and Abu Nu'aym, Ma'rifat As-Sahaba, Hadith no. 6770, and Hilyat Al-Awliya', 2/50.*

dangling his feet on the hollow wood of the date-palm with the help of which Prophet Muhammad used to climb (into the apartment) and leave it. I asked permission to enter into [the presence of] Prophet Muhammad three times. The last time I cried, "O Rabah, ask Allah's Messenger's permission for me to strike her (Hafsa's) neck". I raised my voice and he pointed to me to climb up (and enter his apartment). I entered upon him and he was lying on a mat. As I had entered I saw the signs of anger on his face, and I therefore said, "Messenger of Allah [Muhammad], what trouble do you receive from your wives for you to divorce them. Surely Allah, His angels, Jibril, Mikail, me, Abu Bakr and the believers are with you". I hardly talked, and I hoped that Allah will testify to my words that I uttered (on that day). Consequently, Allah's saying: "His Lord may well replace you with better wives if the Prophet decides to divorce any of you" (*at-Tahrim: 5*) was revealed'.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...but if you support each other against him, [be warned that] Allah, He is his Protector, and so are Jibril (Gabriel) and all righteous believers, and furthermore, the angels will be his supporters' (*at-Tahrim: 4*), it was 'Aisha, the daughter of Abu Bakr, and Hafsa who support each other against Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. 'Umar continued, 'I said, "Messenger of Allah, have you divorced them?" He said, "No". I said, "Messenger of Allah, I entered the mosque and found the Muslims playing with pebbles (absorbed in thought) and saying, 'Allah's Messenger has divorced his wives'. Should I climb down and inform them that you have not divorced them?" He said, "Yes, if you wish to". And I went on talking to him until I (found) the signs of anger had disappeared on his face and (his seriousness was changed to a happy mood and as a result thereof) his face had its natural tranquility on it'.⁽¹⁾

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...whether previously married or virgins' (*at-Tahrim: 5*). The previous six attributes, regarding their Islam, belief, devotion, repentance, worship and fasting, are all abstract qualities. In this verse, He *Glorified is He* addresses women some of whom were very

(1) This Hadith is narrated on the authority of 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab Allah be pleased with him. See Muslim, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 3764; Ibn Hibban, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 4188; Al-Bazzar, *Musnad*, Hadith no. 195; and Abu Ya'a, *Musnad*, Hadith no. 164.

jealous about Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. For this reason, He *Glorified is He* wanted to eliminate their jealousy, saying, 'If you were either previously married or virgins, Allah is Able to replace you with not only previously married women but also with virgins'.

The Arabic word '*thayyib*' (deflowered woman) refers to the woman who has previously married, whether she is divorced or a widow. She was called this because after she is divorced or her husband dies, she returns to her father's house. As for the Arabic word '*bikr*' (a virgin woman), it refers to the woman which is not deflowered. The woman cannot be a virgin and deflowered at the same time, and that is why He *the Almighty* uses the conjunction 'or', meaning: '...whether previously married or virgins' (*at-Tahrim*: 5).

The first six attributes can all be found in one man or one woman and that is why Allah *Glorified is He* has not used the conjunction 'or' here. That is to say that it is possible to find a Muslim, believing, devoted, repentant, worshipping and fasting (or travelling) man or woman who has all these qualities at the same time.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...whether previously married or virgins' (*at-Tahrim*: 5), the attribute of virginity in this verse may refer to 'Aisha Allah *be pleased with her* and that of being deflowered may refer to Hafsa Allah *be pleased with her* because she was married to someone before Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. By contrast, 'Aisha was a virgin when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* married her and she used to take pride in being the only woman who was a virgin when he married her to the extent that she once asked him, 'O Messenger of Allah! Suppose you landed in a valley where there was a tree of which something had been eaten and then you found trees of which nothing has been eaten, from which tree will you let your camel graze?' Prophet Muhammad said, '(I will let my camel graze) from the one from which nothing had been eaten before'.⁽¹⁾ She was referring to the fact that he *peace and blessings be upon him* had not married any virgin except her.

(1) This Hadith is narrated on the authority of 'Aisha Allah *be pleased with her*. See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih*, Hadith no. 5077; and *Ibn Hibban, Sahih*, Hadith no. 4331.

One may ask, 'What is the virtue of replacing Prophet Muhammad's wives with deflowered ones if he preferred virgins?' Prophet Muhammad said to Jabir ibn 'Abdullah after he married, 'Have you married a virgin or a previously married woman?' Jabir said, 'A previously married woman'. He said, 'Why not a virgin, so you could play with her and she could play with you?'⁽¹⁾ However, the previously married woman has certain benefits in practical life. For this reason, Jabir mentioned the reason for preferring the previously married woman, saying, 'Abdullah (my father) died and left girls, and I did not like to marry a girl like them who cannot educate them or take care of them, and that is why I married a previously married woman in order for her to look after them and educate them'.⁽²⁾ Jabir had nine young sisters whose father, 'Abdullah ibn Haram, left when he died, and for this reason Jabir wanted to marry a previously married woman who could take care of and educate his young sisters. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* knows that a previously married woman has many benefits, but he wanted to make Jabir happy after the death of his father.

Thus, Allah's saying: '...previously married...' (*at-Tahrim*: 5) is intended for Hafsa *Allah be pleased with her* as if He *Glorified is He* is saying that He will replace Prophet Muhammad's wives, whether previously married or virgins, with also previously married and virgin wives, but the latter will be better than the former.

Nothing can be harder for the woman than divorcing her and her husband's determination to marry another wife. This can break her heart and pre-occupy her mind. Accordingly, it is an extremely serious threat for her.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

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- (1) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Jabir ibn 'Abdullah Allah be pleased with him. See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 2967 and 5247; and Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 3709.*
 - (2) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Jabir ibn 'Abdullah Allah be pleased with him. See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 3967; Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 4184; and Abu 'Uwana, Mustakhraj, Hadith no. 3924.*

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا قُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ عَلَيْهَا مَلَائِكَةٌ
 غِلَظُ شِدَادٍ لَا يَعْصُونَ اللَّهَ مَا أَمَرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ ﴿٦﴾

Believers, guard yourselves and your families against a Fire fuelled by people and stones, over which stand angels, stern and strong; angels who never disobey God's commands to them, but do as they are ordered [6] (The Quran, *at-Tahrim*: 6)

In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* addresses those who believe in Him as their Lord and have pledged the covenant of faith with Him. Allah *Glorified is He* addresses all people to pay their attention to the matter of faith, whereas when He addresses the believers, He charges them with religious obligations. By contrast, He *the Almighty* does not assign any rulings to those who do not believe in Him. This is due to the fact that belief entails a commitment; as long as you devoted yourself to Allah as your All-Wise Lord, you should take the rulings of your religion from Him.

The believers adhere to the obligations of Allah *Glorified is He* out of their love for Him, even if His Obligations are difficult for them, like fasting or striving in His Way. Let us take fasting as an example; He *Glorified is He* says: 'O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you so that you may guard (against evil)' (*al-Baqara*: 183). Fasting entails that one refrains from eating, drinking and sexual intercourse from dawn to sunset for one lunar month. Undoubtedly, fasting is a hard obligation; however, the true believers wait and feel happy for the advent of *Ramadan* every year.

Let us offer another example to illustrate this point further; Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'O you who believe! Retaliation is prescribed for you in the matter of the slain, the free for the free, and the slave for the slave and the female for the female...' (*al-Baqara*: 178). The retribution can be brutal, but the believers accept it wholeheartedly because it leads to social reform and deters criminals. For this reason, the Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'And there is life for you in (the law of) retaliation, O men of understanding, that you may guard yourselves' (*al-Baqara*: 179).

The true believers believe that Allah's Legislation is absolutely precise as Allah wisely sets the duties and the rights. There is no duty without a right

and vice versa. In order to recognise the supremacy of Allah's Legislation, every believer should reflect on and compare his duties with his rights. Thereupon, he will realise that, in the light of Allah's Way of Guidance, he is treated with absolute justice.

In the verse under discussion, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Believers, guard (*qu*) yourselves and your families against a fire...' (*at-Tahrim*: 6). The believers should place a barrier between them and the hellfire and be cautious about being cast into it. The Arabic word '*wiqaya*' (prevention), from which the word '*qu*' (guard) is derived, means to guard yourself against the evil that you cannot bear. This means Allah *the Almighty* commands us to place a barrier between us and the hellfire because its evil is unbearable.

Out of His Greatness, Allah *Glorified is He* perfected the creation of the human soul. In every soul there is a commander and a commanded being. The person should guard himself by directing the order of the commander to the commanded being and to make the latter obey the former. You are commanded to protect your soul from the causes of perdition by ordering it to do good and not to commit evil. To give an example of this, the Lord *the Almighty* says: 'His [Qabil's (Cain's)] soul prompted him to kill his brother...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 30). This implies that part of Qabil's (Cain's) entity incited his whole entity to kill his brother, Habil (Abel).

In fact, Allah *the Almighty* has instilled numerous qualities within the human soul, like generosity and miserliness. The generous one tends to seek peoples' praise while the miser seeks to have sufficient money. These qualities compete with each other within every human soul and that is why He *the Almighty* commands us to guard ourselves. That is to say that we should guard ourselves against the bad qualities of our souls. One bad quality of the soul could be its longing to satisfy its desires, but another good quality within the same soul warns it against these fleeting desires whose consequences will be suffered later. Thus, there is a struggle within one's soul; when it renounces evil, it returns to goodness.

When Allah *Glorified is He* sets His Way of Guidance, He instills religious inclinations in every soul to make it adhere to His Way if it is careful and alert. But if these religious inclinations are neglected, the soul goes astray.

However, after this temporal deviation, it becomes alert again. This happens to the self-reproaching soul that whispers to the person when he does something wrong that Allah *the Almighty* commanded him not to do. Thereupon, the person returns to Allah's Way of Guidance in order to seek His Forgiveness and Pardon.

If the self-reproaching soul is absent, then the soul that incites him to evil takes its place and directs the person towards deviations. Every soul is surrounded by many souls that want to reform the society and resist deviations. However, sometimes the reformation and redirection towards the right, after committing something wrong, comes from one's self-reproaching soul. But when one's self-reproaching soul is absent, the soul that incites to evil replaces it.

Deviation from the Divine Way takes place gradually. When someone does not follow Allah's Way in a certain matter, his soul reproaches him for that; such a soul is called a self-reproaching soul. After a person commits a sin, his soul returns to being careful about following the Divine Way if such a person possesses religious immunity. By contrast, another person enjoys deviating from the right course and his soul urges him to go astray. He has a soul that incites him to evil and frequently prompts him to commit sins. Such a person needs someone else to guide him to do good.

Allah *Glorified is He* has made the human soul three kinds: self-reproaching, inciting to evil and at peace. The self-reproaching soul is in charge of rejecting the whispers of the soul inciting to evil. If it does not reject such whispers, the soul inciting to evil keeps inciting the human being to do wrong and nothing can stop it. As for the soul at peace, it is the one who is assured regarding the Divine Way of Guidance. We should take into account that the human soul naturally loves goodness. If its evil does not control it, it inclines to goodness and loves it. But if the evil soul controls it, its evil veils its goodness and its whims and desires open the gates of evil for it.

The person may follow his whims and commit a bad deed, but he then becomes heedful and his soul reproaches him for committing the bad deed; this is the self-reproaching soul which rebukes himself for doing evil and motives himself to do good. If the self-reproaching soul prevails, the society will be in a good state. To sum up, the soul at peace obeys Allah *the Almighty*

and commands the human beings to obey Him, and the self-reproaching soul reproaches himself for doing evil. Every believer may undergo some weakness in his faith. In such a case, he should seek instruction from his co-religionist who will blame him for his weakness in faith and put him back on the right track.

The person is not only responsible for guarding himself against the hellfire, but he is also responsible for his household, including his wife and children. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was asked, 'How can we guard ourselves and families against the hellfire?' He replied, 'By ordering them to do what pleases Allah and not to do what He dislikes'.⁽¹⁾ This means that we should learn what is good and then teach it to our families in order to guard ourselves and the people we know against the hellfire by obeying Allah *the Almighty*. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* commands us to first learn what is beneficial for us, and then teach it to those we are responsible for; that is, the person starts with himself, then his closest relatives, and then the rest of his family. This is because Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Start with your dependents'.⁽²⁾ The man is in charge of his family and should take care of them as Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'All of you are guardians (*ra'i*) and are responsible for your charges'.

The root of the Arabic word '*ra'i*' (guardian) is derived from grazing sheep because when the shepherd takes the sheep to the pasture, he guards them for none of them to go astray and then be caught by the wolves. He provides for the sheep what makes them at rest for them not to become exhausted and die on the way.

Thus, the man shoulders the responsibility of his family as Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'The man is the guardian of his family and is responsible for them; a woman is the guardian of her husband's home and his children and is responsible for them; and the slave is a guardian

(1) In his *Tafsir*, As-Suyuti ascribed this Hadith to Ibn Mardawayh on the authority of Zayd ibn Aslam. It is also narrated by Sa'id ibn Mansur, Abd ibn Hamid, Ibn Jarir, and others. See As-Suyuti, *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur*, 14/588.

(2) This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him. See Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 1426.

of his master's property and is responsible for it. Surely, every one of you is a guardian and is responsible for his charges'.⁽¹⁾

Giving the example of one of the Prophets, Allah *the Almighty* teaches us how to care for our families, saying: 'And he [Ismail (Ishmael)] enjoined on his family prayer and almsgiving, and was one in whom his Lord was well pleased' (*Maryam*: 55). One of the virtues of Prophet Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* is that he used to order his wife and children to pray and give alms. He *Glorified is He* does not make mention of a virtue unless it is great and proportional to Ishmael's virtues of being truthful to his promise and being a Messenger and a Prophet. As such, anyone who wants to be described with a prophetic virtue should command his household to pray and give alms.

But why does Allah *Glorified is He* especially mention one's household? This is because they immediately surround him and that if they are righteous, his whole family and offspring will be good. If the man draws his household's attention towards the remembrance of Allah and praying five times a day, this blocks the ways of Satan. After all, he has no chance in a home where prayer is established five times a day. In this regard, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'May Allah show mercy to a man who gets up during the night and prays two units of prayer, and who wakens his wife and she prays; but if she refuses, he sprinkles water on her face. May Allah show mercy to a woman who gets up during the night and prays, and who wakens her husband and he prays; but if he refuses, she sprinkles water on his face'.⁽²⁾

This means every night, every man and woman can be like a Messenger for their household. In this connection, He *the Almighty* says: 'And enjoin prayer on your followers, and be constant in it. We do not ask you for subsistence; We give you subsistence. And the (good) end is for those who guard (against evil)' (*Ta Ha*: 132). Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* explained

(1) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Ibn 'Umar Allah be pleased with him. See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 7138; Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 4828;*

(2) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him. In his Musradrak, Al-Hakim grades it as authentic, meeting the conditions stipulated by Muslim. See Abu Dawud, Sunnan, Hadith no. 1310 and 1452; An-Nasa'i, Sunnan, Hadith no. 1610; Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 7404 and 9625; Al-Bazzar, Musnad, Hadith no. 8502; and Al-Hakim, Musradrak, Hadith no. 1164.*

this matter for us, saying, 'Command your children to perform prayer when they are seven, and beat them for not offering them when they are ten'.⁽¹⁾ The order to pray is issued by the child's family, but it is ultimately issued by Allah *the Almighty*. This is because He *the Almighty* wanted to make the child, in this early age, ordered from someone physically closer to him. His father is the one who gives him the material bounties by providing him with food, drink and all the necessities of life. For this reason, if his father orders him to pray, he will likely obey him. After all, the child's faculties of perception are not broad enough to understand the One Who really bestows the bounties, namely Allah *the Almighty*. That is why Allah commands the father to make his child accustomed to carrying out Allah's Obligations, punishing him if he does not adhere to that order. This is because the one who issues any order is the one who punishes for neglecting it. When the child attains puberty, he receives the order from the One Who bestows bounty on him, that is Allah *Glorified is He*. At that time, the child will be familiar with the religious obligations; therefore, they will be easy for him.

You should notice that Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...and be patient (*istabir*) in it [the prayer, yourself]' (*Ta Ha*: 132) meaning, the responsibility of the father and the mother is not confined to ordering the children to pray, but they should be steadfast in praying themselves. There is a difference between the imperative '*isbir*' and '*istabir*' (be patient), which have similar meanings. The Arabic verb '*istabir*' used in the last verse expresses a hyperbole; to be more patient and deliberately do it by, for example, caring to pray in front of the children to establish the importance of prayer in their minds. For instance, when you enter your house and find the food is ready, you can say to your children, 'Wait until I offer my prayer'. In this way, the children will be aware that Prayer is more important than food. Furthermore, you will instill the idea of respecting Allah's Obligation in their souls, and that keeping up prayer takes precedence over any other action, whatever it may be. 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* used to get up at night to pray what Allah *the Almighty* used to make easy for him until the Dawn Prayer. Then he used to wake his household up

(1) This Hadith is narrated on the authority of 'Amr ibn Al-'As *Allah be pleased with him*. See Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 6756; Abu Dawud, Sunnan, Hadith no. 495.

for prayer; but if they refused, he would sprinkle water on their faces. When you make your children accustomed to the call for prayer, they will answer it once they hear it without prioritising anything else. In fact, Allah *Glorified is He* does not bless any work that distracts you from answering the call for prayer.

Back to the verse in question; Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Believers, guard yourselves and your families against a fire fuelled by people and stones...' (*at-Tahrim*: 6). In another verse, He *the Almighty* also says: '...then be on your guard against the fire of which men and stones are the fuel; it is prepared for the unbelievers' (*al-Baqara*: 24). This means people and stones will be the fuel of the hellfire that lights it and makes it blaze strongly. Moreover, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Surely you and what you worship besides Allah are firewood (*hasab*) of hell; to it you shall come' (*al-Anbiya*: 98). The Arabic word '*hasab*' (firewood) means all that is used as fuel for fire, whether it is wood, cloth, oil or electricity. So, what do you think if the fuel of the hellfire is the disbelieving people themselves? The hellfire waits, longs and yearns for their coming; a fact which is crystal clear in His saying: 'On the Day when We will say to Hell, "Are you filled up?" And it will say, "Are there any more?"' (*Qaf*: 30), and in His saying: 'When they shall be cast therein, they shall hear a [dreadful] inhaling as it boils up' (*al-Mulk*: 7). When the disbelievers are thrown into the hellfire, it will blaze forth, making a great blast. Its inhalation seizes the hearts as if it sucks in what is thrown into it.

It has been narrated that when Allah's saying: '...a fire fuelled by people and stones...' (*at-Tahrim*: 6) was revealed, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* recited it and thereupon a young person sitting beside him fell unconscious. Out of mercy for him, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* put his head on his lap. After a while, the young boy opened his eyes to find his head on the lap of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Thereupon, the young man said, 'May my father and mother be scarified for you, Prophet Muhammad. What is the stone of the Hell like?' He replied, 'Is what has inflicted you not enough? Anyhow, if one of its stones were placed on a mountain, it would melt'.⁽¹⁾

(1) This Hadith was narrated by Ibn Al-Mundhir on the authority of Mohammad ibn Hisham, but Al-Albani graded it as weak. In his *Tafsir*, As-Suyuti ascribed it to Ibn Abu Ad-Dunya =

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* describes the angels who are in charge of the hellfire and are its keepers as being: '...stern and strong...' (*at-Tahrim*: 6). The Arabic word '*ghilazh*' (strong) refers to those who have strong and big bodies. The distance between the two shoulders of any of these angels is like the distance of travelling for one year. They also use harsh words and treat the disbelievers who are the companions of the hellfire roughly. Furthermore, they are heartless and merciless to the disbeliever when they beg for mercy, for their mercy to the disbeliever has been taken away from their hearts, even though they are angels. Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And We have not made the wardens of the fire other than angels. And We have not made their number but as a trial for those who disbelieve, in order that the people of the Book may be certain and those who believe may increase in faith...' (*al-Muddaththir*: 31).

The number of these angels who are in charge of the hellfire is nineteen, as Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Over it are nineteen' (*al-Muddaththir*: 30). They are harsh when responding to the people of the hellfire, as Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And those who are in the Fire shall say to the keepers of Hell, "Call upon your Lord that He may lighten to us one day of the punishment"' (*Ghafir*: 49). But the keepers of the hellfire will shatter their hopes, saying: 'They shall say, "Did your Messengers not come to you with clear arguments?" They shall say, "Yes". They [the angels] shall say, "Then call. But the call of the unbelievers is nothing but [futile wandering] in [mazes of] error"' (*Ghafir*: 50).

The punishment of the hellfire is so severe that the disbelievers will ask Allah *the Almighty* to cause them to perish in order to relieve themselves from that punishment. In this regard, the Lord *the Almighty* says: 'And they shall call out, "O Malik! Let your Lord put an end of us". He shall say, "Surely, you shall abide"' (*az-Zukhruf*: 78). Furthermore, it is narrated that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'When the people of Paradise enter Paradise and the people of Hell enter Hell, death shall be brought in a form of a sheep. Then it will be said to the believers, "Do you recognise this?" They will say, "We recognise it. It is death. It came to us and we knew it". Then it will be said to the people of the fire, "Do you recognise this?"

= and Ibn Qudama in his book *Al-Buka' Wa Ar-Riqa*. See Al-Albani, *Da'if At-Tarhib*, Hadith no. 2152; and As-Suyuti, *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur*, 14/689.

They will say, "Yes". Then it will be said, "O people of Paradise! Have an everlasting life without death! O people of the Fire! Have an everlasting life without death!"⁽¹⁾

Therefore, the people of the hellfire will wish to die in order to be relieved of the chastisement. There is a great difference between death and punishment. Death ends the life and causes one's pain to come to an end, whereas the punishment lasts as long as the person lives. You can imagine the severity of the punishment that makes the punished person wish and beg for death. In this connection, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'They will be hurled into a narrow part of the hellfire, chained together. They will cry out for death. Do not cry out this day for one death, but cry out for many deaths' (*al-Furqan*: 13, 14). A poet says in this regard:

How terrible your suffering is if you consider death a cure
and how calamitous it is to wish to die!

Allah *Glorified is He* describes the angels in general and the keepers of the hellfire in particular, saying: '...angels who never disobey Allah's Commands to them, but do as they are ordered' (*at-Tahrim*: 6). They never disobey His command, and for this reason not one of the disbelievers should think that they can, for instance, incite one of the keepers of the hellfire to let them leave the hellfire. Naturally, the angels obey the commands of Allah *the Almighty* and never disobey Him. For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* made the keepers of the hellfire angels who were created from light and who naturally obey Him. Furthermore, the Lord *Glorified is He* describes them, saying: 'They fear their Lord above them and do what they are commanded' (*an-Nahl*: 50). Besides, they never disdain to worship Him *the Almighty* nor do they grow weary, as He *the Almighty* says: 'Those who are with Him [Allah] are not proud to serve Him, nor do they grow weary' (*al-Anbiya*': 19). They are not like the disbelievers and the deniers; rather, they do not become weak, eat or grow weary of obeying Him *Glorified is He*. Moreover, Allah *the Most High* says: 'Those who bear the Supreme Throne [of Allah] and those around Him

(1) This Hadith was narrated on the authority of Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri Allah be pleased with him. See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 4730; Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 7360.*

[Allah] celebrate the praise of their Lord and believe in Him, and ask protection for those who believe...' (*Ghafir*: 7). They do not celebrate Allah's praise out of fear and awe; rather, out of love and faith, and that is why the Lord *Glorified is He* says that they: '...believe in Him...' (*Ghafir*: 7).

Afterwards, Allah *the Exalted* says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَا تَعْنِذُوا الْيَوْمَ إِنَّمَا تُخْرَوْنَ مَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٧﴾

'You who disbelieve, make no excuses today: you are only being repaid for what you used to do'[7]
(The Quran, *at-Tahrim*: 7)

There are numerous kinds of addresses in the Quran, and the addresses differ according to the addressee. For example, Allah *the Almighty* addresses the believers, saying: 'O you who believe, shall I show you a bargain that will save you from a painful torment? Believe in Allah and His Messenger [Muhammad] and struggle for His Cause with your possessions and your persons—that is better for you, if only you knew' (*as-Saff*: 10-11), and: 'O believers, obey Allah and His Messenger [Muhammad]: do not turn away when you are listening to him. And do not be like those who say, "We heard", though in fact they were not listening. The worst creatures in Allah's eyes are those who are [wilfully] deaf and dumb, who do not use reason' (*al-Anfal*: 20-22).

In addition, Allah *Glorified is He* addresses the Prophets and the people of the Book, but He does not address the disbeliever except in this verse that reads: 'O you who disbelieve, make no excuses today: you are only being repaid for what you used to do' (*at-Tahrim*: 7). He, however, includes the disbelievers in His general address directed to all the people commanding them to believe in Him, as in His saying: 'O people, be mindful of your Lord, for the earthquake of the Last Hour will be a mighty thing' (*al-Hajj*: 1), and: 'O people, be mindful of your Lord and fear a day when no parent will be able to avail their child at all, nor will a child be able to avail their parent at all. Allah's Promise is true, so do not let the present life delude you nor let the Deceiver delude you about Allah' (*Luqman*: 33). Here, Allah *Glorified is He* addresses all people, believers and disbelievers.

Allah *Glorified is He* does not address the disbelievers except when they enter the fire and suffer the severe torment, saying: 'O you who disbelieve, make no excuses today...' (*at-Tahrim*: 7). The disbelievers wishfully think that pleasure is confined to the worldly life, which runs counter to the Truth that they will come to know only in the hereafter, after they are thrown in the hellfire. In this regard, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Leave them to eat and enjoy themselves and to let false hopes distract them for they will come to know the consequences of their actions' (*al-Hijr*: 3).

The disbelievers are of two kinds: one kind disbelieved in Allah *the Almighty*, but when guidance came to them, they employed their minds, arrived at the Truth and declared their belief in Him *the Almighty*. The other kind of disbelievers benefited from their disbelief and, therefore, clung to it, no matter what proofs of faith were presented to them, out of their stubbornness in their disbelief.

These disbelievers did not disbelieve in Allah *Glorified is He* because the Message did not come to them. After all, it is their right to be sent a Prophet or a Messenger to lead them to the Divine Way. However, they considered their disbelief a mission to fulfill and a path to follow, given the fact that their disbelief made them masters and unjustly gave them extra privileges over other people. Disbelief means to try to veil the reality of Allah's Existence, the necessarily existing God. In fact, their concealment of Allah's Existence is a proof in itself that He exists, for no one attempts to conceal what is non-existent. Thus, their attempt to conceal Allah's Existence rebound, as it proves His Existence. As such, the disbelievers themselves attest to Allah's Existence.

The worst kind of disbelief is that preceded by believing in Allah *the Almighty* as He says: 'Surely, those who disbelieve after having believed, then increase in disbelief, their repentance shall not be accepted, and these are the ones that go astray' (*Al-Imran*: 90). The one whose disbelief increases is the one who, after disbelieving himself, bars others from having faith in Allah *the Almighty*. Such a disbeliever is not satisfied with his disbelief, for he tries to spread it to others, which increases his disbelief. Furthermore, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Surely, those who disbelieve and die while they are unbelievers, the earth full of gold shall not be accepted from one of them, though he should offer

to ransom himself with it. They are the ones who shall have a painful chastisement, and they shall have no helpers' (*Al- 'Imran*: 91). It will be said to them: 'Did you disbelieve after having believed? Taste therefore the chastisement because you disbelieved' (*Al- 'Imran*: 106). This is because they first believed then disbelieved and died in the state of disbelief.

Their faces will be black on the Day of Judgment, even if they were masters in this worldly life, enjoying its pleasures. In this connection, Allah *the Almighty* commands Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the Muslims, saying: '[O Prophet], do not be deceived by the disbelievers' [lucrative] trading to and fro in the land' (*Al- 'Imran*: 196). The disbelievers only enjoy the short, fleeting pleasure of this worldly life. By contrast, the believers will enjoy the deferred yet eternal pleasure in the hereafter. For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* says about the disbelievers' enjoyment: 'This is only a brief enjoyment, after which Hell will be their home—a miserable resting place!' (*Al- 'Imran*: 197) That is why the Lord *the Most High* will not accept their excuses because, on the Day of Judgment, the matter is over and their life in this world will have end. As a result, they had already lost their opportunity to believe and their excuses will neither be accepted nor be beneficial for them. They will be punished for their misdeeds, as they did not offer anything except their disbelief in Allah *the Almighty* rejecting His signs and fighting His Messengers and righteous slaves.

They will give many excuses in the Hereafter, saying, for instance: 'The last of them shall say with regards to the foremost of them, "Our Lord! These led us astray, therefore give them a double chastisement of the Fire". He will say, "Every one shall have double, but this you do not understand"' (*al-A 'raf*: 38). This excuse is not accepted because all the disbelievers have a double punishment. Those who imitated others in going astray from the Way of Guidance increased the number of the callers towards error and strengthened their position, which incited many people to follow them.

The oppressed ones among the disbelievers will give another excuse that the haughty, disbelieving oppressors schemed, night and day, against them, ordering them to disbelieve in Allah *the Almighty*. In this connection, Allah

the Almighty says: '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". The oppressed will say to them, "No, it was your scheming, night and day, ordering us to disbelieve in Allah 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?' (*Saba'*: 32-33) Each of the two groups will blame the other, claiming that it is responsible for the punishment they suffer. When the oppressors charged the oppressed saying that they were sinners who followed them to avail themselves of the pleasures of the worldly life, the oppressed will respond by stating that the oppressors used to scheme, day and night, persuading and urging them to disbelieve until they followed them.

Furthermore, they will give another lame excuse, saying: 'O our Lord! Our adversity overcame us and we were an erring people. O our Lord! Take us out of it; then, if we return (to evil), surely we shall be unjust' (*al-Mu'minun*: 106-107). Thereupon, Allah *the Almighty* replies: 'Away with you! Remain in it [Hell] with ignominy! Do not speak to Me!' (*al-Mu'minun*: 108) They wanted to be acquitted of their charge, putting the blame on Allah *Glorified is He* by saying that He predestined their waywardness and as a result they are not sinful, for how can they be among the blessed if their destiny was otherwise. Moreover, they will say, 'If Allah willed, we will not have disbelieved'. As a result, Allah *the Almighty* replies: 'Away with you! Remain in it [Hell] with ignominy! Do not speak to Me!' (*al-Mu'minun*: 108) It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* is saying to them, 'Be silent in your humiliation and disgrace, for you used to persecute the believers'.

On their entry to the hellfire, Allah *the Almighty* says to them: 'O you who disbelieve, make no excuses today: you are only being repaid for what you used to do' (*at-Tahrim*: 7). This is meant to shatter their hopes of salvation. The Lord *the Almighty* also says: 'But on that day their excuse shall not profit those who were unjust, nor will they be allowed to receive a reprove [so as to be given another chance after it] (*yust'ataboon*)' (*ar-Rum*: 57). In addition to the unacceptability of their excuses, they will not be allowed to make amends.

The Arabic word '*al-'itab*' from which the word '*yust'ataboon*' (receive a reprove) is derived, means to reprove someone gently for something he has done. No one will even dare to ask them to plead with Allah *the Almighty* to waive their punishment.

The Day of Judgment is not the time for giving excuses; rather, it is the Day of Recompense for deeds. The disbelievers will be admitted to the hellfire as a repayment for their misdeeds. Their excuses for their sins and crimes will not be useful for them as they had been warned in the worldly life.

In the verse in question, Allah *the Almighty* says: '...you are only being repaid for what you used to do' (*at-Tahrim*: 7). That is, the disbelievers' punishment is not decreed unjustly against them because the Lord *the Almighty* neither unjustly favours the one who does good deeds nor is He unjust to the one who does misdeeds; a fact which is clear in His saying: '...no injustice (shall be done) this Day...' (*Ghafir*: 7).

Allah *the Almighty* also says: 'And you shall see every nation kneeling down; every nation shall be called to its book. Today you shall be rewarded for what you did' (*al-Jathiya*: 28). Consequently, Allah *the Almighty* does not unjustly punish them; rather, He says to them: '...Taste what you did' (*al-'Ankabut*: 55). It is as if their misdeed is the hellfire that burns them. In fact, the person is only held accountable and rewarded for his own actions, and as a result no one should ask the Lord *the Exalted* about something that has nothing to do with him.

The human being is asked to repent regardless of his religious condition. If he is a disbeliever, his repentance is to believe in Allah *the Almighty* and if he is a believer, his repentance is to stop committing sins, misdeeds and injustice, and to refrain from appropriating people's rights.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* commands the believers, in particular, to repent, saying:

بَيِّنَاتٍ لِّلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا تُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ تَوْبَةً نَّصُوحًا عَسَىٰ رَبُّكُمْ أَن يَكْفِرَ عَنْكُمْ
 سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَيُدْخِلَكُم جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ يَوْمَ لَا يُخْزِي اللَّهُ
 النَّبِيَّ وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا مَعَهُ نُورُهُمْ يَسْعَىٰ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَبِأَيْمَانِهِمْ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا
 أَتِمِّمْ لَنَا نُورَنَا وَآغْفِرْ لَنَا إِنَّكَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٨﴾

Believers, turn to God in sincere repentance. Your Lord may well cancel your bad deeds for you and admit you into Gardens graced with flowing streams, on a Day when God will not disgrace the Prophet or those who have believed with him. With their lights streaming out ahead of them and to their right, they will say, 'Lord, perfect our lights for us and forgive us: You have power over everything' [8]

(The Quran, *at-Tahrim*: 8)

One may ask, 'Why does Allah address the disbelievers in the previous verse, although in the verse before and after it He addresses the believers? He firstly addresses the believers, saying: 'O believers, guard yourselves and your families against a fire fuelled by people and stones, over which stand angels, stern and strong; angels who never disobey Allah's Commands to them, but do as they are ordered' (*at-Tahrim*: 6), and followed it by saying: 'O you who disbelieve, make no excuses today: you are only being repaid for what you used to do' (*at-Tahrim*: 7), and then He says: 'O believers, turn to Allah in sincere repentance' (*at-Tahrim*: 8). The one who reflects on these verses will find that Allah *the Almighty* has compassion for the disbelievers as He places His discourse to them between two verses addressing the believers. He *the Almighty* wants them to believe in Him; but why do they reject the Call of Belief?

From these verses we also learn that Allah *the Almighty* also warns the believers against disbelieving and asks them to guard themselves and their families against the hellfire fuelled by men and stones. In another verse, He *the Almighty* says: 'And if you are in doubt as to that which We have revealed to Our slave, then produce a chapter like it and call on your witnesses besides Allah if you are truthful. But if you do (it) not, and never shall you do (it), then be on your guard against the fire whose fuel is men and stones; it is prepared for the unbelievers' (*al-Baqara*: 23-24). After Allah *the Almighty* makes mention of

the hellfire in the earlier verse in the chapter of *at-Tahrim*, it is suitable that He calls the disbelievers, saying: ‘O you who disbelieve, make no excuses today: you are only being repaid for what you used to do’ (*at-Tahrim*: 7).

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* commands the believers to repent, saying: ‘Believers, turn to Allah in sincere repentance (*tawba*)’ (*at-Tahrim*: 8). Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* also said, ‘Allah is more delighted at the repentance of His slave than the one who found his camel after he had lost it in a waterless desert’. ⁽¹⁾ If one tries to get closer to Allah *the Almighty* He guides him. Repentance requires the determination of the repentant to not commit new sins or return to those which he had previously committed. The Lord *the Almighty* does not reject the invocations of anyone who seeks His Bounty.

To know how great His Mercy towards His slaves is, we should read the following Sacred Hadith in which Prophet Muhammad related Allah as saying, ‘On every day the sun rises, the sky says to Allah, “My Lord, grant me the permission to fall apart on the human beings for they eat from Your Provision but are ungrateful to You”. The seas say, “My Lord, grant us the permission to drown the human beings for they eat from Your Provision but are ungrateful to You”. The mountains also say, “My Lord, grant us the permission to smash the human beings for they eat from Your Provision but are ungrateful to You”. Thereupon Allah says, “Leave them, for if you had created them, you will have been merciful to them. They are my slaves. If they repent to Me, I will be pleased with them. Otherwise, I will reform them”’. ⁽²⁾

The Arabic verb ‘*taba*’ (to repent), from which the word ‘*toobu*’ (turn in repentance) in the verse under discussion is derived, means that the slave repents to Allah *the Almighty* seeking His Forgiveness for his sins and misdeeds. By doing this, the Lord *the Almighty* accepts his repentance. Thus, the word repentance revolves around returning to Him *the Almighty*.

Allah's Kindness and Mercy is evident in prescribing repentance in order for the people to have their sins forgiven. Accordingly, when the person commits a sin and regrets doing it, he should not think that repentance is

(1) *This Hadith was narrated on the authority of Anas ibn Malik Allah be pleased with him. See: Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 6309; Muslim, Hadith no. 7137.*

(2) From the proofreader: This is not a Hadith. See: <http://dorar.net/spreadH/465>.

difficult for him, as the Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'Except those who repent and amend and make manifest (the Truth), these are the ones to whom I turn (in mercy); and I am the Oft-Returning (to mercy), the Most Merciful' (*al-Baqara*: 160). Thus, Allah accepts the repentance of all sinners as He is the Oft-Returning (to mercy). In addition to prescribing repentance in order for the slaves to have their repentance accepted, Allah *the Almighty* prescribed it to guard His slaves against the evils of committing sins and to show Mercy to the repentant sinners.

In fact, Allah *the Almighty* shows great Mercy to His slaves and especially the repentant ones among them, a fact which is crystal clear in His saying: 'And (as to) those who do evil deeds but then repent and believe, your Lord after that is most surely Forgiving, Most Merciful' (*al-A'raf*: 153). Thus, repentance means to regret your sin and be determined not to do it again. It also means to return from falsehood to Truth. Some people even repent from their disbelief that inflicted their pure natural belief in order to follow the Divine Way of Guidance. Out of His Mercy, Allah *the Almighty* opens the doors of repentance to the sinners which protects the whole society from the deviant people and the followers of whims and desires. Had these doors of repentance been closed in front of the sinners, the whole society will have suffered because the sinners will keep on their falsehood and error, as they will not have had any motivation to be righteous.

The repentance should be a sincere one, for Allah *the Almighty* says: 'O believers turn to Allah in sincere repentance...' (*at-Tahrim*: 8). Being sincere in repentance requiring that the repentant slave abstains from committing the sin, is determined not to repeat it, and returns the rights to the people, if applicable. The sincere repentance, therefore, is the one after which the repentant person does not commit the sin and does not mockingly renege on it saying, 'I will commit such-and-such a sin and then I will repent again'. Thus, the person should truly return to Allah *the Almighty* by being determined not to return to the sin again.

There are some conditions that should be met with regard to repentance in order for it to be a sincere one. These stipulated conditions include: firstly, to abstain from committing the sin; secondly, to regret committing it; and finally, to

be determined not to repeat it again. This does not mean that if you commit the same sin again He *the Almighty* does not accept your repentance because you may undergo some circumstances that make you fall into the same sin once again. What you should do is be truthfully determined not to return to the sin after your repentance, but if you fell into it again, this should be unintentional. However, if you said you will commit the sin and then repent, how can you be sure that the Lord *the Most High* will grant you a respite until you repent again? As such, we should hastily repent before it is too late. These are the conditions of repentance of the slave regarding a sin committed against Allah *the Almighty*.

If it is related to other people, the repentant person should meet another condition, namely, returning the rights to the people concerned if this is possible. If it is not possible, he should give any good type of charity, intending to give the reward thereof to the people he had wronged.

Allah says: 'Your Lord may well cancel your bad deeds for you...' (*at-Tahrim*: 8). That is, He forgives the major and the minor sins of the believers. There are many reasons He forgives, including repentance, concealing the charity given to the poor, a fact which is crystal clear in His saying: 'If you give alms openly, it is well. But if you hide it and give it to the poor, it is better for you; this will do away with some of your evil deeds. And Allah is aware of what you do' (*al-Baqara*: 271), and piety. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'O you who believe! If you are careful of (your duty to) Allah, He will grant you a distinction, do away with your evils and forgive you. And Allah's Favour is indeed immense' (*al-Anfal*: 29).

It has become clear that Allah *Glorified is He* conceals the believer's misdeeds and forgives them, waiving the punishment they deserve for committing these misdeeds. In addition, avoiding the major sins like killing, committing adultery and fleeing the battlefield is one of the reasons for having sins forgiven, a fact which is illustrated in His saying: 'If you avoid the great sins you have been forbidden, We shall wipe out your minor misdeeds and let you in through the entrance of honour' (*an-Nisa*': 31).

But this is a matter over which the scholars have pondered and lingered. They said, 'The people may be incited to do the minor sins if they avoided the

major ones'. We say, 'No'. On the other hand, insisting on doing a minor sin is a great sin. For this reason, you should not insist on committing minor sins; He *the Almighty* only forgives what you do unintentionally. That is why Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Repentance with Allah is only for those who do evil (*as-soo* ') in ignorance and then turn (to Allah) soon. These are the ones to whom Allah turns (in mercy), and Allah is All Knowing, All-Wise' (*an-Nisa*': 17). They do the misdeed without previously arranging to do it, for repentance is not accepted from the one who enjoys committing sins and is heedless of repentance except when he is dying. For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'It is not true repentance when people persist in doing evil deeds (*as-sai'aat*) until death confronts them and they then say, "Now I repent", nor those who die while they are disbelievers: We have prepared a painful torment for these' (*an-Nisa*': 18).

You should notice that the Quran used the word 'as-soo'' ('evil', in the singular) to refer to the one sin that the person unintentionally fell into, but for the one who deviates from Allah's Way of Guidance, the word '*as-sai'aat*' ('evil deeds', in the plural) is used to describe them as persisting in doing evil deeds. Committing only one sin means that the person has only one weak point, and he does his best to make up for it by doing good deeds. By contrast, the one who habitually commits evil deeds does not have only one weak point as he commits many sins and indulges in deviation. He also defers repentance until the time he is dying, and then he says: 'Now I repent' (*an-Nisa*': 18).

Wiping out the sins means that Allah *the Almighty* conceals them in this worldly life and waives the punishment they incur in the Hereafter. Allah *the Almighty* wipes out the sins of the one who repents sincerely by abstaining from committing a certain sin and not thinking about returning to it. It is as if the sincere repentance has purified the organs of his body; it has purified the heart and the mind from having or thinking about bad intentions.

With regard to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Believers, turn to Allah in sincere repentance...' (*at-Tahrim*: 8), 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* commented, 'It is related to the person who commits a sin and then repents honestly and does not return to it'.⁽¹⁾

(1) See *Al-Fakhr Al-Razi, Mafatih Al-Ghaib*, 3/469.

In fact, Allah's Mercy encompasses all the believers who sin, for He forgives all their sins for them. However, the person might not have all his sins wiped out; this is because sins are of two types: there are sins which are committed against Allah *the Almighty* by violating His Orders, and there are others which are committed by the people against each other. The repentant person may have all the sins committed against Allah *the Almighty* forgiven for him. This is because he, that is the sinner, does not actually do wrong against Allah *the Almighty* Himself by committing such sins, but rather to himself. However, any harm committed against the human beings will abuse them and violate their rights. For this reason, repentance in this case occurs only by the restitution of these rights.

Islam is a religion that takes into consideration the reality of the human beings. Allah *the Almighty* knows that His slaves frequently commit sins, and that is why He *Glorified is He* has laid down for them the way to ask for forgiveness. If they commit sins, Allah *the Almighty* asks them to seek repentance.

Polytheism is the major sin that Allah *the Almighty* does not forgive, a fact which is clear in His saying: 'Surely Allah does not forgive that anything should be associated with Him, but forgives anything else besides that to whomsoever He pleases; and associating anything with Allah is to devise a most heinous sin indeed' (*an-Nisa'*: 48). That is, Allah *the Almighty* does not pardon those who die without repenting from polytheism, and consequently they will go to the fire whose fuel is men and stones. To such people He *the Almighty* says: '...make no excuses today: you are only being repaid for what you used to do' (*at-Tahrim*: 7).

Returning to the verse under discussion, the Lord *the Almighty* then says: '...and admit you into Gardens graced with flowing streams, on a Day when Allah will not disgrace the Prophet or those who have believed with him. With their lights streaming out ahead of them and to their right, they will say, "Lord, perfect our lights for us and forgive us: You have power over everything"' (*at-Tahrim*: 8).

There are many kinds of Gardens. They include: *Al-Firdaws*, Eden, the Bliss, the Abode of Eternity, the Abode of Peace and the Abode of Shelter. But the best of these Gardens is called *'Illiyun*. Furthermore, the greatest of all the

blessings in paradise is to enjoy seeing Allah *the Almighty*. Thus, the bliss of paradise is far superior to the bliss of having food and drink in this worldly life.

These Gardens are fully equipped with everything and do not require any effort on the part of the believers. The rivers are running underneath them, and the believers will find there what Allah *the Almighty* had promised them: '...wherein they abide eternally, with purified spouses...' (*Al- 'Imran*: 15).

Allah *the Almighty* has created paradise and made it a perpetual abode, as He *Glorified is He* says: 'Allah has promised to the believing men and the believing women Gardens beneath which rivers flow, to abide in them, and goodly dwellings in Gardens of perpetual abode; and best of all is Allah's goodly Pleasure—that is the grand achievement' (*at-Tawba*: 72).

In paradise, there are Gardens and Homes provided for the human beings. This is because the human being likes to have a home in order to enjoy his own pleasures by himself. Besides, he likes to sit with other people in a beautiful place, exactly as we do on holidays and special occasions when we go out to the gardens and orchards to sit together. It is as if the Gardens are prepared for extra luxury when you want to meet the people. On the other hand, the Homes of paradise are dedicated for privacy in which each one has a special place to privately enjoy his surroundings.

Therefore, the Gardens are like the orchards, but they were not created with normal causes and means because it is Allah *the Almighty* Who created them. When we go to a house of a rich person, we may find that the house has a garden looked after by a skilled gardener who takes care of its flowers and trees for them to look nice for the rich owner. In this case, we enjoy sitting in this garden very much and hate to leave it. If this is what happens in the worldly life and within human capacity, how about the Garden created by Allah *the Almighty*? How great will be the beauty, sweetness and pleasure of these Gardens?!

It is Allah *Glorified is He* Who promised to admit us into these Gardens, and He is Fully Able to fulfill His Promises to make us enjoy the bliss which no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined. He *the Almighty* made these Gardens vast and full of plants and flowers which please the

eye with their beauty, the hand with their soft touch, and the nose with their pleasant fragrance.

The rivers running under paradise give it another feature of beauty. They are running underneath it and the source of the water comes from another place or branch from underneath paradise itself. That is, the water originates itself from the same place, so it seems that every river springs from underneath its paradise. They are very beautiful, for they were created by Allah *the Almighty*. In our worldly life, we see that every river has two banks, but the rivers of paradise run without banks. These rivers, which contain milk, honey, water and wine share the same canal but do not mix. Each river is separate from the others because it is Allah *the Almighty* Who created them.

The paradise consists of Gardens that contain homes. In the worldly life, we find villas placed in the centre of gardens; but just imagine the beauty of the homes that Allah *the Almighty* promised us in the centre of paradise! In the Arabic language, the word '*janna*' (garden) means 'concealment' or 'hiding', and one of its derivatives is the word '*al-junun*' (insanity). The garden can conceal everything by means of the great number of its trees. This means that anyone can walk under its shade or sit in it without being seen. Since it is full of luxuries, the human being will not think of leaving it. The Gardens of Eden and residence in them are perpetual because they contain everything the human being needs. Besides, everyone wishes to live eternally therein.

Allah *the Almighty* describes these Gardens, saying: 'Gardens of perpetual residence, which they will enter, beneath which rivers flow...' (*an-Nahl*: 31), and: '...Gardens graced with flowing streams' (*at-Tawba*: 100). These verses mean that the rivers are running beneath the Gardens, but the source of the water may come from another place. Someone may say, 'The flow of these rivers may be stopped'. That is why Allah *the Almighty* says: '...beneath which rivers flow' (*an-Nahl*: 31). This means that the Garden provides water for itself, and it does not come from another source that may be stopped.

Regarding the Lord's saying: '...Gardens graced with flowing streams' (*at-Tawba*: 100), it means that the spring of this water comes from a remote place and passes underneath the Garden. As for His saying: '... beneath which rivers flow' (*an-Nahl*: 31), it implies that this water springs from underneath

the Garden itself. Consequently, the believers should not fear of it stopping or drying up. This offers assurance that the bliss of paradise is eternal and permanent.

The Arabic word '*anhar*' (rivers) is a plural whose singular is '*nahr*'. The river is a canal which contains running water; it does not refer to just the water itself. Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Gardens of perpetual residence, which they will enter, beneath which rivers flow...' (*an-Nahl*: 31). Where are these rivers running? Are they running under the plants or homes of paradise?

The garden is the orchard which contains trees that the people can hide behind, but it is not similar to the flowering orchard in which only the flowers delight the eyes. Paradise has high trees, thus they can conceal people walking in it. Furthermore, it contains a provision and all what the person needs. It does not let you look for an alternative place because it contains everything. If anyone lacks anything in his worldly life, he looks forward to having everything he needs. But if he has everything he needs, he does not look for other things.

From this we learn that the Garden in paradise covers the believers; its trees have grown to hide the people walking under their branches and leaves. The believers do not look forward to leaving paradise as everything is provided there: water, food, a comfortable place to sit or dance and other blessings bestowed by Allah *the Almighty*.

The difference between the rivers in this worldly life and those of paradise is that the former are channels that have banks, but the latter run on the surface of the land, without banks to detain the water. In paradise, the rivers of wine are running on the surface of the land but they do not mix with the rivers of water or that of milk. And nothing can stop the flow of the rivers in paradise. All of this has been created by an Omnipotent, All-Wise Lord. The running of the rivers in the worldly life is merely a way to achieve greenery, fertility and ripeness. To sum up, the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...beneath which rivers flow' (*Ta Ha*: 76) means that the water provides itself; it does not come from another source that may be stopped or banned.

Allah *the Almighty* says about the rivers of paradise: 'Here is a picture of the Garden promised to the pious: rivers of water forever pure, rivers of milk forever fresh, rivers of wine, a delight for those who drink, rivers of honey clarified and pure, [all] flow in it. There they will find fruit of every kind, and

they will find forgiveness from their Lord. How can this be compared to the fate of those who dwell forever in the fire and are given boiling water to drink that tears their bowels?' (*Muhammad*: 15)

The Lord *the Most High* gives the rivers of paradise certain names that we are familiar with. However, He purified these rivers from any mud that we might see in the rivers of this worldly life which run between two banks. By contrast, the rivers of paradise will have no banks to detain the water as they will be detained by Allah's Power.

In paradise, you will find rivers of milk whose taste has not been changed, and rivers of wine different from that of the worldly life; it will be delicious for the drinkers. In this worldly life, on the other hand, people drink wine without pleasure, as a person drops it into his mouth at once to reduce its sharp and acidified taste.

Unlike this worldly life, paradise has rivers of honey refined by Allah *the Almighty*. In this regard, the Arabs used to collect honey from the mountains but they used to find it mixed with stones and sand. Thus, Allah *the Almighty* filters these blessings from all impurities; He filters water from dirtiness, milk from its taste being altered, wine from what causes drunkenness, and honey from all impurities. That is, He *the Almighty* purified them from all the impurities known in this worldly life. In this worldly life, water, for example, is sweet, serene and pure, but it becomes dirty when it stagnates. On the contrary, the rivers of water in paradise are purified from all these impurities.

Also, the wine of the Hereafter differs from that of this worldly life; it does not harm the mind. Besides, the wine of this world is not delicious for its drinkers because it is extracted from alcohol which has an astringent taste. This is why you find its drinkers pour it quickly into their mouths in order to avoid its bitterness which in turn hurts their stomach. The situation is different if the drink is mango, orange or sugar-cane juice. People like to taste those fruits, and as a result, we find that they drink their juices slowly to retain their taste for a longer time. Furthermore, Allah *the Almighty* says about the wine of paradise: 'No bad effect is there in it' (*as-Saffat*: 47). He *the Almighty* purifies the rivers of wine from the impurities of the wine of this worldly life which make the mind unaware of what he is doing.

The greatness of paradise is presented by the fact that regardless of the pleasures we enjoy in this worldly life, we cannot have a river of wine, milk or honey. Moreover, out of Allah's Omnipotence, these rivers run in paradise without banks, yet they do not mix with each other.

Enjoying these pleasures will be realised on: '...a Day when Allah will not disgrace (*yukhzi*) the Prophet [Muhammad] or those who have believed with him' (*at-Tahrim*: 8). The word '*khizi*' (disgrace), from which the verb '*yukhzi*' is derived, has two meanings in the Arabic language: scandal and shame.

The two senses are interconnected; if a person encounters a scandal, he becomes ashamed. This indicates that disgrace is an ugly thing that you hate people to know about. With regard to the Hereafter, the 'disgrace' is a level of punishment that is more severe than the torment of hell. The most severe disgrace is when a person takes things from this worldly life in order to redeem himself from the punishment of hell, but Allah *the Almighty* does not accept that from him. In this regard, He *the Almighty* says: 'Surely (as for) those who disbelieve, even if they had everything that is on the earth, and the like of it with it, to give as a ransom for the punishment of the Day of Resurrection, it shall not be accepted from them. They shall have a painful punishment' (*al-Ma'ida*: 36). This is the harshest disgrace that one should avoid.

Likewise, the Jewish will suffer from disgrace and scandal, a fact which is clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'For them in this world is disgrace and they will have in the Hereafter a great punishment' (*al-Baqara*: 114). Thus, not only will they be punished by being disgraced, but also by a great torment in the hellfire.

In fact, disgrace is harsher on the soul than torment because it entails a scandal. For example, if a person, who used to have a high status in his neighborhood, had a fight with a young boy in front of the people, the disgrace which afflicts this person for starting a fight will be harsher than any physical beating, to the extent that he will become unable to face the people.

The torment which results in disgrace in this worldly life can be embodied in every haughty bully who persecutes the people. His disgrace in this worldly life is realised by being punished and humiliated by the people.

Furthermore, the torment of the Hereafter is the severest and the worst type of torment. Any disgraced person feels worthless and suffers due to the scandal among the people.

Thus, disgrace is an unbearable dishonour and humiliation which is more painful than any physical harm. Disgrace is a chill that inflicts the body and no one can escape from it, even if he is able to conceal his pain. It affects the person psychologically, and this appears on the face; no one can conceal this because it affects one's arrogance, removing it.

With regard to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...on a Day when Allah will not disgrace the Prophet [Muhammad] or those who have believed with him' (*at-Tahrim*: 8), this tells those who did not believe in Allah *the Almighty* that they will be subject to disgrace and debasement, leaving them ashamed and worried and in a poor position. Moreover Allah *the Almighty* will not disgrace the believers as long as Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* will not be subject to disgrace. The word 'believers' here refers to those who follow the Prophet's way. But if they abandoned his way, they will be subject to disgrace.

In this connection, the Lord *the Almighty* says: 'Our Lord, indeed, whoever You admit to the Fire—You have disgraced (*akhzaytahu*)' (*Al-'Imran*: 192). Here, the believers do not focus on the torment of those who will go to the fire, but rather on how they will be disgraced. The word '*khizi*' (disgrace) from which the word '*akhzaytah*' is derived, reminds me about a joyful situation which I experienced when I was young. Sheikh Hassan Zaghoul *Allah rest his soul* used to review Quran for us to ensure we were reciting it in a good way. He was blind and we often used to trick him. If we found an opportunity, we escaped from him and ran away to avoid having our recital of the Quran checked. Concerning this point, I wish to stress strongly that those students, who memorise the Quran alone, without a teacher, can make mistakes in their recitation.

One day, one of our colleagues, Sheikh Mohamad Hassan 'Abd Al-Bary, forgot to have his Quran recitation reviewed. Suddenly, the principal of the school attended and tested him in the Quran. Sheikh 'Abd Al-Bary recited: 'Our Lord, indeed, whoever You admit to the Fire—You have disgraced' (*Al-'Imran*: 192). But instead of reciting the word '*akhzaytah*' (disgraced

him) with the letter 'zay', he recited it with the letter 'raa'. Sheikh Hassan Zaghloul *Allah rest his soul* laughed very much and said, 'The meaning is correct, but the narration is not like that'. Usually, whenever we wanted to make Sheikh 'Abd Al-Bary laugh, we used to remind him about this situation.

Next, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'With their lights streaming out ahead of them and to their right...' (*at-Tahrim*: 08). This verse is similar to His saying: 'On that day you will see the faithful men and the faithful women—their light running before them and on their right. Good news for you today: Gardens beneath which rivers flow, to abide therein, that is the grand achievement' (*al-Hadid*: 12). This means that their light will shine in front of them, whereas Allah relates what the hypocrites will say to the believers: 'The Day the hypocrites, men and women, will say to the believers, "Wait for us, that we may have light from your light"; it will be said, "Turn back and seek a light". Then a wall will be put up between them, with a gate in it; (as for) the inside of it, there shall be mercy throughout, and (as for) the outside of it, all along there will be punishment' (*al-Hadid*: 13). It too late for such hypocrites to seek light, for the time to seek light was in the worldly life by following the Right Path and doing good deeds. From the verse we learn that the Lord *the Most High* gives the believers light above their light in the Hereafter. Anyone who follows the Divine Way will be given a guiding light streaming out ahead of him and to his right.

Allah *the Almighty* relates that the believers will say: 'Lord, perfect our lights for us...' (*at-Tahrim*: 08). When the believers see the hypocrites' light extinguished, they will ask Allah *the Almighty* to perfect their light in order to reach paradise. Ibn 'Abbas said, 'Every Muslim will be given a light on the Day of Judgment'.⁽¹⁾

Thus, the light of the hypocrite will be extinguished, and when the believers see that, they will become fearful and thus: 'They will say, "Lord, perfect our lights for us..."' (*at-Tahrim*: 08). The people of the hell do not get

(1) In his *Tafsir*, Ibn Al-Jawzi ascribed this narration to Ibn Abu Hatim on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas, and Ibn Kathir does as well. However, As-Suyuti ascribed it to Al-Bayhaqi. See Ibn Al-Jawzi, *Zad Al-Masir*, 4/311; Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir Al-Quran Al-'Azhim*, 1/192; and As-Suyuti, *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur*, 8/228.

anything from the bliss of paradise and the light of the believers. When they request some light from the people of paradise, the people will reply to them, 'It is too late as the time of fulfilling the religious obligations is over'. Therefore, whoever wishes to obtain the light in the Hereafter should work hard in this worldly life. After all, this light is not a gift from a human to another but a gift from Allah *the Almighty* to the believers.

To sum up, the hypocrites will say, 'Wait for us that we may acquire some of your light'. But the people of paradise will not be able to give them light. Allah *the Almighty* says regarding these hypocrites: 'Their parable is like the parable of one who kindled a fire, but when it had illumined all around him, Allah took away their light and left them in utter darkness—they do not see' (*al-Baqara*: 17). They lit a fire to give them light in order to see the Path of Belief, but when this light was present, they did not take it. At that point, Allah *the Almighty* took away the light from their hearts. Thus, they are the ones who requested the Light of Belief, but when He *the Almighty* bestowed light on them, they did not take it.

Allah *the Almighty* keeps relating what they will say: '...and forgive us' (*at-Tahrim*: 8). We ask Him *the Almighty* to save us from the sins that provoke His Anger. In another verse, He *the Almighty* says: 'And their words were not but that they said, 'Our Lord, forgive us our sins and the excess [committed] in our affairs, and plant firmly our feet and give us victory over the disbelieving people' (*Al-Imran*: 147).

Seeking Allah's Forgiveness means the person acknowledges he was negligent and committed sins. When you ask Him for forgiveness, you also acknowledge your belief in Him and that the religious obligations He charged you with are right. Moreover, as long as the person has asked forgiveness for the past sins, he should not commit new sins. In other words, after repenting, the slave should be keen to avoid sins.

Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who forgives all sins. One day, Al-Asma'i was near the *Ka'ba* and saw a Bedouin invoking Allah *the Almighty* saying, 'O Lord, I know that I am disobedient and I am not entitled to supplicate You in such a case, but I know there is no god but You. Hence, if I cannot ask you, who else can I ask?' Thereupon, Al-'Asma'i said, 'Allah will forgive you

because you supplicated Him in the proper way'. Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Say, "O My slaves who have transgressed against themselves [by sinning], do not despair of the Mercy of Allah. Indeed, Allah forgives all sins. Indeed, it is He Who is the All-Forgiving, the Most Merciful' (*az-Zumar*: 53).

Allah *the Almighty* is fully Able to do anything and that is why the believers say in their invocation: 'You have power over everything' (*at-Tahrim*: 8). He *the Almighty* knows we tend to be inattentive, and He always alerts us to His Omnipotence. He *Glorified is He* has full Power over His universe, and there is no Ultimate Power but His. Allah is the All-Powerful even before the existence of anything. That is to say that He did not become Omnipotent after bringing human beings into existence; rather, His Power existed before mankind and the entire universe was created. Allah *the Almighty* remains Powerful and in control in every moment.

Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who created paradise, including its rivers. Out of His Omnipotence, He has the Power to admit anyone who believes in Him into paradise. Furthermore, He *the Almighty* gives such a person light to guide him, while the disbeliever will be deprived of this light. Rather, the hell into which such a disbeliever will be thrown is full of only the light from the fire.

The believers will continuously pray and invoke Allah *the Almighty* to perfect their light. On the other hand, the hypocrites will say to the believers: 'Wait for us that we may borrow from your light...' (*al-Hadid*: 13). This verse means that the hypocrites will say to the believers, 'Look at us or wait for us to walk through your light', but it will be said to them: 'Turn back and seek a light' (*al-Hadid*: 13). That is, it will be said to them, 'Go back to this worldly life, for in the Hereafter you will find only the lights you had in the worldly life!' This means His saying: 'Turn back and seek a light' (*al-Hadid*: 13) is a form of sarcasm, as, on the Day of Judgment, it is not possible to return to this worldly life to seek light. Moreover, in the Hereafter, there will be no light for those who had not acquired it in the worldly life.

All Muslims will have light on the Day of Judgment to guide them along the Straight Path. By contrast, the hypocrites will not have light and will be separated from the believers. This verse tells us that the Lord *the Almighty* has allocated light for the believers in the Hereafter but deprived the hypocrites

of light because they did not follow the light that He *the Almighty* revealed in this worldly life.

With regard to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'On a Day when Allah will not disgrace the Prophet [Muhammad] or those who have believed with him. With their lights streaming out ahead of them and to their right, they will say, "Lord, perfect our lights for us..."' (*at-Tahrim*: 8), 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas, the well-known interpreter of the Quran, said, 'All the Muslims will have light on the Day of Judgment'. As for the hypocrites, they will have no light. When the believers see that, they become fearful and say: 'Lord, perfect our lights for us...' (*at-Tahrim*: 8). Then Allah *the Almighty* says:

يَتَأْتِيهَا النَّبِيُّ جَاهِدِ الْكُفَّارَ وَالْمُنَافِقِينَ وَاغْلُظْ
عَلَيْهِمْ وَمَأْوَهُمُ جَهَنَّمُ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿٩﴾

Prophet, strive hard against the disbelievers and the hypocrites. Deal with them sternly. Hell will be their home, an evil destination! [9] (The Quran, *at-Tahrim*: 9)

The Arabic word '*jahada*' (to strive) has the same form as '*sharaka*' (to participate) and '*qatala*' (to fight); the verb 'to strive' and 'to fight' depend upon participation in the incident which means that if someone fights you, you should exert your effort to fight against him. They are similar to the verb 'to participate'. In Arabic, it is not correct to say, 'Zayd participates', for you should complete the meaning and say, 'Zayd participates with 'Amr'. In the case of the verb 'to fight', you should say, 'Zayd fights 'Amr'. That is, there is reaction when you fight. The verb 'to strive' entails resistance, patience and confrontation in the battle. It means exerting the utmost effort in the battlefield. One of its derivatives is used when you say, 'Someone strove to do something', and 'Striving in extracting the legal ruling'. We can see that striving produces a reaction, which needs a great effort. In other words, it comes from two sides, you and the other party.

These two verbs 'to strive' and 'to fight' refer to participation in an action. Similarly, you say, 'Zayd participates with 'Amr'. In this example, both of them are simultaneously a subject and an object.

Striving is needed in many fields: striving against the instincts and emotions, the hardship of following the commands and the prohibitions, the demons of mankind and jinn, and the opponents of Islam who want to extinguish Allah's Light.

Furthermore, Jihad takes many forms; whoever has power and money or one of them must strive with what he has. If the person is weak, he should provide money to the strong to buy arms, horses, armour, and any other means needed for fighting. As a matter of fact, the one who strives with money is certain that Allah *the Almighty* will reward him with better than what he spent.

In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* commands Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to strive against the disbelievers and the hypocrites. The disbelievers benefit from corruption and in order to keep this corruption, they resist the Right Path of the believers. By doing this, they want to keep the privileges they gained by means of following the falsehood.

Consequently Allah *the Almighty* alerts Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to the reality of these disbelievers who benefitted from corruption, and consequently fought him. That is why He *the Almighty* says to him: '...strive hard against the disbelievers and the hypocrites' (*at-Tahrim*: 9).

Striving against the disbelievers is two types: firstly, when the disbelievers resist the call of Islam and stand in the way of the ones who call others to it, trying to silent them; secondly, Muslims strive in order to spread the Message of Allah *the Almighty* worldwide, without coercion. As a matter of fact, no one can be forced to adopt any religion. As such, the Islamic military campaigns were not intended to impose the religion of Islam, but rather to guarantee the freedom of religion for the human being, in order for people to choose their religion without coercion. The freedom of choice comes by removing the obstacles that used to force a person to adopt a certain religion. After that, all the religions become available to him and he can choose whatever he wants.

As long as Jihad is an obligation in this sense, every Muslim is obliged to strive. Here, we should know that *Jihad* is either an individual obligation upon the Muslim—this is when the believers are attacked and their number is insufficient to resist the enemy or a collective obligation—this is when the numbers and troops of the Muslim army are sufficient to defeat the enemy.

Striving against the disbelievers differs from striving against the hypocrites. As for the disbelievers, Allah *the Almighty* describes their characteristics in two verses, saying: 'Indeed, those who disbelieve—it is all the same for them whether you warn them or do not warn them—they will not believe. Allah has set a seal upon their hearts and upon their hearing, and there is a covering over their eyes, and there is a great punishment for them' (*al-Baqara*: 6-7). The disbelievers are explicit in their hostility. And, as they explicitly announce their disbelief, we can avoid their harm. In fact, unlike the hypocrites who deny faith inwardly and announce it outwardly, the disbelievers deny faith and announce it with their tongues.

As for the hypocrites, we must be cautious about them because we do not know their true state. For this reason, we should be careful in dealing with them, for they may betray us and can harm us greatly.

As such, the believers face enmity from two categories: the disbelievers and the hypocrites. The disbelievers announce their disbelief publicly and everyone knows they are disbelievers. This matter appears in their speech and actions, for they disbelieve inwardly and outwardly.

On the other hand, the hypocrites announce faith with their tongues but hide disbelief in their hearts. In this way they are a dangerous enemy as they cheat us. You may think that someone is a believer and you disclose your secrets to him. Then you discover that he betrayed you in order to distort your religion. That is, the hypocrites declare with their tongues what runs counter to what is in their hearts, and fear that other people may discover their reality.

As the hypocrites declare with their tongues what is not in their hearts, Allah *the Almighty* will treat them in the same way. While they are treated like the true Muslims in the worldly life, their secrets will be disclosed on the Day of Judgment when they will go to the bottom of the hell; their status will not be equal to the disbeliever but be even worse.

The Arabic word '*nifaaq*' (hypocrisy) is derived from '*nafaaq al-jerbou*' (the holes of jerboa). Jerboa is a desert animal that cheats anyone who wants to kill it. It opens two holes, entering into one of them in front of the person, and then going out from the other. If the person waits for it at the entrance of one hole, it will come out from the other.

By announcing his disbelief, the disbeliever has given the Muslims an indication to be careful in dealing with him. For this reason, his harm to us will be limited. On the other hand, the hypocrite pretends to be a believer, and this makes his harm more likely. After all, he knows our secrets and weaknesses, and as a result he can hurt us fatally. That is, the disbeliever is an explicit enemy, but the hypocrite is an enemy in disguise. In fact, the invisible enemy is more harmful than the apparent one. We usually do not take care of the invisible enemy, and he knows all our movements and can betray us at any time without us being mindful of this treachery.

The initial stage of Jihad is achieved by using argument. At the early time of Islam, the believers were weak and few, and did not have the strength to face the great power of disbelief. Allah *the Almighty* says: 'O you who have believed, fight those adjacent to you of the disbelievers and let them find in you firmness. And know that Allah is with the righteous' (*at-Tawba*: 123). This refers to the believers confronting a disbelieving group who was relatively closer to them than other groups which were further away. In the same vein, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And fight against the disbelievers collectively as they fight against you collectively...' (*at-Tawba*: 36) and: 'Fight in the way of Allah those who fight you but do not transgress. Indeed. Allah does not like the transgressors' (*al-Baqara*: 190).

The intention of fighting must be for Allah's sake, not for arrogance and tyranny. Therefore, in Islam, no fighting shall be launched for the sake of the worldly life, wealth or gaining an economic market. Rather, fighting shall be only for the sake of making the Word of Allah superior and supporting the religion. This is the purpose of fighting in Islam: fighting to repel aggression, not to initiate it. We should take into account that the sword was not used to impose the religion but to protect the freedom of religion.

Allah *the Almighty* did not prescribe fighting for the preceding Messengers before Prophet Muhammad, *peace and blessings upon him*. They used to call their people to belief. If they believed, they were saved from the punishment; otherwise they were punished with a furious wind, quake, blast, drowning, causing the earth to swallow them, etc.

That is, the previous Messengers communicated Allah's Message, and Allah *the Almighty* punished those who denied them. Fighting was not prescribed

until the followers of the previous Prophets, like the children of Israel, asked Allah *the Almighty* to prescribe it. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Have you not considered the assembly of the Children of Israel after [the time of] Moses when they said to a Prophet of theirs, "Send to us a king, and we will fight in the way of Allah..."' (*al-Baqara*: 246).

They were the ones who proposed fighting. But fighting for the sake of spreading Allah's Message to the whole world came only with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. It seems that Allah *the Almighty* granted his followers the merit of being entrusted with the rest of the people.

Someone might ask, 'Why does Allah *the Almighty* not grant victory to the believers and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* directly, without them fighting the disbelievers and the polytheists?' We reply, 'If victory came due to an unseen reason or unrealized wisdom, it might be said that victory came due to any natural phenomenon. But Allah *the Almighty* wants to show us that a small number of believers achieved victory over their enemy'.

When Allah *the Almighty* commands the believers to fight the disbelievers, we understand that the latter must have done something wrong to deserve to be fought, or that they had intended to fight the believers, which is why the believers must fight them. The disbelievers sought to fight Muslims in the Battle of Badr. Furthermore, they marched to Medina and held alliance with the Jews in the Battle of the Trench in order to eliminate the Islamic State that emerged in Medina. Clearly, fighting becomes a must to defend Islam and ensure its survival.

Satan incited the disbelievers to fight the believers promising them to achieve victory and to become notables in the entire Arabian Peninsula. This will result in other people fearing them and they will finally become the chiefs of the peninsula. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And [remember] when Satan made their deeds pleasing to them and said, "No one can overcome you today from among the people, and indeed, I am your protector". But when the two armies sighted each other, he turned on his heels and said, "Indeed, I am clear of you. Indeed, I see what you do not see; indeed I fear Allah. And Allah is severe in punishment' (*al-Anfal*: 48).

Striving against the disbelievers here refers to fighting against them in the battlefield where there will be a victor and a loser. But striving against the hypocrites is another kind of *Jihad* because they do not announce their hostility; rather, they declare a false loyalty. *Jihad* against them is to inflict punishment on them because they used to commit sins and afterwards deny doing them by means of false oaths. Having been interrogated by Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* they denied their wrongdoing, and thus he forgave them. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And they swear by Allah that they are from among you while they are not from among you...' (*at-Tawba*: 56), and: 'They swear by Allah that they did not say [anything against Prophet Muhammad] while they had said a word of disbelief...' (*at-Tawba*: 74). Moreover: 'They swear by Allah to you [Muslims] to satisfy you. But Allah and His Messenger [Muhammad] are more worthy for them to satisfy...' (*at-Tawba*: 62), and: 'When the hypocrites come to you, [O Muhammad], they say, "We testify that you are the Messenger of Allah". And Allah knows that you are His Messenger. And Allah testifies that the hypocrites are liars' (*al-Munafiqun*: 1).

The hypocrites used to stand in the first rows of prayer because all of them wanted to hide their hypocrisy. For this reason, they were keen on doing the apparent acts of worship. They are more dangerous to the believers than the disbelievers! In this connection, Allah *the Almighty* says: '...Surely Allah will gather together the hypocrites and the disbelievers, all in Hell. Those [are the ones] who wait for (some misfortune to befall) you; if you have a victory from Allah they say, "Were we not with you?" And if the disbelievers gain a success, they say [to them], "Did we not gain an advantage over you and guard you from the believers?" So Allah shall Judge between you on the Day of Resurrection, and Allah will by no means give the disbelievers a way against the believers' (*an-Nisa*': 140-141). They wait looking at the believers; if they are victorious, they try to benefit from that, but if they are defeated, they try to benefit from the opponents of Islam. They are believers in public, and disbelievers in secret. They wait looking at the believers to see what will happen in order to arrange their affairs according to that.

If Allah *the Almighty* granted victory to the believers in a battle and they took the spoils of war, the hypocrites say: 'Were we not with you?' (*an-Nisa*': 141)

This means that they used to claim a share in the spoils of war. But if the believers were defeated, the hypocrites turn to the disbelievers, a fact which is clear in His saying: 'And if the disbelievers gain a success, they say [to them], "Did we not gain an advantage over you and guard you from the believers?"' (*an-Nisa'*: 141) The hypocrites said: 'Did we not gain an advantage over you and guard you from the believers?' (*an-Nisa'*: 141) This reveals their status during the battle. They, that is the hypocrites, try to know the details of the battle to recognise the intention of the believers. When they go into the battlefield, they pretend to capture the disbelievers, just to protect them from the swords of the believers. Then they say to the disbelievers, 'Did we not gain the advantage over you, but we protected you from the believers?' Finally, they asked them for a price for that.

We see that Allah *the Almighty* mentions the disbelievers and the hypocrites together in the verse under discussion, saying: 'O Prophet [Muhammad], strive hard against the disbelievers and the hypocrites. Deal with them sternly. Hell will be their home, an evil destination!' (*at-Tahrim*: 9) Dealing sternly with them signifies warning them against the horrible torment that awaits them in order that they may take admonition. Harshness is not always needed, but it is applicable when necessary. That is why Allah *the Almighty* says: 'O you who have believed, fight those of the disbelievers who are near to you and let them find you firm...' (*at-Tawba*: 123). This means, the believer should attack his enemy strongly, boldly and bravely. And when the enemy tries to attack him, he should be steadfast. Thus, firmness is required in both cases. It is not enough to hit your enemy severely, but you should bear his attack with ruggedness. As such, firmness requires you to attack and to bear you enemy's attack. Patience entails endurance, which in turn requires courage. If your opponent has patience and courage, you should have more patience and endurance than him.

Ruggedness should be shown by Muslims in the battlefield by being strong in both attack and defence. Allah *the Almighty* says: 'I will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieved so strike [them] upon the necks and strike from them every fingertip [which holds a sword]' (*al-Anfal*: 12). Striking above the necks means to cut the head in order for the enemy to lose his ability to think

and as a result his life comes to an end. As for those who averted death in the battlefield, they will grieve for the death of their fellows. With regard to His saying: '...and strike from them every fingertip' (*al-Anfal*: 12), it means to strike their hands with swords to make them incapable of fighting.

The disbelievers and the hypocrites will go to hell, a fact which is clear in Allah's saying: 'Hell will be their home (*ma'wa*)' (*at-Tahrim*: 9). The word '*ma'wa*' ('home' or 'refuge') is a place to which one returns. That is, the fire will be their home. In the Arabic language, this word refers to the place that protects you from something. If the fire is their refuge, then its surroundings must be even more severe. They resort to the fire for refuge as it is their final destination.

In this connection, Allah *the Almighty* says: '...where they burn? What an evil place to stay!' (*Ibrahim*: 29) The hell has gates as Allah *the Almighty* says: 'So enter the gates of hell (*Jahannam*) to abide eternally therein, and how wretched is the residence of the arrogant' (*an-Nahl*: 29). *Jahannam* (hell) is one of the names of the fire in the Hereafter. It looks very ugly and its bottom is very deep.

With regard to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...an evil destination!' (*at-Tahrim*: 9), the destination is the final fate for everything. Thus, the last destination of the disbelievers will be unpleasant. They will not go to hell by their choices; rather, Allah *the Almighty* will force them to go there, a fact which is clear in His saying: '...then I will drive him to the punishment of the fire, a wretched (*bi's*) destination indeed' (*al-Baqara*: 126). Here Allah *the Almighty* warns the disbelievers that they will be punished in the Hereafter, as they will be forcibly thrown into the hell. Therefore, the path that leads to hell must be extremely bad.

Out of His Mercy to His creation, Allah *the Almighty* revealed to them the religious approach that guides them through this life on earth for them not to be captivated by this fleeting worldly life. In addition, He warned them against the bad fate that awaits the disbelievers which indicates His *Glorified is He* Love for His creation. Out of His Love for them, He does not want to see them in such a bad fate, being cast into hell in the Hereafter. That is why He warns the people against the fate of the disbelievers. The fire is the eternal

resting place for the disbelievers. The Arabic word '*bi's*' (wretched) is used to vilify and offend something. Surely, the fire will be a wretched refuge.

One of the battles in which Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* performed *Jihad* against the disbelievers and the hypocrites together is the Battle of the Confederates about which Allah *the Almighty* says: 'O you who believe! Call to mind the favor of Allah to you when there came down on you hosts, so We sent against them a strong wind and hosts that you saw not. And Allah sees all that you do. When they came on you from above you and from below you, and when the eyes turned dull and the hearts rose up to the throats, and you began to imagine various [vain] thoughts about Allah. There, the believers were tried and they were shaken with a severe shaking' (*al-Ahzab*: 9-11).

In this fierce battle, Allah *the Almighty* caused the wind to blow so strongly against the disbelievers that it dispersed them everywhere. Afterwards, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* returned to Medina. The Muslim fighters were supposed to rest after the battle. But before they took off their clothes for war, the Archangel Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* came to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and said, 'O Messenger, did you take off the clothes for war?' He said: 'Yes'. The angel said, 'Allah ordered the angels not to put their arms down until they attack Banu Qurayza. O Muhammad, Allah the Almighty commands you to attack Banu Qurayzah, and I will precede you to strike fear into their hearts'. Then, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* ordered his Muedhin (an announcer to Prayer) to say, 'Do not pray *Al-'Asr* Prayer except in Banu Qurayzah'. Some of the people prayed it on the way when its time had come, while others said, 'We should not pray it until we reach Banu Qurayzah'. When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was told about their different actions, he did not reproach any of them.

Next, the Lord *the Almighty* says:

ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا لِّلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَمْرَاتَ نُوحٍ وَأَمْرَاتَ لُوطٍ
كَانَتَا تَحْتَ عَبْدَيْنِ مِّنْ عِبَادِنَا صَالِحَيْنِ فَخَانَتَاهُمَا فَلَمْ يُغْنِيَا
عَنَّهُمَا مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا وَقِيلَ ادْخُلَا النَّارَ مَعَ الدَّٰخِلِينَ ﴿١٠﴾

God has given examples of disbelievers: the wives of Noah and Lot who married two of Our righteous servants but betrayed them. Their husbands could not help them against God: it was said, ‘Both of you enter the Fire with the others’[10] (The Quran, *at-Tahrim*: 10)

Allah *the Almighty* has given us examples (*daraba*) with physical matters to convey abstract meanings to our minds. That is because we are familiar with matters we can sense. The human being's perception begins with the matters we can see which enable him to understand abstract matters after this.

In this regard, the Lord *the Exalted* gives examples even using small creatures, as He says: 'Allah does not disdain to give examples (*yadrib*) even using something as small as a gnat or larger...' (*al-Baqara*: 26), using the word '*yadrib*' (give examples) which is derived from '*daraba*' (has given examples). He *Glorified is He* is not shy to give such an example because mosquitos have all the systems needed for having a life, just like the elephant, the camel and the other large animals. In addition, this mosquito that you despise may be stronger than you and may challenge one's strength and tyranny. As such, Allah *the Almighty* gives you this despicable creature in your eyes as an example to alert you to hidden matters.

Regarding the importance of giving an example to clarify unclear matters, poets usually use this method to clarify meanings. The poet may face a complex issue that is only perceived by wise people, but he wishes to express this issue for the public audience to understand.

One such example is that even though an innocent person might be accused of unjust charges, these false accusations often make him attain a higher status among the people. The following lines of poetry are a case in point:

If Allah wanted to show a concealed virtue

He makes an envious man talk about this virtue

Unless a fire breaks out

Scant smell of aloes wood will not appear

You may have a virtue that no one knows about, and then an envious person accuses you and tarnishes your reputation. As a result, he unintentionally discloses this virtue and all of your other unknown talents. This is similar to aloes wood that we cannot smell unless we burn it.

Thus, 'the example' aims at clarifying an unknown matter using a well-known one. For example, if you do not know the person we are talking about, we can tell you that he is similar in height to someone you know, and similar in colour to another person. Then you can combine these images to form a complete picture of this person who you do not know.

In the Quran, there are many examples that clarify unknown matters with known ones. They describe the abstract matters with ones we can sense. Allah *the Almighty* gives us an example of spending money for His sake and how He has promised us to multiply such money, saying: 'The example of those who spend their wealth in the Way of Allah is like a seed [of grain] which grows seven spikes; in each spike is a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies [His reward] for whom He wills. And Allah is All-Encompassing and All Knowing' (*al-Baqara*: 261).

The word '*darab*' (to give an example) is taken from the phrase '*darbu al 'umla*' (minting coins), as currency in the past used to be made from gold and silver. The people shaped pieces of silver or gold in a specified form to determine their value, and thus they became circulating currencies. Another meaning of this word is used in the phrase, '*durib fi Misr*' meaning it was manufactured in Egypt, which means that this object became a reality, and likewise examples spread and become realities. In the past, currency was made from gold and silver. Out of fear of fraud, the experts used to mix the gold with copper and stamp it to become certified, reliable and valid for trading.

When Allah *the Almighty* gives us an example of something unknown by something known, the matter will become clear in our minds. The Arabic word '*ad-darb*' (hitting), which is derived from '*daraba*' (give an example), means to hit something with a tool. As we have said, this word refers to minting coins and stamping them to become valid for trading.

This word also means 'to strike', a meaning which is clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'And We had inspired to Musa (Moses), "Travel by night with My slaves and strike (*fadrib*) for them a dry path through the sea, without fear of being overtaken [by Pharaoh] and without fear [of drowning]' (*Ta Ha*: 77). Musa *peace be upon him* hit ('*fadaraba*' from the word '*darb*') the sea with his stick and so the sea divided into two parts, providing a dry path for the crossing of the children of Israel. In other words, it means that the path was paved for them for transportation.

In the verse in question, the word '*darb*' (to strike) does not entail an adverse impact, but rather a positive one. Similarly, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And others traveling (*yadriboon*) throughout the land seeking [something] of the bounty of Allah...' (*al-Muzzammil*: 20), which uses the word '*yadriboon*' which is derived from the word '*darb*'. It is as if hitting has a lasting impact on the ground as it extracts its treasures. Likewise, minting leaves a significant impact on the coins that cannot be erased by people's hands during the trading activity.

In the same sense, giving examples clarifies unclear matters exactly as the process of minting coins defines their shapes. It makes the idea clear in the mind. The Arabic word '*darb*' (to strike) needs three elements: the striker, the one who is struck and the tool used for this purpose.

Allah *the Almighty* gives us an example to explain the topic of Oneness, saying: 'Allah sets forth an example (*daraba*): There is a slave in whom are (several) partners differing with one another, and there is another slave wholly owned by one man. Are the two alike in condition? (All) praise is due to Allah. Nay! Most of them do not know' (*az-Zumar*: 29).

Whoever worships another god with Allah *the Almighty* is similar to a slave who has two masters who are always in disagreement; when he tries to satisfy one, the other becomes angry. He feels tired with them. The question now is 'Is this slave equal to one who has only one master?' This example is similar to worshipping Allah *the Almighty* without any partners. In this way, the issue becomes clear in our mind. It is as if He *the Almighty* says, 'I do not disdain to give you such an example because I want to make facts clear for you and to explain abstract meanings for you'.

In the same vein, He *the Almighty* says: 'And We have certainly given (*darabna*) to the people, in this Quran, every [kind of] example' (*ar-Rum*: 58). This means that He *Glorified is He* has given them examples and signs that should leave an effect on the mind in the same way striking leaves an effect on the person because striking is the last stage of perception.

Now, why does Allah give us examples? The scholars have said, 'This is because the human being has many senses; he sees, hears, smells, tastes and touches. If you think about these senses, you will find that 'hitting/striking' is the most effective way to affect someone's perception. That is why if you want to awaken a person from sleep, you shake him as if you are hitting him in order to make him get up, as he might not hear your call.

Clearly, hitting leaves a massive and powerful impact on matter, a point which is clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...and others traveling (*yadriboon*) throughout the land seeking [something] of the bounty of Allah' (*al-Muzzammil*: 20). The verse means that they, that is the pious people, left a great impact on the land through ploughing, for example, which is similar to hitting. Allah *the Almighty* gives examples to make you perceive matters, just as a person feels pain when hit. If the person does not understand the example, it is as though he does not feel the physical pain of being hit.

Allah *the Almighty* gives us an example about two women who were wives of two Prophets, saying: 'Allah has given examples (*daraba*) of disbelievers: the wife of Nuh (Noah) and the wife of Lut (Lot) who were under two of Our righteous slaves but betrayed them...' (*at-Tahrim*: 10).

Despite being Prophets, Nuh and Lut *peace be upon them* both, did not succeed in convincing their wives to believe in the Oneness of Allah. It is noteworthy to mention concerning this story that the betrayal here is not a sexual one. Rather, it means that even Messengers are not entitled to force their wives to believe in the sound creed.

Thus, the woman has freedom of belief and the man cannot force her to adopt any religion. Even Pharaoh, who claimed divinity, could not do that, a fact which is clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Allah has also given examples of believers: Pharaoh's wife, who said, "Lord, build me a house near You in Paradise. And save me from Pharaoh and his actions, and save

me from the evildoers” (at-Tahrim: 11). These facts tell us that the issue of faith has nothing to do with lineage or marital relationship. The verse we are discussing has made it clear that a Messenger cannot impose any faith on his wife, for sound conviction has to do with freedom of belief.

With regard to His saying: 'Allah has given examples of disbelievers: the wife of Nuh (Noah) and the wife of Lut (Lot) who were under two of Our righteous slaves...' (at-Tahrim: 10), we should take into account that none of the two wives in question were arrogant to her husband, a fact which is clearly stated in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Who were under two of Our righteous slaves...' (at-Tahrim: 10). That is to say that both were under the guardianship of their husbands, but they did not obey them in the matter of faith which is subject to one's free choice.

Some people mistakenly tried to accuse both women of adultery, but this is a pure fabrication. In this regard, we stress that their betrayal is a result of their rejection of the Divine Messages with which their husbands were sent. Both Prophet Nuh and Lut *peace be upon them* did not succeed in convincing their wives to believe in Allah *the Almighty* emphasising that belief cannot be achieved except through self-choice.

In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* does not specify the names of the wives, as mentioning their names here will add nothing. The verse states that the matter of guidance is controlled by Him *the Almighty* Alone, and that even the Prophets could not convert their wives and relatives to the sound creed. The verse clearly indicates that women have absolute freedom of belief.

Allah *the Almighty* does not specify their names, but rather, He mentions an important description of them, namely: being the wives of two Messengers. However, neither Prophet Nuh nor Prophet Lut *peace be upon them* was able to convince his wife to renounce her disbelief. Both of the two women had conspired against their husbands and that is why their last destination will be the hellfire. The lesson deduced from this story is that choosing religion is up to every person's free choice. In fact, freedom of belief is a clear foundation for the Right Path.

Clearly, both the man and the woman are entitled to freedom of belief; there is no authority for a particular gender over the other. No man can force a

woman to adopt any religion. As for those who accused the wife of Prophet Nuh *peace be upon him* of adultery, they should ask for forgiveness from Allah *the Almighty* for He *Glorified is He* is far removed above being unfair to His Messenger by allowing him to marry a wife who was unchaste. The wife of Prophet Nuh's betrayal was nothing but her disbelief in the Message he brought from Allah. As for the wife of Prophet Lut's betrayal, it lies in her cooperation with the transgressors and her disclosure of his secrets; she used to inform her people about Lut's guests.

In this regard, the angels prohibited Prophet Lut *peace be upon him* from bringing his wife with him because she had betrayed him. Consequently, he had to leave her with those who suffered the torment. Yet, when Prophet Lut *peace be upon him* was about to leave the town, she claimed that she was faithful to him and said, 'I will leave with you'. But she preferred her people and as a result returned to stay with them, and thereby received the punishment brought by the angels in the time set, namely the morning. In this connection, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'They said, "O Lut (Lot), indeed we are Messengers of your Lord; [therefore], they will never reach you. So set out with your family during a portion of the night and let not any among you look back—except your wife; indeed, she will be struck by that which strikes them. Indeed, their appointment is [for] the morning. Is the morning not near?' (*Hud*: 81)

Instead of being happy with meeting the angels, Prophet Lut *peace be upon him* was sad and afraid. At this moment, they said: 'Fear not, nor grieve. Indeed, we will save you and your family, except your wife; she is to be of those who remain behind' (*al-'Ankabut*: 33). They said to him, 'Do not be afraid of those corrupt people as we are not human beings, but rather, we are angels. We came to root out those malicious people and we will save you and your relatives from the torment that will befall them'. However, they excluded his wife from salvation, saying: 'Except your wife; she is to be of those who remain behind (*ghabireen*)' (*al-'Ankabut*: 33). This is because she used to disclose his secrets and inform her people about his guests. Hence, she was one of those who remained behind to receive the punishment. The Arabic word '*ghabra*', from which the word '*ghabireen*' (remain behind) is derived, has many meanings; it means staying in a place and it also refers to anything that is finished in the past.

While Allah *the Almighty* saved Prophet Lut *peace be upon him* from the torment that inflicted his people, we find that his wife did not go out with him and stayed in the place where the torment occurred. We should not delve into the details about why she stayed with her people. Some people accused her of sexual betrayal. According to this allegation, it is as if Allah *the Almighty* was unfair to one of His Prophets for allowing him to marry an unchaste woman. Here, it is of great importance to clearly state that we only accept what Allah *the Almighty* mentions about this matter, that is, she was a disbeliever, which means she was not a follower of Prophet Lut.

Both the wife of Prophet Nuh and the wife of Prophet Lut were: '...under two of Our righteous slaves (*salihain*)...' (*at-Tahrim*: 10). Allah *the Almighty* says about Prophet Nuh: 'O descendants of those We carried [in the ship] with Nuh (Noah). Indeed, he was a grateful slave' (*al-Isra'*: 3). This verse means that Nuh's righteous deeds benefitted his offspring. As a result, the Lord *Glorified is He* has taken care of his offspring and has not left them scrambling in the maze of life. Furthermore, He *the Almighty* sent for them the guidance that explains for them the Right Path to avoid slipping and deviating.

With regard to Allah's saying: '...righteous slaves (*salihain*)...' (*at-Tahrim*: 10), it means that both Prophet Nuh and Lut *peace be upon them* were righteous; they were two good slaves, and were not coerced by Allah *the Almighty* to do their good deeds. Instead, they were righteous in themselves and that is why Allah *the Almighty* chose them to be Prophets.

The Arabic word '*salih*' (a righteous man), from which '*salihain*' (two righteous men) is derived, means that the person is qualified to be Allah's vicegerent on earth. This term is also used to refer to cultivating the land. The righteous person is the one who leaves what is good in its state of goodness and tries to increase its goodness, or is the one who reforms anything bad. Depending on his in-depth knowledge, such a person does not do what apparently seems useful but eventually turns out to be harmful.

Continuing with the verse under discussion, nothing can avail the disbelievers against Allah's Torment, a fact which is clear in His saying: '(As for) those who disbelieve, surely neither their wealth nor their children shall avail them in the least against Allah, and these it is who are the fuel of the

Fire' (*Al-'Imran*: 10). Nothing can save them from the fire and what will happen on the Day of Judgment, for children, wealth, friends, and intercession are not helpful on that Day. The Judgment is not determined by one's ancestry or relationships, and the paradise is not for sale. In other words, no one can buy a place in paradise with money.

Similarly, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Their husbands could not help them against Allah...' (*at-Tahrim*: 10). Thus, Prophet Nuh and Lut *peace be upon them* cannot save their wives from the fire, even if they are Prophets who are close to Allah *the Almighty*.

The disbelievers gruded Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* for receiving the Glorious Quran, which was a test for him. However, he was patient and continued to communicate Allah's Message without paying attention to what the disbelievers said. In fact, Prophet Muhammad took their saying as evidence of the strength of the miracle of the Quran that confirms his truthfulness.

Allah *the Almighty* calls these disbelievers to faith, saying: 'So believe in Allah...' (*at-Taghabun*: 8). Believing in Allah is the foundation of faith and the most important element in religion. It is not only related to believing in His Existence, but also in His Oneness and Him being worthy of worship, for Allah *the Almighty* Alone is the One Who created this universe with its sky, land, human beings, animals and plants.

This means it is not enough to just believe in Allah's Existence, refuting thus the charge of atheism. Here, we should take into account that the disbelievers of Quraysh, to whom Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent, acknowledged that Allah is the Creator of the entire universe; the Quran recorded this undeniable fact in more than one position: 'If you asked them, "Who created the heavens and earth and subjected the sun and the moon?" they will surely say, "Allah". Then how are they deluded?' (*al-'Ankabut*: 61), and: 'And if you asked them, "Who sends down rain from the sky and gives life thereby to the earth after its lifelessness?" they will surely say "Allah". Say, "Praise to Allah", but most of them do not reason' (*al-'Ankabut*: 63), and: 'And if you asked them who created them, they will surely say, "Allah". So how are they deluded?' (*az-Zukhruf*: 87)

Associating other gods and idols with Allah *the Almighty* was their problem and the reason behind their disbelief. Furthermore, they used to take idols as mediators to Him, saying: 'We only worship them that they may bring us nearer to Allah in position' (*az-Zumar*: 3). If they had said, 'We slaughter for them to be close to Allah', it will have been possible to include them among the worshippers of Allah *the Almighty*. However, they confirmed their worship of the idols. For this reason they will, undoubtedly, go to the hellfire.

The Lord *the Almighty* says: '...it was said, "Both of you enter the Fire with the [others] ones who enter [it]"' (*at-Tahrim*: 10). This means that the wives of Prophets Nuh and Lut will go to hell with the other disbelievers of their peoples whom they supported against these Prophets.

That is, Allah *the Almighty* gives no hope to those who commit sins that they will not benefit from the good deeds of others. There is no intercession in the matter of disbelief. They had the ability to believe and, therefore, go to paradise, but they chose not to.

The word '*imra'a*' (a woman) illustrates how wonderful the Quran was written. In this verse under discussion, it was not written with the last letter shaped as a '*taa*' *marbouta*', but with the shape '*taa*' *maftouha*', which clearly indicates that the marital relationship between each Prophet and his wife was already established at the time. This is because '*taa*' *maftouha*' is used when the wife is mentioned in the possessive form that is the Prophet's wife.

In the verse in question, the verb 'to say' is used in the passive voice; Allah says: '...it was said, "Both of you enter the Fire with the [others] ones who enter [it]"' (*at-Tahrim*: 10). By using the passive voice, it shows a disregard for them because of their disbelief. They should have believed in Allah's Messengers, especially because they were their husbands.

Both of them were: '...under two of Our righteous slaves' (*at-Tahrim*: 10). They were their wives and Allah's Revelation came down in their presence. But why did they lose the way of guidance even though they were wives of Prophets who lived in their houses?!

One should only take pride in Islam and faith, not in ancestry, relatives or parentage. If you reflect on the history of early Muslims, you will find

that they took pride in Islam, not in ancestry. Religion and belief are the strong link that binds a human being with another, even if the latter is lower according to life's standards.

Hudhayfa *Allah be pleased with him* said, 'I came to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Al-'Abbas *Allah be pleased with him* was sitting on his right, and Fatima *Allah be pleased with her* on his left. Then Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, "O Fatima, daughter of the Messenger, do good deeds for the sake of Allah, as I cannot avail you on the Day of Resurrection; O 'Abbas ibn 'Abd Al-Muttalib, uncle of Prophet Muhammad, do good deeds for the sake of Allah as I cannot avail you on the Day of Resurrection", he repeated that three times'.⁽¹⁾

Thus, on the Day of Judgment, the criterion will be the good deeds, not the relationships. That is why Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to his relatives, 'People will come to me with their good deeds on the Day of Judgment but you should never come to me with your relationships'.⁽²⁾ Prophet Muhammad also said, 'O Fatima, daughter of the Messenger, do good deeds for the sake of Allah, as I cannot avail you on the Day of Resurrection'.

On that Day, people's relationships and lineages are not beneficial. Allah *the Almighty* told us through the story of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) that one's relatives have no value, for only one's religion will be beneficial. Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Every soul, for what it has earned, will be detained' (*al-Muddaththir*: 38). The good deeds and faith will only be the controlling factors on the Day of Judgment, not relatives.

In the same connection, we should reflect on the story of Mus'ab ibn 'Umayr *Allah be pleased with him*. He was the most indulged boy of Quraysh and one of the richest people. He used to wear the finest clothes and lead a luxurious life. When he believed in Allah, he renounced all this bliss and deprived himself of the money that his family owned. Then he migrated to Medina. There, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saw him

(1) This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Abu Hurayra *Allah be pleased with him*. See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 2753; Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 351*.

(2) This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Abu Hurayra *Allah be pleased with him*. See *Al-Bukhari, Al-'Adab Al-Mufrad, Hadith no. 897; Ibn Abu 'Asim, As-Sunna, Hadith no. 213*.

wearing the skin of a sheep. Thereupon he said, 'Look! How faith changed your brother Mus'ab!'

In the Battle of Badr, Mus'ab saw that his brother Abu 'Aziz ibn 'Umayr had been captured; he had been captured by the Companion Abu Al-Yusr *Allah be pleased with him*. Mus'ab said to Abu Al-Yusr, 'Be careful of him lest he escapes from you as his mother is rich and will ransom him with a lot of money'. Then Abu 'Aziz ibn 'Umayr looked at his brother Mus'ab and said, 'This is a bad intercession from you, brother'. Therefore, Mus'ab said to him, 'Abu Al-Yusr is my brother in Islam, not you'. Clearly, there are no lineages between the believers or the disbelievers in the worldly life and in the Hereafter.

The Lord *the Almighty* then says:

وَضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا امْرَأَتَ فِرْعَوْنَ إِذْ قَالَتْ رَبِّ ابْنِ لِي عِنْدَكَ بَيْتًا
فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَنَجِّنِي مِنْ فِرْعَوْنَ وَعَمَلِهِ وَنَجِّنِي مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١١﴾

God has also given examples of believers: Pharaoh's wife, who said, 'Lord, build me a house near You in the Garden. Save me from Pharaoh and his actions; save me from the evildoers' [11] (The Quran, *at-Tahrim*: 11)

Here Allah *the Almighty* does not mention the name of Pharaoh's wife because the important matter here is that she was a believing wife of someone who claimed divinity, as He *the Almighty* says: 'And Pharaoh said, "O eminent ones, no god do I know for you but myself"' (*al-Qasas*: 38). Although he claimed divinity, he could not convince his wife that he was a god, nor could he force her to disbelieve in Allah *the Almighty*. This is evidence that the man has no authority over the woman in the matter of belief and cannot coerce her to follow a certain religion, even if he was Pharaoh who claimed divinity. It suffices here to know that she was the wife of the tyrannical Pharaoh; it is not important to mention her name here.

As such, the wife of Pharaoh—the man who misguided people and claimed divinity—was a believer. It is as if Allah *the Almighty* alludes for all people that religions and beliefs are related to the choice of the person and cannot be affected by other people, no matter who they are. The guidance of a Prophet

or the false enticements of the one who claimed divinity does not affect a person with regards to choosing a religion.

Therefore, Islam preserves women's role and power and respects her opinion. Allah *the Almighty* brought this story without telling the names of the characters in order for it to be a role model and example for everyone. Had their names been mentioned, it will have been associated with only one specific person.

Why does Allah *the Almighty* not disclose her name? This is to know that the same situation can happen to any woman; she can be a believer, while her husband is a tyrant. Conversely, the woman can be a disbeliever, while her husband is a pious man.

Allah *the Almighty* says: 'But no one believed Musa (Moses), except [some] youths (*dhuriya*) among his people, for fear of Pharaoh and his chiefs, lest they should persecute them. And indeed, Pharaoh was haughty within the land, and indeed, he was of the transgressors' (*Yunus*: 83). Commenting on the meaning of the word '*dhurriya*' (offspring, youths among his people) in this verse, scholars said, 'It included the wife of Pharaoh (Asiya), the treasurer of Pharaoh and his wife, the hairdresser of Pharaoh's daughter, and some of Musa's people who concealed their faith'. All of these people feared Pharaoh's torment, so they did not disclose their belief in the Message of Musa *peace be upon him*. Pharaoh was a tyrant who claimed divinity; if he saw anyone falsify his claim of divinity, he used to have killed him. And they feared this oppression. With the help of his soldiers, Pharaoh killed the sons of the children of Israel but left their women alive. They were afraid of these aides who carried out what Pharaoh wanted.

Allah *the Almighty* made Asiya, the wife of Pharaoh, love Prophet Musa *peace be upon him* when he was a child in the cradle. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'I showered you with My Love and planned that you should be reared under My Watchful Eye' (*Ta Ha*: 39). This means that Asiya loved Musa *peace be upon him* by the Will of Allah. When she saw Musa, she loved him despite the opposition of Pharaoh.

Moreover, Pharaoh's daughter, who suffered from leprosy, had seen in a dream that her recovery will be through something coming out of the sea and that she should take the saliva of this thing and paint her body with it if she

wanted to be cured. When she saw Musa *peace be upon him* she remembered her dream. She took his saliva and rubbed her skin with it, and then she was recovered immediately. As a result, she hung on to him *peace be upon him*.

Pharaoh's tyranny could not prevent his wife and daughter from believing in Allah *the Almighty* despite the fact that he, that is Pharaoh, said: 'I am your most exalted lord' (*an-Nazi 'at*: 24). He was helpless in making his wife a disbeliever.

This indicates that choosing one's belief is a well-protected right, as the human being chooses his religion on the basis of full conviction, and not on the basis of oppression. Pharaoh's wife was an example of faith that appeared in the house of disbelief.

Out of her faith in Allah, the Last Day and the existence of paradise, Pharaoh's wife said: 'Lord, build me a house near You in Paradise...' (*at-Tahrim*: 11). Pharaoh and his soldiers used to torment her; they used to place her under the scorching sun, hanging her from four pieces of wood to which her hands and feet were tied. Whenever the torturers left, the angels used to put their wings above her to protect her from the heat of the sun. Furthermore, Allah *the Almighty* enabled her to see her home in Paradise.⁽¹⁾

The reason behind her faith was that she had seen the wife of the treasurer suffering from the torment of Pharaoh. The story started when a comb fell from the hairdresser of Pharaoh's daughter. She said, 'O miserable disbelievers'. Pharaoh's daughter said to her, 'Do you have a lord other than my father?' She said, 'Allah is my Lord, the Lord of your father and the Lord of all things'.

Pharaoh's daughter slapped the hairdresser and told her father about what she had said. Pharaoh said to her, 'Do you worship a lord other than me?' She said, 'Allah is my Lord, your Lord and the Lord of all things, and I worship Him'. Pharaoh claimed she was a liar. He tied up her hands and legs, and brought snakes to bite her. One day, he came to her and said, 'Do you insist on your belief?' She said to him, 'Allah is my Lord, your Lord and the Lord of all things'. He said to her, 'I will slaughter your son if you do not give that up'.

(1) In his *Tafsir*, As-Suyuti attributed this narration to Ibn Abu Shayba, 'Abd ibn Hamid, Ibn Jarir, Ibn Al-Mudhir, Al-Hakim, who authenticated it, and Al-Bayhaqi in *Shu'ab Al-Iman* on the authority of Salman. See As-Suyuti, *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur*, 8/229; and *At-Tabari*, 23/114.

She said to him, 'Do what you want'. He slaughtered her son, but the spirit of her son came and said to her, 'Be patient, my mother, Allah will reward you'. She insisted on her stance. Then Pharaoh came to her another day and repeated what he had earlier said, whereupon she repeated what she had said. Then he slaughtered her younger son. The spirit of this son said to her, 'Be patient, my mother, Allah will reward you with such and such'.

The wife of Pharaoh saw the whole situation, and she heard the words of the spirit of the hairdresser's eldest and younger sons, which is why she believed in Allah. The hairdresser eventually died and her high status in paradise was uncovered to the wife of Pharaoh, a matter that increased her belief and certainty.

When Pharaoh knew about the belief of his wife Asiya, he went out to the public and said, 'What do you know about Asiya Bint Muzahim?' The people praised her. He said to them, 'She worships another lord'. At that time, they asked him to kill her. He tied up her hands and feet, and as a result she invoked Allah *the Almighty* saying: 'Lord, build me a house near You in Paradise. Save me from Pharaoh and his actions, and save me from the evildoers' (*at-Tahrim*: 11).

While she was looking at her house in paradise, she laughed, which is why Pharaoh came next to her and said, 'She is mad. We torment her and she laughs'. Then he killed her. At this moment, she saw her house of white pearl in paradise.⁽¹⁾

Here arises a question which is, 'Why did she ask her Lord to build her a house in Paradise?' The answer is that her people claimed that if she believed, she will lose a great kingdom and a magnificent palace. They also claimed that if she believed in the Lord of Musa, she will not be buried in the pyramid that Pharaoh had built for himself and his wife. That is why she asked Allah *the Almighty* to build her a house in paradise. Moreover, she said: '...near You...' (*at-Tahrim*: 11). That is, she chose to be near to Allah, not Pharaoh. She wanted her house to be close to the Mercy of Allah or in the group closest

(1) In his *Tafsir*, Al-Qurtubi, related this narration on the authority of Abu Al-'Aliya as well as Salman Al-Farisi. See Al-Qurtubi, *Jame' Ahkam Al-Quran*, 18/203.

to Allah. She wanted to be among the upper rank in paradise because Allah *Glorified is He* is far removed above being confined in any place. Thus, her saying: '...near You...' (*at-Tahrim*: 11) means that the house is near to Allah's Throne, while Pharaoh will be helpless and without any power.

The Arabic word 'bayt' (house) is taken from 'al-baytuta', that is a shelter that you resort to in order to live and rest. It is as if the wife of Pharaoh wants to get rid of Pharaoh's torment. Then she says: '...Save me from Pharaoh and his actions...' (*at-Tahrim*: 11). She asked Allah *the Almighty* to save her from Pharaoh's tyranny, injustice, torment and all his misdeeds, including disbelief. She asked Allah *the Almighty* to grant her steadfastness in faith and to rid her of Pharaoh's deeds and his tyranny against the believers.

After that, Allah *the Almighty* relates that she said: '...and save me from the evildoers' (*at-Tahrim*: 11). The verse refers to the wrongdoing people who committed injustice that is polytheism; they took Pharaoh as another god with Allah *the Almighty*.

We know that injustice is to unfairly give a right to someone other than its due owner. Clearly, the highest level of injustice is polytheism; it is a great injustice, a fact which is clear in the Lord's saying: 'Indeed, association [with Allah] is a great injustice' (*Luqman*: 13).

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says:

وَمَرْيَمَ ابْنَتَ عِمْرَانَ الَّتِي أَحْصَنَتْ فَرْجَهَا فَنَفَخْنَا فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِنَا
وَصَدَقَتْ بِكَلِمَاتِ رَبِّهَا وَكُتُبِهِ وَكَانَتْ مِنَ الْقَانِنِينَ ﴿١٢﴾

**And Mary, daughter of 'Imran. She guarded her chastity,
so We breathed into her from Our spirit. She accepted the
truth of her Lord's words and Scriptures: she was truly
devout [12] (The Quran, *at-Tahrim*: 12)**

The wife of Pharaoh is not the only example of the believing woman given by Allah *the Almighty* for He also makes Maryam (Mary), daughter of 'Imran (Amram), an example. He says: 'And Maryam (Mary), daughter of 'Imran (Amram); she guarded her chastity [of her body and soul; lit. opening], so We breathed into it [the opening of her garment] from Our Spirit.

She accepted the truth of the Words of her Lord and His Revelation, and was one of the truly devout' (*at-Tahrim*: 12).

He *the Almighty* mentions Maryam (Mary) with her given name along with the name of her father because the event which happened to her is unique and will not be repeated for any other woman.

It is wisely recommended to leave general matters vague, not linked to any particular person, time or place, as in the story of the People of the Cave. Allah *the Almighty* did not disclose their names in order to make them an example and a role model for every believer in every time and place.

For this reason, the stories of the Quran provide anonymous figures, except in the story of Prophet 'Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), and Maryam (Mary), daughter of 'Imran (Amram) because what happened with them is a miracle that will not be repeated. This is why Allah *the Almighty* identified them by their names.

With regard to the word 'Imran (Amram) as a name in the Quran, we should know that there are two persons bearing that name: the father of Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon them* and the father of Maryam (Mary). The former is 'Imran, the son of Qahat. His grandfather is Levi, the son of Ya'qub (Jacob), the son of Ishaq (Isaac), the son of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon them*. The other 'Imran is the father of Maryam (Mary) *Allah be pleased with her*. He is 'Imran, the son of Mathan, a descendant of Sulaiman (Solomon), the son of Dawud (David) *peace be upon them*.

In the chapter of *Al- 'Imran*, Allah *the Almighty* says about Maryam (Mary): 'And [mention] when the angels said, "O Maryam (Mary), indeed, Allah has chosen (*istafa* ') you and purified you and chosen (*istafa* ') you above the women of the worlds' (*Al- 'Imran*: 42). The Arabic word '*istafa* ' means has selected or chosen. It also refers to something which is pure. In this verse in the chapter of *Al- 'Imran*, Allah *the Almighty* says twice that Maryam (Mary) has been chosen; in the first time, the word '*istafa* ' is neither preceded nor followed by any preposition, as for the second time, it is followed by the preposition '*ala* ' (over).

The first time Maryam (Mary) was chosen was a means to inform her that Allah *the Almighty* had distinguished her by giving her faith, goodness and good ethics. Many individuals, men and women, may be chosen in this way.

As for the second time Maryam (Mary) was chosen, about which Allah *the Almighty* says: '...and purified you and chosen you above the women of the worlds' (*Al- 'Imran*: 42), it is special for her, for she was the only woman that gave birth to a child without a man, that is, she was a mother for a newborn who had no father.

In the verse under discussion, Allah *the Almighty* mentions Maryam (Mary), saying: 'And Maryam (Mary), daughter of 'Imran (Amram); she guarded her chastity (*ahsanat*)...' (*at-Tahrim*: 12). This means that she prevented any one from having sexual intercourse with her and did not succumb to anyone.

The Arabic word '*ihsan*' (chastity), from which the word '*ahsanat*' (guarded her chastity) is derived, refers to chastity which is a merit in the free woman who prevents anyone from having a sexual relationship with her. The Arabic word '*muhsana*' (chaste) refers also to a free woman that no one can dare to touch because of her status.

The Arabic word '*muhsana*' (chaste) has three meanings, as follows: first, the married woman who preserves her chastity and has no sexual relationship except with her husband; second, a chaste woman even if she is unmarried; third, a free woman, for the crime of adultery during the time of the revelation of the Quran was mostly committed by slave women.

Chastity means preservation; it is derived from the word '*hisn*' (fortress) that protects what is inside it. The chaste woman thus fortifies herself with marriage in order to avoid adultery, or preserves her chastity even if she is unmarried, exactly as Maryam (Mary) did; she never got married, but she was chaste.

But if she had: '...guarded her chastity...' (*at-Tahrim*: 12), how was Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* born?! Allah *the Almighty* provides the answer, saying: '...so We breathed into her from Our Spirit...' (*at-Tahrim*: 12). Breathing the Spirit here was in Maryam's (Mary's) vagina, not in anything else. Breathing the Spirit into other things was a special privilege for Prophet 'Isa, son of Maryam (Mary). In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* relates that 'Isa said: 'Indeed, I have come to you with a sign from your Lord in that I design for you from clay [that which is] like the form of a bird, then I breathe (*fanfokho*) into it and it becomes a bird, by the Permission of Allah' (*Al- 'Imran*: 49).

This aforementioned verse in the chapter of *Al-‘Imran* refers to blowing in the mud which had been shaped like a bird for it to become a living creature. Here, we should know that the Quran mentions that the act of breathing into Maryam (Mary) was inside herself; He *the Almighty* says: 'And she who guarded her chastity [of her body and soul; lit. opening], so We breathed into it [the opening of her garment] (*fanafakhna fihi*) of Our Spirit and made her and her son a sign for the nations' (*al-Anbiya*: 91), and it also states that it was in her vagina; He *the Almighty* says: 'And Mary, daughter of Imran. She guarded her chastity [of her body and soul; lit. opening], so We breathed into it [the opening of her garment] (*fanafakhna fihi*) from Our Spirit. She accepted the truth of the Words of her Lord and His Revelation, and she was one of the truly devout' (*at-Tahrim*: 12). As a matter of fact, the two verses give the same meaning. Here, we should also remember that Allah blew into Adam, when he was lying on the ground, which resulted in a soul entering him.

The act of breathing was not made directly into her vagina but rather into the opening of her dress, till it reached her womb and thus carried Prophet ‘Isa *peace be upon him*. Here, we should know that every opening or crack is called ‘*farj*’, as we can see from the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...and [how] it has no cracks (*furooj*)?’ (*Qaf*: 6), where the word ‘*furooj*’ (‘cracks’ or ‘openings’) is plural for ‘*farj*’ (opening).

Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...from Our Spirit...’ (*at-Tahrim*: 12). The spirit has many meanings. First, it refers to the basic element of our life. When Allah blows the Spirit into the bodies, they become alive and the body systems start to work.

The Spirit also refers to Archangel Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* as Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Then We sent to her Our Spirit...' (Maryam: 17). Jibril (Gabriel) presented himself, that is, he was not in his real form or nature. The angels' image has other characteristics; they have, for example, two, three or four wings. He came to her in a human form because their meeting cannot be in a hidden way. In addition, it is impossible for the angels and the humans to meet with each other when both are in their normal form and nature. Each has his own rules, which does not fit with the other. That is, the angel must be in a human image or the human must be upgraded to an

angelic form, exactly as what was done with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who was upgraded to the rank of the angels during the Night Journey. Meeting between two different types of beings cannot happen without this convergence.

Allah *the Almighty* then says: 'She accepted (*saddaqat*) the Truth the Words of her Lord and His Revelation...' (*at-Tahrim*: 12). The word 'accepted' (*saddaqat*) here means that she believed. The word in Arabic, '*saddaqat*', means that she acknowledged this Divine Truth and proved her faith by doing good deeds. Here, we should take into account the true believer is known through his good deeds and commitment to the Divine Way of Guidance. This means the true proof of faith is its interpretation into doing good deeds. Therefore, the matter of '*tasdiq*' (practical faith), which is derived from the word '*saddaqat*', refers to more than the abstract faith of the heart. But the first step needed for faith is to firmly believe in the soundness of the creed, for believing is the most important factor in this respect.

The Words of Allah *the Almighty* are the imperative order, 'Be!' by which all what He wants in the universe is carried out, including what we have known or will know in the future, and what we will know only on the Day of Judgment.

Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* is a Word; Allah says: '...and His Word which He bestowed on Maryam (Mary) and a soul [created by a command] from Him' (*an-Nisa*': 171). He was not created through the natural way known to all people, that is, from a mother and a father. Rather, he was created by Allah's Power, which is meant to prove His Omnipotence regarding His creation and that He creates what He wills.

One time, Allah *the Almighty* created a man without a father and a mother, like Adam *peace be upon him*. Another time, He created a man from a mother, that is, without a father, as in the case of Prophet 'Isa *peace be upon him*. Other times, He *Glorified is He* creates people through a father and a mother. Finally, He created a woman through a father but without a mother, as in the case of Hawwa' (Eve).

Maryam's (Mary's) belief in the Words of Allah clearly indicates her belief in Angel Jibril, who Allah relates as saying: 'He [Angel Jibril (Gabriel)]

said, "I am only a Messenger of your Lord to give you [news of] a pure boy" She said, "How can I have a boy while no man has touched me and I have not been unchaste?" He said, "Thus [it will be]; your Lord says, 'It is easy for Me, and We will make him a sign to the people and a mercy from Us'. And it is a matter [already] decreed'" (*Maryam*: 19-21).

Maryam (Mary) believed in the Words of her Lord and His Books revealed to the former Messengers. She believed in the Torah of Prophet Musa *peace be upon him*. She used to worship Allah *Glorified is He* in her sanctuary. Her sister's husband was Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* and her sister's son was Prophet Yahya (John) *peace be upon him*.

Allah *the Almighty* concludes this verse in question, saying: '...she was one of the truly devout (*qaniteen*)' (*at-Tahrim*: 12). The Arabic word '*al-qaniteen*' (the truly devout) is plural the singular form of which is '*qanit*'. It means the slave who continuously worships his Lord in humility and contentment. When someone adheres to obedience but then leaves it, this will be as if he tries Allah's Kindness yet finds that He *Glorified is He* is not appropriate for that kindness.

The obedient slave is the one who does not stop worshipping Allah because he has already tasted and fully realised the sweetness of the continuity of worship, which is why he firmly adheres to worship with reverence, tranquility and sustainability, and he becomes among the devoutly obedient people.

The good woman is the righteous one who follows Allah's Way of Guidance. As long as she is a good woman, she will be devoutly obedient. One of the practical applications of the Arabic word '*qunut*' (devoutness), from which the word '*qaniteen*' (devout) is derived and which refers to permanently worshipping Allah, is '*Qunut Al-Fajr*' (supplication of devoutness in *Al-Fajr* Prayer) in which we pray a longer time to supplicate Allah *the Almighty*.

The devoted woman is subject to Allah *the Almighty*. As a result, she adheres to His Way of Guidance. Allah *the Almighty* says about Maryam (Mary): 'She accepted the Truth of the Words of her Lord...' (*at-Tahrim*: 12) as well as: '...she was one of the truly devout' (*at-Tahrim*: 12), and: 'The Maseeh (Messiah), son of Maryam (Mary), was nothing but a Messenger;

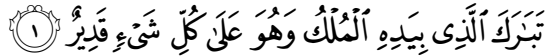
[other] Messengers have passed on before him. And his mother was a supporter of the Truth' (*al-Ma'ida*: 75). She was a support of the Truth, that is, she did not only believe in the Truth, but rather supported it as well. This is a trait she had which was granted by Allah *the Almighty*. Thus Allah *the Almighty* concludes this chapter with His saying: 'And Maryam (Mary), daughter of 'Imran (Amram); she guarded her chastity [of her body], so We breathed into it [the opening of her garment] from Our Spirit. She accepted the truth of the Words of her Lord and His Revelation, and she was one of the truly devout' (*at-Tahrim*: 12).

the chapter of

al-Mulk

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

The chapter of *al-Mulk*⁽¹⁾.



**Exalted is He who holds all control in His hands; who
has power over all things [1] (The Quran, *al-Mulk*: 1)**

The Dominion belongs to Allah⁽²⁾ *the Almighty* Alone. He has the power to do anything. We did not exist until He *the Almighty* granted us life in His own universe. Besides, He *the Almighty* prepared the universe for us before bringing us into existence.

The chapter of *al-Mulk* provides us with a comprehensive view that goes beyond the limited realm of the earth and the earthly life; it delves into the realms of the heavens that have no flaws. When the human being understands the nature of his presence in this universe, he becomes compatible with the system of the universe that glorifies Allah *the Almighty*.

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- (1) The chapter of *al-Mulk* was revealed in Mecca. It consists of 30 verses and was revealed after the chapter of *at-Tur*. It is also called *Al-Waqiya*, *Al-Munjiya* and *Ad-Dafi'a*. *Ibn 'Abbas* narrated that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'I wish that every Muslim glorifies the One in Whose Hands is Dominion'. Furthermore, *Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him* narrated that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'One of the chapters of Allah's Book, which only consists of 30 verses, will intercede on behalf of man so that he will be taken out of the Hellfire on the Day of Judgment and admitted to Paradise. It is the chapter of *Tabarak*'. See *Atha 'alibi, Tafsir*, 9/354.
- (2) The Islamic conception of 'Allah' is not the same as the Christian and Jewish conception of 'God'. However, the word 'Allah' does not refer to a tribal god or the God of only Muslims; it refers to the Creator of the whole world, the One God (who has no son). We prefer, however, to use 'Allah' rather than 'God' as it has a unique character: it cannot be used to refer to any false gods and does not have any derivatives like goddess, gods, etc. It is a unique word used solely to describe the One God of this universe.

Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Exalted is He (*tabarak*)...' (*al-Mulk*: 1). If you carefully examine the word '*tabarak*' ('exalted' or 'blessed') in the Quran, you will find that the letter '*alif*' is clearly written after the letter '*baa*' in some cases, while in other cases the '*baa*' comes without the '*alif*' being clearly written as a separate letter. This is to indicate that the matter is not a result of the words being written haphazardly.

Just as the words and structures of the Quran are miraculous, Allah *the Almighty* wanted its writing to be a miracle too. Some have said that the Arabs in the time of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not master writing. We say, 'If they were not familiar with the rules of writing, they could not write the word '*bism*' (in the name) properly, without a letter '*alif*' in its position. They knew that the Quran should be written in the exact way in which it was revealed by the Archangel Jibril (Gabriel), and as Allah *the Almighty* ordained'.

The expression 'Exalted is He' (*al-Mulk*: 1) usually refers to blessings, which refer to gaining more than what you expect from something. For example, when food for three persons becomes enough for ten, you say that this food is blessed. The word '*tabark*' means that Allah is Almighty, the Bestower of all good and All-Generous in His Bounty, three characteristics which are complementary to each other.

Interestingly, the way the term 'Exalted is He' (*al-Mulk*: 1) is written and its form is a miracle. If you trace it in the Quran, you will find that this word is mentioned nine times; seven of them having the letter '*alif*' as a separate letter and the other two without '*alif*' being written clearly. We may ask why this word was not written with a letter '*alif*' clearly written as a separate letter in all the verses, or vice versa. This shows us that the writing in the Quran has been divinely ordained; the words have not been written haphazardly. The word '*bism*' (in the name of...) in the saying of Allah: 'Recite, in the name (*bism*) of your Lord who created...' (*al-'Alaq*: 1) is a case in point. In this verse of the chapter of *al-'Alaq*, unlike in the other verses of the Quran, this word is written with the letter '*alif*' after the letter '*ba*'. To conclude, the way the Quran is written and read is not ordinary. For example, you read any other book in any situation, but when you recite the Quran, you must perform ablution first.

Thus, the expression: 'Exalted is He...' (*al-Mulk*: 1) connotes three meanings, which are: Allah is Almighty, no one is equivalent to Him, and He bestows on His creation abundant good. He is unparalleled in His Power, His Being, His Attributes and His Actions. All this is in our interest. There is no God that is Almighty or Self-Sufficient but Him *Glorified is He*.

When we read: '...in whose Hands is Dominion (all control)...' (*al-Mulk*: 1), we must know that Allah *the Almighty* knows best about Himself. As a result, we should stop delving further into this topic. Yes, Allah *Glorified is He* has two Hands. But beware of imagining that anything related to Him is similar to the human being.

Basically, you exist, and Allah *the Almighty* exists. But your existence is different from His, and your hand is likewise different from His. For this reason we should avoid anthropomorphism by mistakenly saying that His Hands are like ours. Let us say that His Hand is meant to represent His Power or Blessing. The noble aim behind this is to maintain that He is Exalted.

And some people say, 'Allah has Hands, but not like our hands because we perceive each Description of Allah in the light of the verse: "There is certainly nothing like Him" (*ash-Shura*: 11), and accordingly the interpretation of Allah's Attributes is possible'.

The Lord *the Most High* says: '...both His Hands are spread out, He expends as He pleases...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 64) and: '...the Hand of Allah is above their hands' (*al-Fath*: 10). This means that His Power is over theirs, just like when He talks about His Ability to create, saying: 'And the heaven, We raised it high with [Our] Hands (power), and most surely, We are steadily expanding it' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 47).⁽¹⁾

Therefore, as the true dominion is controlled by Him, you should not worry about your provision; since He has created you, He has guaranteed your provision. Such provision is sent down from the heaven to the earth in

(1) The phrase 'with Hands' means by Power and Capability. An extra vowel letter is added to the Arabic word in the Holy Quran to distinguish its meaning from the literal meaning of the word. Interpreting the word 'Hand' in this context as Allah's Power by means of which He has built the sky undoubtedly takes precedence over the literal meaning of the word 'Hands'. See *Al-Ibyari, Al-Mawsu'a Al-Qur'aniyya*, 3/104.

the form of rain by means of which plants grow; it is upon these plants that every creature, including the human beings who may also eat herbivores, such as cattle and sheep feed.

Your provision is linked to all the natural phenomena on the earth including the wind, air, sun or rain. All of such are within the Dominion of Allah *the Almighty* Alone because there is no other god besides Him. Why then should the human being feel worried about his provision?

Allah *the Almighty* says: '...in Whose Hands is all Dominion (control) (*mulk*)...' (*al-Mulk*: 1). When there is a dominion (*mulk*), it logically follows that there is a dominator, persons who are dominated and a power to maintain such dominion. It is as if the Lord *the Almighty* wants to show us His Absolute Power in this phrase.

The human being does not truly have the ability to dominate or maintain what he dominates. There is a difference between the two words here: 'ownership' and 'dominion', both of which are derived from the word '*mulk*' in Arabic. As for 'ownership', it means that the human being possesses some things, such as clothes, books and other belongings.

But, to have control over the owners of such things is what we call 'dominion'. If such possession is part of what we can see, we call it 'the dominion' of the world we can behold. If such possession is part of the unseen, we call it 'the kingdom of the unseen world'.

Now, we have 'ownership', 'dominion' and 'kingdom'. Ownership is used with a person who owns things, whereas the dominion is what is controlled by those who are in charge of some group of people, like the kings. This has to do with the dealings of humans.

As for Allah *the Almighty* He is the Owner of all things and all owners. Thus, no one should ever think that there is a person who owned something or any position in this worldly life without Allah's Permission, a fact which is crystal clear in His saying: 'Say, "O Allah, Lord of all dominion! You give dominion to whomsoever You please and take away dominion from whomsoever You please, and You exalt whom You please and abase whom You please. In Your hand is all good; surely, You have power over all things"' (*Al-Imran*: 26).

Therefore, any worldly ownership or dominion is temporary because Allah *the Almighty* takes it away from whom He wills and gives it to whom He wills. All of this is done according to the Will of the Supreme Creator; whenever He wills, nothing can stop His Decree.

With His Absolute Power and Might, He *the Almighty* created life and death, and the heaven with its planets, the suns and the stars. He has also subjected the earth, mountains and rivers to be of service to the human being. Then He *the Almighty* asked the human being to walk in the paths of the earth, seeking His Provision. That is, Allah *the Almighty* is the Omnipotent Who created the human being and gave him the ability to cultivate the land and to pave the ways of the earth and the mountains. But all this is due to His Power, not the power of the human being.

Allah *the Almighty* says: '...Who has power over all things' (*al-Mulk*: 1). Allah *the Exalted* has Absolute Power in this dominion. Consequently, if He says He wills to do something, that thing will definitely come to pass. There is no capability or power in this universe but Allah's, and only what He wills can happen. Nothing can overpower Him *the Almighty* and nothing goes against His Will. The Lord has Power over everything, and everything occurs according to His Will and Power. To Him belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earths, and He is the Omnipotent.

Allah has the Power to do anything: creating, providing, bringing to life, causing death, and starting immortality in either Paradise or Hell. He is truly Capable of anything.

Since actions vary according to different capabilities, Allah's Ultimate Power requires no time to bring about any action. In this regard, the Lord *the Almighty* says: 'Look then at the signs of Allah's Mercy, how He gives life to the earth after its death. Most surely He will raise the dead to life; and He has power over all things' (*ar-Rum*: 50). Allah *the Almighty* has the All Perfect Attributes of Knowledge, Power, Wisdom, Withholding, Giving and Causing benefit or harm.

The Lord *the Almighty* was All-Powerful even before the existence of any object over which this Power is exercised. That is to say He did not become All-Powerful when He created the human beings; rather, by His very Power,

He created the entire universe. As Allah *the Almighty* is Unchangeable, He remains Fully Capable and Ever-Living.

The Arabic word '*qadir*' (fully capable) is in the morphological form '*fa'il*', which may refer to a subject or an object. This is like when we say, 'Allah is *Rahim* (All-Merciful)', in which Allah is the subject that does the action, whereas the word '*qateel*' (the killed person), which is in the same morphological form, refers to the object upon which the action is done.

The Lord *Glorified is He* then says:

الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْغَفُورُ ﴿٢﴾

**Who created death and life to test you [people] and
reveal which of you does best — He is the Mighty,
the Forgiving [2] (The Quran, *al-Mulk*: 2)**

Allah *the Almighty* has created a Spirit whereby He provided the human being with life. Thus, we can imagine that death has a reality; when death approaches the human being, it takes away his Spirit. In the light of this, we can understand His saying: 'He created death and life...' (*al-Mulk*: 2). As such, death is not a negative process as some people mistakenly think. It is rather a positive process; it is created with such high efficiency which is appropriate for the Creator *Glorified is He*.

In this verse in question, Allah *the Almighty* clarifies that He brought death forward before life, even though we apparently believe that life came first, not the other way round.

Life gives man power with which he can make use of what has been created in his service: he plants the earth, trades in goods, invents whatever is suitable for his life and enjoys hearing and sight. Therefore, he thinks life was created first. However, Allah *the Almighty* clarifies and draws our attention not to think carefully about life unless you are already aware of its opposite. In this regard, He *the Almighty* says: 'He created death and life...' (*al-Mulk*: 2). This makes it easier for us to understand the Sacred Hadith that explains to us how it will be like after the people of the paradise enter paradise and the people of hell enter hell. After this, Allah *the Almighty* calls upon death to be brought in the form of a ram that is then slain.

Abu Hurayra *Allah be pleased with him* narrated that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'On the Day of Resurrection, death will be brought to stand on the *Sirat* (the Bridge over Hell). It will be said, "O people of Paradise!" Thereupon they will look, anxious and afraid lest they be brought out of the place where they are. Then it will be said, "Do you know this?" They will reply, "Yes, Allah, this is death". Then it will be said again, "O people of Hell!" They will look, hoping that they may be brought out of the place where they are. It will be said, "Do you know this?" They will reply, "Yes, this is death". The command will be given that the ram will be slaughtered on the *Sirat*, and it will be said to both groups, "Eternity for you, and no death ever"⁽¹⁾. Embodying death as a ram means that death has an entity. Then Allah *the Almighty* tells us that death will be eliminated which clearly means that we will live in eternity.

It is Allah *the Almighty* Who created death and life, and He is the Ever-Eternal. He needs no human to keep His Life; He has the Power to do everything, with no exception.

Before Allah *the Almighty* shows how He benevolently bestowed life upon us, He warned us against being deceived by it. He urges the human being to perceive life, knowing that He *the Almighty* has likewise created death, the opposite of life. Allah *the Almighty* does not say that He created life and then death, but rather says: 'He created death and life...' (*al-Mulk*: 2). In this way, each one of us realises that life is preceded by death, its opposite.

This is for you not to be arrogant or forget about such an inevitable end, and to act accordingly. It is as if the Lord *the Almighty* tells us about our death even before creating life. He brought death forward before life to warn us against being deceived by the worldly life and to urge us to strive for the Hereafter.

If a person examines the verses in the Quran, he finds that the word life has always preceded death, except for the verse in question: 'He created death and life...' (*al-Mulk*: 2). The reason for this is that Allah *the Almighty* by

(1) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri Allah be pleased with him. At-Tirmidhi graded it as a good authentic Hadith. See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 4730; see also At-Tirmidhi, Sunnan, Hadith no. 3156; and Al-Ajurri, Shari'a, Hadith no. 942.*

granting us life, grants us also a will to move all the parts of our body. Life then may deceive the person into believing that he is in control of his will and body, and consequently he transgresses. Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* wanted to warn people that He can cause them to die. Such a warning will make him perceive life and its opposite, and so make him follow a straight path in life.

Creation and ending life are Established Attributes of Allah *the Almighty* even before He created or ended the life of anything. In other words, they are Eternal Attributes that existed even before He used them to bring about life or cause death to any creature.

Life is created, and death is also created. Death can be sensed and observed. Both death and life are controlled by Allah *the Almighty*. Death is subject to His Will and Absolute Power which determine its definite time, which will not be advanced or delayed. Afterwards, each person will face the consequence of his deeds.

Both life and death are controlled by the Giver of Life. One should never think that fighting in battles causes death. In this regard, Khalid ibn Al-Walid on his deathbed sets an example for each believer in Allah *the Almighty*. He said, 'I have witnessed around 100 battles, and there is no spot in my body left without a scar or a wound made by a sword or a spear. Yet here I am dying on my bed just like a camel. May the eyes of cowards never fall asleep!'⁽¹⁾ Therefore, life and death are not conditional on fighting in battles or other causes. They are conditional on Allah's Will, a fact which is crystal clear in His saying: 'And most surely We bring to life and cause to die, and We are the heirs' (*al-Hijr*: 32). When Allah *the Almighty* addresses the matter of death and life, and the return of everything in the universe eventually to its Creator, He talks to us about two matters experienced by each creature: life and death. They are experienced by all creatures, for every creature has a defined period in which to live and a fixed time when he will die.

The creation of death and life has a purpose which is clearly illustrated in His saying: '...to test you [people] and reveal which of you is best in deeds...'

(1) In his book, Ibn Kathir ascribed this narration to Al-Wahidi, who quoted Ibn Abu Az-Zinad. See Ibn 'Abd Al-Bar, *Al-Isti'ab*, 1/409; Adh-Dhahabi, *Siyar A'lam An-Nubala'*, 1/382; Al-Kandahlawi, *Hayat As-Sahaba*, 1/565; and Ibn Kathir, *Al-Bidaya wa An-Nihaya*, 7/129.

(*al-Mulk*: 2). That test, then, is the purpose of creating life and death. Life is not futile; rather, it is a test and trial for the people. A test is not something bad in itself; it is bad only when its result is bad. As long as Allah *the Almighty* tests us with what He provides us, we ought to be wise and hasten to do good deeds. In this connection, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...hasten to good deeds; to Allah is your return, and so He will let you know that in which you differed' (*al-Ma'ida*: 48).

Hastening to do good deeds is for the purpose of passing the test which results in a greater reward than what we will get by being disobedient to Him *the Almighty*. Clearly, such a test is in our interest because those who pass it will surely attain eternal success.

The meaning of the saying of Allah: '...to test you [people]...' (*al-Mulk*: 2) indicates that such a test is in order for the people to see which one of them does best. But who determines those deeds? It is Allah *the Almighty*.

Does Allah *the Almighty* then need to test His creatures? No, simply because He knows beforehand all the deeds His creatures will do. But by such a test He means to match what His creatures do to what He already knew, and thereby leave no excuse for anyone; this test is evidence for or against us.

Unlike what some people think, Allah's Test is a blessing; it is good if we pass and bad if we fail. Hence, this test is not bad in itself; it is rather a scale for testing the good and the bad deeds. It is Allah, our Lord, Who tests us. He is the Lord Who educates us in a way that qualifies us to reach the required state of goodness. One of the basics in educating someone is to test him to know whether he learnt the topic well or not.

There must be some good out of such a test. The test may be in the form of a temptation. When people say 'test the gold', they mean put it in a pot and heat it at a high temperature until it turns into liquid in order to get rid of any impurities and make it pure.

Temptation in itself is not bad. What is bad is its negative results, that is whether a person will pass or fail the test. All the tests that the human being encounters are temptations; but whoever passes the test, temptation is something good for him. As for he who fails, temptation is something bad.

Allah *the Almighty* has bestowed upon the human being the ability to choose in order to see who will pass the test and who will fail in it, who will believe and who will disbelieve.

The Lord *the Almighty* does not neglect the reward of the doers of good deeds who remember Him while doing their work. The losers are those who work for the sake of pleasing people instead of Allah *the Almighty* but the people possess no power to benefit them. Hence, whoever does good deeds for the sake of Allah will be rewarded in both this worldly life and the Hereafter, as Allah *the Almighty* says: 'We do not neglect the reward of those who do good deeds' (*al-Kahf*: 30).

In this verse, the word 'who' is general, thus it includes both the believers and the disbelievers. The Lord *the Most High* does not say, 'We do not neglect the reward of the one who has good faith', because there might be a worker who does his work well though he is a disbeliever. Allah *Glorified is He* does not diminish the reward of such a disbeliever, yet the reward is given to him only in this worldly life.

If a disbeliever works hard and excels at science, agriculture, or trade, etc., he will not be deprived the fruits of his work and diligence. However, he will have his fruit early in this worldly life, but he will have no reward in the Hereafter.

Allah *the Almighty* says that He is: '...the Mighty...' (*al-Insan*: 2), Who, due to His Greatness, is never defeated and is not held accountable by anyone. Hence, He *Glorified is He* is Predominant in all that He wills to do. He is the All Powerful and the Mighty Whom no one can harm.

The word 'the Mighty' implies Allah's Predominance, Omnipotence and Power; no one has supremacy over Him. Mightiness means Power and Predominance. He is the absolutely Almighty, for there is no god but Him and He is never defeated or overpowered by anyone.

He is the Lord of Glory in all its forms. If it is the glory of wisdom, He is the Most Wise. He is the 'Almighty' Who is never defeated or overpowered, and He is also the '...All-Forgiving' (*al-Insan*: 2). Due to His Almightyness, He forgives; and due to His Greatness, He pardons as He is All-Sufficient and is not in need of any creature.

In order to understand this fact, we should read Allah's saying: 'When Allah says, "Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), did you say to the people, 'Take me and my mother as two gods alongside with Allah'?" He will say, "May You be exalted! I will never say what I had no right to say—if I had said such a thing You will have known it. You know all that is within me, though I do not know what is within You. You alone have full knowledge of things unseen...If You should chastise them, then surely they are Your slaves; and if You should forgive them, then surely You are the Mighty, the All-Wise"' (*al-Ma'ida*: 116-118).

Since the context is about Mercy, we should logically say, 'You are the All-Forgiving and the Most Merciful', yet 'Isa *peace be upon him* addresses the matter not from the perspective of Mercy or Forgiveness but from the perspective of Absolute Power which may not be objected to. That is why he said: 'You are the Mighty, the All-Wise' (*al-Ma'ida*: 118).

If some people say, 'Why does He forgive them though they said so and so?' The answer is that He is *the Almighty* Who predominates and is never defeated, and no one can object to His Judgment.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says:

الَّذِي خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ طِبَاقًا مَّا تَرَىٰ فِي خَلْقِ الرَّحْمَنِ
مِن تَفَوتٍ فَأَرْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ هَلْ تَرَىٰ مِن فُطُورٍ

Who created the seven heavens, one above the other.

You will not see any flaw in what the Lord of Mercy creates.

Look again! Can you see any flaw? [3] (The Quran, *al-Mulk*: 3)

Allah *the Almighty* is the God Who created the universe. He is the Creator, the Originator, the All-Wise and the Most Merciful to His slaves. He created everything on this earth and in the heavens, and He is Exalted and high above having a partner in His Creation, for He Alone is the One: 'Who created....' (*al-Mulk*: 3).

He is the Creator, the Lord of Mercy, the Most Merciful, and the Predominant. He is the Creator even before bringing His creatures into existence, for He,

due to His eternal Attribute of being able to create, is a Creator. He is the Provider even before the existence of what receives His Provision. With His Ever-Lasting Attributes, He orders a thing to 'Be', and it is.

Thus, if a Messenger told us that Allah is the One Who created the sun; he is either truthful and hence we all shall acknowledge that Allah *the Almighty* is the Creator and the Originator, or he is not truthful and then a question arises, 'Why then has no one else claimed to be its Creator?!'

Yet, the accuracy and the inimitability of the creation which cannot be matched by any individual or any collective and cooperative human powers is undisputable proof that it is Allah *the Almighty* Alone Who created everything. Thus, until we find—and we will never find—someone who claims to have created the universe, the issue is settled in favour of Allah *the Almighty* and there are no adversaries.

A Messenger came to us to say, 'The Creator of the earth, the sun and the heavens is Allah *the Almighty*'. Since no one else claimed to have created any of these, this is proof of the credibility of the Messenger's call. This affirms that this universe is created by an Infinite Power. He *the Almighty* says: 'Or were they created out of nothing, or are they the creators?' (*at-Tur*: 35)

If the answer is 'no' for both the two aforementioned Divine Questions, there must be a Creator—Who is Allah—in Whom we must believe because He did not let anyone be able to claim that he is the creator of this universe or that he created himself.

Allah *the Almighty* is the Creator Who accurately created everything and placed His signs in the universe. When we ponder over the universe around us, we find signs that prove the creativeness of the Creator and the wonderfulness of His creation. We also find harmony and congruity among these signs of the universe.

Allah *Glorified is He* says in some verses addressing this matter: 'And of His signs are the night and the day, the sun and the moon...' (*Fussilat*: 37) and: 'And of His signs are the ships that run on the sea like mountains' (*ash-Shura*: 32). These verses draw our attention to the Omnipotence of the Creator *Glorified is He*.

Allah *the Almighty* created the universe, including the earth, the heavens and human beings, and revealed the Quran to regulate their lives. He did not

leave the universe to work automatically by itself and did not separate Himself from His creation because they are in continuous need of His Provision.

Some creatures share some Attributes with Allah *the Almighty* but in a limited sense. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'So blessed is Allah, the best of creators' (*al-Mu'minun*: 14) and: 'And you create falsehood...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 17).

This means that there are creators other than Allah *the Almighty*. Creation means bringing something into existence. A person who produces glass from sand is a creator and a manufacturer of the glass. In this example, a person brought something into existence, and Allah brings things into existence. However, such a person has brought something into existence out of something else which already existed even before the existence of such a person.

Hence, the Lord *Glorified is He* is the best of creators. He *Glorified is He* was fair to you and did not deny you the title of a creator. Consequently, you should be fair and describe Him *the Almighty* with the description: '...the best of creators...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 14). Allah *the Almighty* respected your bringing something into existence and called you a creator. He did not deny you one of His Attributes, but told you that He is the best of the creators. Hence, He is the best of creators, the best of providers, the best of those who inherit, and the best of those who arrange matters.

It is more proper to turn towards the Great Creator Who brought this universe into existence. Allah's universal signs draw humans' attention to His wonderful, unrivalled creation and the necessity of believing in Him. Through these signs, we come to know that there is an All-Powerful Creator Who manages and maintains this magnificent universe. Even before the creation of the human beings, Allah *the Almighty* created the heavens, the earth, water, and air for them. Besides, Allah *Glorified is He* determined the creatures' sustenance on the earth till the Day of Judgment. Further, Allah *the Almighty* tells us that the creation of the heavens and the earth is greater than the creation of the human beings, a fact which is crystal clear in Allah's saying: 'The creation of the heavens and earth is greater than the creation of mankind, but most of the people do not know.' (*Ghafir*: 57)

When Islam emerged and presented empirical science, it called our attention to the signs of the Creator in the universe and ordered us to meditate

on them. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'And how many a sign in the heavens and the earth which they pass by, yet they turn aside from it...' (*Yusuf*: 105). Thus, Allah *the Almighty* draws our attention to His signs in the heavens and the earth for us to contemplate over them and derive from them what contributes to the achievement of our civilisation. It is important to note that Allah *the Almighty* unprecedentedly created the heavens, the earth and everything therein, as Allah *the Almighty* says, 'The Originator of the heavens and the earth.' (*al-Baqara*: 117) In other words, before, Allah *the Almighty* created them, there were no heavens, earth, angels, jinn and humankind, so that the same entities would be patterned by Him *the Almighty*. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* did not have recourse to 'patterning' or 'moulding'.

We should be filled with wonder about the creation of the heavens and earth. The human being should be conscious of what Allah *the Almighty* created for him in order that he finds out about his Creator, believes in Him and bears witness that He is the only One God.

If the humans ponder on the creation of the heavens and the earth, their natural dispositions will guide them to the fact that this well-knit, perfect universe is originated by Allah *the Almighty*. However, most of them do not think properly. So, the heavens and the earth are maintained in a stunning balance by Him *the Almighty* alone. In this connection, He says, 'Surely, Allah upholds the heavens and the earth lest they come to naught; and if they should come to naught, there is none who can uphold them after Him; surely, He is the Forbearing, the Forgiving.' (*Fatir*: 41). If the heavens and the earth were destined by Allah *the Almighty* to cease to exist, no one can preserve them, given the fact that they are maintained by His Omnipotence. In other words, if He wills them to vanish, no one can hold them and prevent their disappearance.

Regarding the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Who created the seven heavens...' (*al-Mulk*: 3), the word 'heavens' is in the plural form. In another verse, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'So He ordained them seven heavens in two periods, and revealed in every heaven its affair; and We adorned the lower heaven with brilliant stars and (made it) to guard; that is the decree of the Mighty, the Knowing.' (*Fussilat*: 12)

In the past, some people used to claim that the seven heavens refer to seven planets: the sun, the moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and the Earth. But Allah *the Almighty* willed to refute this claim, while those who made it were still alive. This refutation was done by the astronomers who discovered other planets such as Neptune and Pluto. This serves as a rebuttal of the claim of those who argued that the ‘seven heavens’ mean ‘seven planets’. They held this view in good faith and in an attempt to link the Quran with science. However, they did not scrutinise the Quranic verses properly, for Allah *the Almighty* informs us that the sun, the moon, and other planets are just the adornments of the lower heaven. So, what would we think of the nature and the adornments of the remaining heavens?!

In the same vein, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘And certainly We made above you seven heavens; and never are We heedless of creation.’ (*al-Mu’minun*: 17) The Arabic word *tarai’q* means the ‘beaten ways’ or the paths made for the angels. A beaten object has a size which widens by treading, exactly as a piece of iron expands by striking against it. So, you should look at the heaven and its boundless vastness and say, ‘Exalted is the One Who expanded it’.

It is worth noting here that Allah *the Almighty* does not mention the earth. So, what is the reason for that? This is because we can stand steady on the earth without fear; whereas we fear that the heaven should collapse upon us. That is why Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...and never are We heedless of creation.’ (*al-Mu’minun*: 17) Allah *the Almighty* is never unaware of the heaven and He holds it with His Power. The birds that fly and are held aloft by Him *the Almighty* provide us with a tangible proof of how He raised the sky over us without pillars. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Do they not see the birds above them spreading and closing their wings? It is only the Lord of Mercy who holds them up: He watches over everything.’ (*al-Mulk*: 19)

Linguistically, the Arabic word *as-sama`* (the sky) means everything that overtops and shades you. So, does the sky, meant by Allah *the Almighty*, refer to all that is over you, including the stars, the sun, and the moon? We should say to those who claim that the seven heavens are the planets that these planets are not always over us. The sun and the moon, for example, sometimes overtop us and at times go down. So, the sun, the moon, and other planets cannot be

the seven heavens. Besides, these people are mistaken because Allah *the Almighty* revealed to them via modern science that the sun has other satellites. Some astronomers say that they are eight satellites while others state they are nine. According to some others, they amount to ten. Thus, the notion that these satellites are the seven heavens has been refuted, for the heaven overtops all these celestial bodies.

Allah *the Almighty* created the heavens in layers, one above the other, a fact which is crystal clear in Allah's saying: 'You will progress from stage to stage.' (*al-Inshiqaq*: 19) It is Allah *the Almighty* Who perfectly created the seven-layered heavens. When one looks at heaven, he cannot find any defect. Even if he looks once again, he also finds no cracks or flaws.

Let us notice the objects that the humans make. If one wants to build, for example, a house or a ceiling, it should be built in a very precise way. However, you may see protruding bricks. So, a plasterer tries hard to level the surface of the wall and measures it with a spirit level. However, we may see unlevelled parts in the wall. At this point, the painter's role comes; he tries to repair any faults by using putty.

After a person uses up all the means of building his house as he likes, some days later Allah *the Almighty* discloses for him the defects in his building, regardless of its precision, by means of a layer of dust that vertically covers the wall. This exposes clearly any faults in the wall.

If the objects made by the humans differ according to their skills and adeptness, what do you think about Allah, the Creator Who builds perfects and beautifies His creations?

Allah *the Almighty* then says, '...You will not see any flaw in what the Lord of Mercy creates...' (*al-Mulk*: 3). By virtue of His Mercy, Allah *the Almighty* created the universe in this perfect way. Here, He mentions the Name which must be extolled, namely; the Lord of Mercy. Out of His Mercy and Bestowals, people live in the universe and enjoy their sustenance and all what surrounds them. So, they should have appreciated the creation of the Lord of Mercy in which they played no role. Allah, the Lord of Mercy, is the One Who grants all the bestowals and blessings, and He mentions this Attribute in particular

because Mercy evokes people's tender feelings unlike His Attribute of Omnipotence or the Almightyness.

There are no flaws in the creation of the Lord of Mercy. Let us offer an example to illustrate this fact; the most skilful maker may be asked to flatten the ceiling of several rooms with one material and paints them in one colour. However, you can notice that his painting of each room differs from the others in some aspect. Even if the painter combines the colour of the paint at one time for all the rooms, the colour will be different because when he takes out some of the paint mixture, the remaining quantity becomes more concentrated. Further, if the task does not finish on the same day, what remains of the paint loses a quantity of water the next day, which affects the degree of the colour.

So, the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...You will not see any flaw in what the Lord of Mercy creates...' (*al-Mulk*: 3) means that His creation is devoid of any dissimilarity or disproportion. Using the word 'any' in this verse implies that there are no flaws whatsoever in His creation. For example, if you go to someone to borrow some money from him, he may say to you, 'I do not have enough money to lend you'. This means that he owns several pounds that are insufficient for lending. However, when you go to another person for the same purpose, he may say to you, 'I do not have any money'. Using the word 'any' means that he does not even one pound. Likewise, you will not see any flaw in the creation of Allah *the Almighty*.

Thus, you cannot notice any imperfection in His creation. In the heaven, for example, you cannot see any disproportion, dissimilarity, or crookedness. Disproportion refers to the inharmonious objects that do not fit together. All of this is untrue regarding the creation of Allah *the Almighty* thereby the beholder cannot say, 'If the heaven had been created in such-and-such a way, it would have been better', because Allah *the Almighty* created it perfectly and in a well-knitted way.

Allah *the Almighty* then says: '...Look again...' (*al-Mulk*: 3). So, let anyone look at the heaven repeatedly and meditates on His creation; he should not just look at this creation without consideration and reflection, as Allah *the Almighty* says, '...Look again...' (*al-Mulk*: 3). You may mistakenly think that some words have the same meaning, yet we stress that each word has a specific

sense. For example, the verbs 'see, look, catch sight of, glance sideways at and stare at' refer generally to the act of seeing something, but each verb has a specific meaning.

Regarding concrete objects, sight is the function of the eye. When the sight is accompanied with insight and reflection, this enlightens the heart till one discerns that Allah's creation is not tainted with dissimilarity or imperfection. One who is endowed with the in-depth knowledge and the insight of the scholars discerns, by means of reflection and knowledge, the hidden aspects of the world, and therefore, extracts mysteries and deduces facts.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says, '...Look again! Can you see any flaw?' (*al-Mulk*: 3) If the human being looks repeatedly at the heaven, he will not spot any fissures or cracks. He, the Omnipotent, bestows on each of His creatures' specific characteristics that make it suitable for its function. So, the one should not think that such a creature is out of the control of its Creator. It is Allah *the Almighty* Who created the heavens and the earth with absolute creativity and perfection; it is He alone Who can ruin them or cause breaks in them at any time. Also, it is He Who will wrap the sun in darkness, dim the stars, and turn the mountains into dust.

The lower heaven has one shape and contains no cracks or defects whatsoever as Allah *the Almighty* perfected its creation, as He says, 'And the heaven, We raised it high with power...' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 47); and He says in elsewhere: 'I swear by the heaven full of ways.' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 7) Thus, the creation of the heaven is well-knit and consistent. In the last verse, the Arabic word *hubuk* (compactness) refers to the fact that the invisible atoms of the heaven fit neatly together and that it why it seems smooth and even. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says about the heaven: 'He raised its ceiling and proportioned it.' (*an-Nazi'at*: 28). If you have a look at the heaven when it is clear, you find that it is an even structure having no protrusions or curvatures despite its vastness and the absence of pillars. Hence, Allah *the Almighty* orders you to consider and meditate, as if He is saying: 'We do not deceive you. Look at the heaven attentively and carefully'. So, He says in the verse in question: '...Look again! Can you see any flaw?' (*al-Mulk*: 3); and He says: 'Say, "Observe what is in the heavens and earth..."' (*Yunus*: 101). It is as if

He is saying to the people: ‘The entire universe is before your eyes. Why do not you observe and meditate on it’?

Allah *the Almighty* raised the heaven and laid down the balance. The heaven does not fall on the earth, and everything in His creation is completely precise and cohesive. The sun rises in the east and sets in the west. The moon and the stars move with utmost precision and perfection because the humans have nothing to do with such celestial bodies.

If you want your life to be managed as perfect and sound as the heaven and the earth, you should apply the Divine Balance to your affairs and follow the saying of Allah: ‘And the heaven, He raised it high, and He made the balance. That you may not be inordinate in respect of the measure, And keep up the balance with equity and do not make the measure deficient (*ar-Rahman*: 7-9).

As you notice that the celestial bodies move in an orderly way without any human intervention which caused corruption to many things, why do not you follow Allah’s Way of Guidance regarding the matters in which you involve? If you adopt this Divine Way, which He created for you, in this worldly life, your affairs will be as sound as everything related to the universe. The heaven, for example, does not fall on the earth because it is governed by a perfect system. The earth does not move away from its orbit as Allah *the Almighty* determined its order as well. This is a precise and perfect system which the human being has nothing to do with. Thus, you should lay down a balance for all the matters that are left to your choice so that you do not transgress this balance. By virtue of His Omnipotence, Allah *the Almighty* perfected the creation of the heaven.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

ثُمَّ ارْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ كَرَّتَيْنِ يَنْقَلِبْ إِلَيْكَ الْبَصَرُ خَاسِئًا وَهُوَ حَسِيرٌ

**Look again! And again! Your sight will turn back to you,
weak and defeated [4] (The Quran, *al-Mulk*: 4)**

Even if you have a look several times, you still cannot see any cracks, dissimilarity or imperfection in the creation of the heaven. If you did not ascertain through your first look, you can look once again carefully and

closely. However, this will not change the fact that its creation is flawless. One may not spot the faults of something unless he repeatedly looks at it. Hence, if you think that the heaven has defects or disproportions, take repeated looks so that you eliminate your doubts. It is as if Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Take your time looking and scrutinizing to be certain of this fact.' The result is that your sight will be fatigued and too weak to withstand the intense light. For example, if your eyes encounter the sunlight or a car light, your eyes cannot bear such light. This is because light is primarily used to enable us to see things.

So, regarding the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...your sight will turn back to you, weak and defeated' (*al-Mulk*: 4), it means that your sight will get humbled and fail to keep looking. It will be humbled because it will not make you see cracks and faults.

Not only will your sight turn humbled but it will also become too exhausted and strained to endure the intense light. The Arabic word *hasra* means to regret losing something. Allah *the Almighty* says, 'To Him belongs whoever is in the heavens and the earth. And those near Him are not prevented by arrogance from His worship, nor do they tire.' (*al-Anbiya'*: 19) This word here means to be weary of something.

Allah *the Almighty* makes mention of the creation of the Heaven and earth, saying: 'Allah is He Who created the heavens and the earth and what is between them in six periods, and He mounted the throne (of authority)...' (*as-Sajda*: 4). Allah *the Almighty* informs us that He established Himself above the Throne after the creation of the heavens and the earth. We should consider this fact in the context of His being the All Exalted and far above the way the humans seat themselves. Allah *the Almighty* also says, 'The Beneficent is firm in power.' (*Ta Ha*: 5) Has Allah *the Almighty* got a body to seat Himself on a Throne?! This anthropomorphism must be categorically negated. The reality of this matter is one of the ambiguous ones that the believers must believe in without arguing over them. Humans' existence, hand and sitting are unlike Allah's Existence, Hand and Establishing Himself on the Throne. Concerning His Throne, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'Over them is the Throne, and the distance between its upper and lower parts is the

same as the distance between every two heavens. Then Allah is above all that.⁽¹⁾ We are bound to believe in these facts as they are. At the same time, we must not understand them according to our human capabilities. Whatever crosses your mind, Allah *Glorified is He* is absolutely unlike it.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says:

وَلَقَدْ زَيَّنَّا السَّمَاءَ الدُّنْيَا بِمَصَابِيحَ وَجَعَلْنَاهَا رُجُومًا
لِّلشَّيَاطِينِ وَأَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابَ السَّعِيرِ

**We have adorned the lowest heaven with lamps and
made them [missiles] for stoning devils for whom We
have also prepared the torment of a blazing fire [5]
(The Quran, *al-Mulk*: 5)**

The Arabic particle *qadd* (already) emphasises the predicate of a sentence. It can be used before the past and present tenses. Allah *the Almighty* adorned the lower heaven with lamps which are the stars. Surprisingly, the light of some stars reaches us in fifty light years. If we want to calculate the distance between us and a star, we will have to add a lot of zeros to a figure.

Astronomers set a suitable unit for measuring the distances of stars. This unit of measurement is called 'light year'. As we know, the speed of light is about three hundred thousand kilometres per second. As a huge and bright star, the sun is ninety-three million miles from us. Its light reaches us within

(1) Ibn `Abbas is narrated to have said, 'Once we were sitting with Messenger Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him at Al-Batha, a cloud appeared (in the sky). Thereupon, he asked, "Do you know what this is?" We replied, "It is a cloud." He asked, "And a nimbus?" We replied, "And a nimbus." He asked, "And Al-`Anan?" We kept silent, then he asked, "Do you know the distance between the sky and earth?" We said, "Allah and His Messenger know better." He said, "The distance between the sky and earth is five hundred years; the distance between one heaven and another is five hundred years; the thickness of each heaven amounts to the distance of five hundred years. Over the seventh heaven is a sea; the distance between its top and bottom is like that between the heaven and earth. Over (that sea) are eight ibexes, the distance between their knees and hoofs is like the distance between the heaven and earth. Over that is the Throne, the distance between its upper part and lower part is the same distance as that between the heaven and earth. Above that is Allah and nothing of the actions of the humans is beyond His Knowledge.'" See Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 1770.

eight minutes and a third. The light of Sirius⁽¹⁾, the brightest star in the earth's night sky, reaches us in nine light years. Thus, the 'light year' is the measurement unit for the celestial distances.

We also observe bright stars in the lower heaven, and thus Allah *the Almighty* states that the sun, the moon, and the stars are its adornments. So, what do we think about the nature and the adornments of the remaining heavens? We should bear in mind that the stars and the planets are objects of adornment hanging down from the lower heaven and giving light at the same time. But they do not constitute the lower heaven.

The lower heaven is far more remote than the bright stars we see. The sun is eight light minutes from us, while the Andromeda Galaxy⁽²⁾ is one hundred light years from us. The distance between us and our galaxy is one million light years. You can multiply one million light years by one hundred and sixty-five days, then multiply the total by twenty-four hours, then multiply the total by sixty minutes, then sixty seconds and finally multiply the total by three hundred thousand kilometres. Afterwards, reflect on the final number you come to.

The sun is the largest star that beautifies our sky and from which all people benefit, believers, sinners, atheists, and polytheists. When the sun sets, everyone uses a source of light within a limited place and according to his own capabilities; a person may light a candle, another brings an oil lamp and someone else brings an electric light bulb or many electric lamps to fill his room or house with light. Does anyone leave their lamp being lit on once the sun rises? Everyone turns off his lamps for being satisfied with the light of the sun. This is the tangible light. The difference between the light that one gets by human means and the light of the sun is that the latter overwhelms all the lamps in the worldly life because it encompasses everything.

(1) Sirius is the brightest star in the sky at night and the fourth brightest celestial body. It consists of two stars that appear together. Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And that it is He who is the Lord of Sirius.' (*an-Najm*: 49)

(2) The Andromeda Galaxy is the nearest to our galaxy and is approximately two million light years and a half away from us. It contains two hundred and fifty billion stars. Its diameter is one hundred and fifty thousand light years. The Andromeda Galaxy can be seen with the naked eye.

Allah *the Almighty* does not only created the stars as lamps beautifying the sky, but He also made them signs of guidance for people, as He says, ‘And landmarks; and by the stars they find the right way.’ (*an-Nahl*: 16)

We know that those who travel by sea depend on the stars to guide them to the right way. Likewise, those who travel by land through deserts depend on the stars. In this regard, the people of Quraysh used to make two commercial journeys every year: one in winter and the other in summer. They used to follow certain routes with the help of stars as they were familiar with the positions of stars. In this vein, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘And He it is Who has made the stars for you that you might follow the right way thereby in the darkness of the land and the sea; truly We have made plain the communications for a people who know.’ (*al-An‘am*: 97). Allah *the Almighty* created the stars so that those who travel by land or sea at night are guided by them. After all, they need some light to show them the way.

So, the Arabs used to depend on the stars to be guided to the right directions in their travels. One can say to another, ‘Go while such-and-such a star is facing you; walk while such-and-such a star is on your left and you will reach such-and-such a place; go ahead while such-and-such a star is behind you and you will find such-and-such.’

The stars are not only designed to guide us when we travel by land or sea. If so, all the stars would be the same size; however, we see large and small stars. Due to its remoteness, a seemingly small star may be larger than an apparent big one.

Allah *the Almighty* also created stars for aesthetic purposes. They give us the sense of pleasure and awe when we look at them. That is why Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘...and has beautified it for the observers.’ (*al-Hijr*: 16) An object can be useful but has no aesthetic value. However, Allah *the Almighty* gave aesthetic values to the stars because the human soul has the faculty of appreciating beauty and being impressed by it. Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘And We have placed within the heaven great stars and have beautified it for the observers.’ (*al-Hijr*: 16)

As a matter of fact, beauty is a value and a blessing from Allah *the Almighty* Who mentions some of His Blessings, saying: ‘And [He created] the horses,

mules and donkeys for you to ride and [as] adornment.' (*an-Nahl*: 8). It is Allah *Glorified is He* Who created these animals in beautiful shapes. In the same vein, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'And there is beauty in them for you when you drive them back (to home), and when you send them forth (to pasture).' (*an-Nahl*: 6) Allah *Glorified is He* does not only create these animals for us to make use of them, but to satisfy our feelings of beauty. The more we get impressed by beauty, the more we recognise Allah's Oneness.

Allah *the Almighty* spreads His Blessings among all His creatures by beautifying the lower heaven with stars. Likewise, Allah *Glorified is He* provides those who have loads with the animals that can carry their loads, as He says, 'And they carry your heavy loads to regions which you could not reach but with distress of the souls; most surely your Lord is Compassionate, Merciful.' (*an-Nahl*: 7) About those who have no heavy loads, they can see horses move gracefully and enjoy their attractive shapes even though these horses may not belong to them. Thus, Allah *the Almighty* spreads His Favours among His creatures.

Allah *the Almighty* grants us luxuries in addition to the basic needs of life. He does not only give the necessary warmth, benefits and foodstuff but also the luxuries of life, like the beautiful things that the person delights upon seeing them. Warmth, useful things, and food are special benefits for those who own cattle and livestock whereas beauty is common to everyone. The moment you see a beautiful horse or a vigorous cow you enjoy the Favours of Allah *the Almighty* that please the beholders. This beauty and splendour please our soul.

Thus, Allah *the Almighty* conferred upon us the necessities of life as well as its luxuries. The adornment is for the purpose of beauty. In this connection, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Surely, We have adorned the nearest heaven with an adornment, the stars. And (there is) a safeguard against every rebellious devil. They cannot listen to the exalted assembly and they are thrown at from every side. Being driven off, and for them is a perpetual chastisement.' (*as-Saffat*: 6-9)

When you look at the sky during the night, you find it exquisitely ornamented with twinkling stars. In this respect, 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud is narrated to have said, 'Jarir ibn 'Abdullah said to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* "Tell us about the lower heaven, O Allah's Messenger." He said, "Allah created the lower heaven from smoke then

raised it. He placed therein a sun and a luminous moon; He also ornamented it with stars and designed them to pelt devils with shooting stars; He safeguarded it from every damned devil.”⁽¹⁾

Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...and made them [missiles] for stoning devils...’ (*al-Mulk*: 5); and: ‘And We adorned the nearest heaven with lamps and as protection. That is the determination of the Exalted in Might, the Knowing.’ (*Fussilat*: 12) According to these two verses, Allah *the Almighty* made the stars, with which He beautified the lower heaven, an instrument for throwing devils with meteors and preventing them from listening secretly to the Highest Assembly of angels. Allah’s saying: ‘...and made them...’ (*al-Mulk*: 5), refers to the meteors which are taken from the planets, not the planets per se.

So, some stars are immobile ornaments for the sky; others guide humankind through the darkness of land and sea; while some others are designed to pelt devils with meteors. The stars with which the lower heaven is ornamented are not the ones thrown at devils to burn them. The stars and planets are bright objects in the sky which resemble a ceiling decorated with pendent lamps. Allah *the Almighty* describes these stars as lamps that are noticeably luminous. The stars give incandescent light while the moon gives a gentle derived light. In this connection, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘It is He who made the sun a shining light and the moon a derived light’ (*Yunus*: 5); ‘And made the moon therein a [reflected] light and made the sun a burning lamp?’ (*Nuh*: 16)

As the sun gives incandescent light, it is like a burning lamp. Unlike the gentle and heatless light of the moon, the incandescent light of the sun is accompanied with heat and warmth. Heat arises when light intrinsically comes from a shining object such as the sun. As for the moon, its light is extrinsic and emanates from the sunrays when they are reflected on it. The moon is like a mirror; if you direct some light towards it, it reflects this light.

The hurled objects thrown at the eavesdropping devils are the meteors that are derived from the stars, and they look like a flaming brand taken from a fire, as in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘He saw a fire and said to his people, “Stay here—I can see a fire. Maybe I can bring you a flaming brand from it or

(1) See *As-Suyuti, Ad-Durr Al-Manthur*, 5/69.

find some guidance there.”” (*Ta Ha*: 10) Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* brought his family a torch out of a fire, but it remained the same. In another context, he *peace be upon him* said, ‘an ember’, which is a piece of wood or coal that remains very hot after a fire stops burning. Elsewhere, he said: ‘I will bring you from there information or will bring you a burning torch...’ (*an-Naml*: 7).

Allah *the Almighty* made the meteors missiles shot at the devils. Before the revelation of the Quran, they used to eavesdrop and have positions of eavesdropping in the sky to listen secretly to what was sent down to the earth, a fact which is crystal clear in Allah’s saying: ‘We used to sit in places there, listening, but anyone trying to listen now will find a shooting star lying in wait for him.’ (*al-Jinn*: 9) They used to eavesdrop and add numerous fabrications to each single truth they heard.⁽¹⁾ So, Allah *the Almighty* relates that the devils said: ‘We tried to reach heaven, but discovered it to be full of stern guards and shooting stars—we used to sit in places there, listening, but anyone trying to listen now will find a shooting star lying in wait for him.’ (*al-Jinn*: 8-9)

Allah *the Almighty* then says in the verse in question: ‘...for whom We have also prepared the torment of a blazing Fire.’ (*al-Mulk*: 5) Just as Allah *the Almighty* punishes them with shooting stars in their worldly life, He has prepared for the devils the punishment of the blazing fire in the Hereafter. Devils are the rebellious jinn about whom Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Surely, We have adorned the nearest heaven with an adornment, the stars. And (there is) a safeguard against every rebellious devil. They cannot listen to the exalted assembly and they are thrown at from every side. Being driven off, and for them is a perpetual chastisement. Except him who snatches off but once, then there follows him a brightly shining flame.’ (*as-Saffat*: 6-9)

(1) Ibn ‘Abbas said, ‘Each tribe of the jinn used to have fixed positions for eavesdropping. Whenever a divine revelation descended, the angels heard a sound like the crash of a piece of iron thrown on the mountain of As-Saffa, whereupon they prostrated themselves and did lift their heads till the divine revelations had been sent down. Afterwards, they asked one another, “What did your Lord say?”’ In case these divine revelations were related to the earth such as the unseen, deaths or anything else, they talked about them and said, ‘Such-and-such a thing will take place.’ Devils used to listen secretly to the conversation of the angels and convey them to their leaders. When Allah sent Prophet Muhammad, the devils were repelled by shooting stars.’ See Ibn Abu Shayba, *Al-Musannaf*, *Hadith no.* 36542.

As-Sa`ir (the Blaze) is one of the names of hell and also one of its types which include: the Flame, the Crusher, Saqar and the Abyss. The Blaze is the fire that burns non-stop and devours everything before it. From the same root of this word, we refer to the rabid dog.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ عَذَابُ جَهَنَّمَ وَيَسَّ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿٦﴾ إِذَا أُلْقُوا فِيهَا سَمِعُوا لَهَا شَهِيقًا وَهِيَ تَفُورُ ﴿٧﴾ تَكَادُ تَمَيَّزُ مِنَ الْغَيْظِ كُلَّمَا أُلْقِيَ فِيهَا فَوْجٌ سَأَلَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَا أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ نَذِيرٌ ﴿٨﴾

For those who defy their Lord We have prepared the torment of Hell: an evil destination [6] They will hear it drawing in its breath when they are thrown in. It blazes forth, [7] almost bursting with rage. Its keepers will ask every group that is thrown in, ‘Did no one come to warn you?’ [8] (The Quran, *al-Mulk*: 6 - 8)

While the blazing fire is the punishment of the devils, the disbelievers’ punishment is hell. The punishment of the latter begins with hearing the inhalation of hell while it is boiling over. Inhalation linguistically means the power that takes the air into the nose and chest. So, what do we think of the strength of the inhalation of hell which attracts and pulls people destined to be punished towards it? In the following Quranic verse, hell itself answers the question of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘We shall say to hell on that Day, “Are you full?” and it will reply, “Are there no more?”’ (*Qaf*: 30) It is the power of hell which calls for punishing more disbelievers. It breathes in those destined to enter it. Naturally, inhalation of air occurs more rapidly than its exhalation. Taking air into the lungs in this worldly life is a necessary process for maintaining one’s life. It also exists in the Hereafter, but it is connected with hell which inhales to swallow the disbelievers, as it yearns and waits for them.

Hell also exhales as Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘When it shall come into their sight from a distant place, they shall hear its vehement raging and roaring.’ (*al-Furqan*: 12) Those who enter hell will also breathe in and out, a fact which is crystal clear in Allah’s saying: ‘For them therein is [violent] exhaling

and inhaling.' (*Hud*: 106) As we know, those who breathe in hell will take hot air into their lungs and send it out hot as well. Imagine how breathing occurs in Hell which is filled with flames. A person in this worldly life breathes to relax by fresh air. So, how can he breathe in that extremely hot air? Without doubt, this will be unbearably painful.

What sort of ease or relaxation can a person get from the hot air of a boiling hell? As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...it blazes forth.' (*al-Mulk*: 7), it means that the fire of Hell boils as water does when it is heated. Water contains air, given the fact that fish breathe while in water. Otherwise, how do fish breathe? If we boil water, we see bubbles rise to the surface.

The disbelievers and sinners will be thrown into hell with a lot of force. Entering hell will not be easy or merciful for them. The act of throwing is associated with concrete objects. This verb is mentioned in many verses of the Quran; Allah *the Almighty* says, '...and he threw down the tablets and seized his brother by [the hair of] his head, pulling him toward him. [Harun (Aaron)] said, "O son of my mother, indeed the people oppressed me."' (*al-A'raf*: 150) Throwing down the tablets is something visible and physical. Allah *the Almighty* also says: 'So they threw their ropes and their staffs and said, "By the might of Pharaoh, indeed it is we who are predominant."' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 44). As for Allah's saying here: 'When they are thrown in...' (*at-Talaq*: 7), it means that the disbelievers will be flung into hell, body and soul.

On the other hand, Allah *the Almighty* uses the verb 'throwing' in some Quranic verses to refer to abstract meanings. He says, '...We will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve...' (*Al-Imran*: 151). Allah *Glorified is He* wants to make terror overwhelm the disbelievers. It seems as if He brings terror and places it into their hearts. Terror is an abstract feeling, but it has a tangible effect on their hearts.

Regarding the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'They will hear it drawing in its breath when they are thrown in.' (*al-Mulk*: 7), it means that the disbelievers will hear hell inhaling when it swallows them. They are sucked into it violently. This prospect is full of activity and vehemence: the disbelievers are thrown into a fire, while it is moving forward and swallowing them. Its flames receive them while it is boiling up and blazing forth. Allah *Glorified is He*

describes this miserable destination, saying: ‘For those who defy their Lord We have prepared the torment of hell: an evil destination.’ (*al-Mulk*: 6) How cannot hell be a most miserable destination for the disbelievers?! They should have borne in mind that fate when they had the free choice in the worldly life. The worst thing about this fate is that it is inescapable, a fact which is crystal clear in Allah’s saying: ‘On that Day man will say, “Where can I escape?” Truly, there is no refuge:] they will all return to your Lord on that Day. ’ (*al-Qiyama*: 10-12); ‘They will wish to get out of the Fire, but never are they to emerge therefrom, and for them is an enduring punishment.’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 37)

Whenever the flames of fire burn the disbelievers, they wish to get out of it. But how do they wish to exit from it? The moment the fire burns them and they move about restlessly, the flames push them towards outside, whereupon they think that their torment comes to a stop. However, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...and for them is an enduring punishment.’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 37) Thus, the punishment of the disbelievers in the fire is perpetual. It is a painful torment that will remain unbearably so, and it will never be alleviated. Likewise, its humiliating punishment will also remain so forever. In both cases, the punishment is eternal.

Allah *the Almighty* then describes hell, saying: ‘Almost bursting with rage. Its keepers will ask every group that is thrown in, ‘Did no one come to warn you?’ (*al-Mulk*: 8) As the fire boils up, inhales and exhales, it is: ‘Almost bursting with rage...’ (*al-Mulk*: 8) at the disbelievers. An example of this is when you see a pot in which water boils up and produces bubbles; some of these bubbles get out from the pot. Likewise, when a person rages, things like the bubbles come out of him, which expresses his seething with rage. Hell also is incandescent with rage as it is punishing the disbelievers who did not realise the value of belief.

Allah *the Almighty* gives us another example in Allah’s saying: ‘How many of the gardens and fountains have they left! And cornfields and noble places! And goodly things wherein they rejoiced. Thus (it was), and We gave them as a heritage to another people. So, the heaven and the earth did not weep for them, nor were they respited.’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 25-29)

The earth is resentful at the existence of the disbelievers on it. So, neither the heaven nor the earth grieves for the underground burial and exemplary punishment inflicted on the disbelievers. Conversely, they grieve over the death of the believers. The earth never gets along with the sinners. Likewise, hell explodes with rage against all those who disbelieve in Allah *Glorified is He*. However, it is crazy about torturing the disbelievers. It is as if the punishment itself is yearning for inflicting them.

Hell is raged at the disbelievers and so it eagerly prepares itself for them. When anger is unendurable by a person, he certainly feels irritated and explodes. So, the saying of Allah: 'Almost bursting with rage...' (*al-Mulk*: 8) means that the constituents of the fire of hell almost break away from one another.

The Arabic word *al-ghayzh* (rage) is an inner feeling and it is a considerable degree of anger which is accompanied by sadness and sorrow. Both the believers and the disbelievers explode with rage; we get angry about the disbelievers' obstinacy and mockery, but Allah *the Almighty* drives our anger away. Thus, the fire of hell is: 'Almost bursting with rage...' (*al-Mulk*: 8).

Then, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Its keepers will ask every group that is thrown in, 'Did no one come to warn you?' (*al-Mulk*: 8) The dwellers of hell will be flung into it in groups, as He *the Almighty*, says, '[Its inhabitants will say], "This is a company bursting in with you." No welcome for them. Indeed, they will burn in the Fire.' (*Sad*: 59); 'and [warn of] the Day when We will gather from every nation a company of those who deny Our signs, and they will be [driven] in rows.' (*an-Naml*: 83)

Allah *the Almighty* also says, 'So, as to those who are unhappy, they shall be in the fire; for them shall be sighing and groaning in it.' (*Hud*: 106) Those who brought down distress upon themselves because of their deviation from the Way of Allah will be bound together by wretchedness. But they will enter Hell individually and in groups, a fact which is clearly manifested in Allah's saying: 'And those who disbelieved will be driven to Hell in groups...' (*az-Zumar*: 71); '...every time a nation enters, it will curse its sister...' (*al-A'raf*: 38). So, the appointed dwellers of hell will come to Him *the Almighty* singly and in groups.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...its keepers will ask every group...’ (*al-Mulk*: 8), the ‘keepers of Hell’ are the angels including Malik and his associates. The same question is also mentioned in a verse of the chapter of *az-Zumar*, which reads: ‘And those who disbelieve shall be driven to Hell in companies; until, when they come to it, its doors shall be opened, and the keepers of it shall say to them: Did there not come to you Messengers from among you reciting to you the communications of your Lord and warning you of the meeting of this Day of yours? They shall say: “Yea!” But the sentence of punishment was due against the disbelievers.’ (*az-Zumar*: 71)

The keepers of hell ask the disbelievers reprovingly: ‘Did there not come to you Messengers from among you reciting to you the communications of your Lord and warning you of the meeting of this Day of yours?’ (*az-Zumar*: 71) This question dumbfounds and overwhelms the disbelievers. Allah *the Almighty* does not seize the disbelievers suddenly when they were unaware. Rather, He sent for them Messengers from themselves, that is to say, they were humans like them and belong to the same milieu, so that they can easily model themselves on them.

Regarding the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...Did no one come to warn you?’ (*al-Mulk*: 8), we should state that the warnings given to the people during their lives are a clear token of Allah’s Mercy towards His servants. The warners (i.e. the Messengers), including Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* will bear witness that they conveyed the Divine Message to their people.

The Arabic word *an-nadheer* (a warner) refers to a person who tells about something bad that may happen in the future so that its causes can be avoided or prevented. The opposite of a warner is a giver of glad tidings who notifies of something good that will happen if the person does what it takes to obtain it. So, giving a warning and glad news are concerned with future occurrences. Warning implies intimidation and advice. For example, if you want your son to study hard, you will say to him, ‘If you do not study hard, you will be as miserable and worthless as the son of so-and-so’. You warn him in order that he avoids the practices that lead him to school failure.

Warning and bringing glad tidings are intended for those who have free choice. Allah *the Almighty* tells us in this regard: ‘...and there is not a people

but a warner has gone among them.’ (*Fatir*: 24) A warner testifies that he conveyed the Divine Message to his community. All the prophets came as warners for their peoples, as Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘And We had certainly sent Nuh (Noah) to his people, [saying], “Indeed, I am to you a clear warner.”’ (*Hud*: 25)

The prophets are givers of warnings as well as glad tidings. Those who believe shall receive the glad tidings. As for the disbelievers, they should expect the realisation of the warnings. So, to give a warning means to tell someone about something bad that will affect him in the future in order that he get ready to protect himself. On the other hand, giving glad tidings is about something promising and hopeful.

Through warning and giving glad tidings, all issues and aspects of the human being’s life become clear. In Arabic, the word *bishara* (giving a glad tidings) denotes telling about something pleasant or unpleasant. But it is commonly used in the sense of telling pleasant news that will realise in the future. As for the act of warning, it is exclusively associated with telling about potential depressing and sad events, which is a blessing in itself. It, in fact, is one of the best favours that Allah *the Almighty* confers upon humans, for by virtue of which they can take their precautions. Such threatening, instruction and intimidation are intended to avoid what incurs punishment. There must be an interval between giving a warning and the realisation of the potential danger so that a person can properly take his precautions. Thus, warning means to advise someone against doing something that can harm him in the future. Allah’s warning is directed to all people so that they can shun what leads them to hell. This implies the necessity of quitting one’s faults before having good qualities. In other words, you should safeguard yourself against what causes you harm and then turn your attention to what is beneficial for you. This is based on the maxim that read: ‘warding off harm takes precedence over the obtainment of benefit’. The warner forewarns against evil things before they occur, for giving such a warning at the time of their occurrence is pointless. The Prophets were sent to the humans and jinn as warners, a fact which is crystal clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘O company of jinn and mankind, did there not come to you messengers from among you, relating to you My verses

and warning you of the meeting of this Day of yours?’ (*al-An‘am*: 130) Hence, Allah *the Almighty* states that He has sent Messengers for both the jinn and mankind from among themselves. However, some scholars hold the view that the Messengers were all human beings because the Quran says on the jinn’s tongues: ‘...indeed we have heard a [recited] Book revealed after Musa (Moses) confirming what was before it which guides to the truth and to a straight path.’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 30). Here, the jinn argue that they knew about a Scripture that was revealed after Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*. So, it seems that they receive their Message from the human Messengers. That is to say that Allah *the Almighty* sent the prophets only from among the human beings, but their messages include the jinn as well.

Allah *the Almighty* sends prophets as warners so that people do not have any arguments or pleas, a fact which is crystal clear in Allah’s saying: ‘[We sent] Messengers as bringers of good tidings and warners so that mankind will have no argument against Allah after the Messengers.’ (*an-Nisa’*: 165)

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

قَالُوا بَلَىٰ قَدْ جَاءَنَا نَذِيرٌ فَكَذَّبْنَا وَقُلْنَا مَا نَزَّلَ اللَّهُ مِن شَيْءٍ إِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا فِي ضَلَالٍ كَبِيرٍ ﴿٩﴾

They will reply, ‘Yes, a warner did come to us, but we did not believe him. We said, “God has revealed nothing: you are greatly misguided”’ [9] (The Quran, *al-Mulk*: 9)

Allah *the Almighty* does not punish for crimes before revealing religious texts through the messengers that clearly criminalise them. In other words, Allah *Glorified is He* does not penalise people for their wrongdoings except after being notified of His Message. None is excusable after having received the Message. The rationale of sending Prophets is to leave no room for pleas or argument by the people who received the divine messages through these prophets.

Here, after having been thrown into Hell, the disbelievers are asked: ‘...Did no one come to warn you?’ (*al-Mulk*: 8) They will reply, ‘Yea.’ (*al-Mulk*: 9) The word *bala* (yea) is a particle like *na’am* (yes). The only difference between both is that *bala* is used to answer a question or a statement containing a negation to indicate that the opposite is true. *Bala*, unlike *na’am*, negates what

is stated in a question. For example, if a person says to you, 'You are not entitled to anything with me' and you reply with 'yes', this means that what he says is true and you agree with him. But if you say, 'Yea', this means that you are entitled to something and disagree to his claim.

Once you say a negative statement and it is followed by the particle '*bala*', you indicate that the opposite of the statement is true. So, it comes as an answer to a negative question. The saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...am I not your Lord?' They said, "Yes..." (*al-A'raf*: 172), is a case in point. The adverb 'Yes' comes as an answer to the negative question and affirms the opposite of the question. That is, Allah *the Almighty* is their Lord.

Further, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'And they swear by Allah their strongest oaths [that] Allah will not resurrect one who dies. But yes - [it is] a true promise [binding] upon Him.' (*an-Nahl*: 38) The disbelievers deny Resurrection, swearing that Allah *Glorified is He* will not raise anyone from death. So, Allah *the Almighty* replies to them by the adverb 'yes' to negate their preceding statement and to affirm that He will resurrect those who die.

As for Allah's saying in the verse in question: 'They will reply, "Yes, a warner did come to us, but we did not believe him." We said, "Allah has revealed nothing..."' (*al-Mulk*: 9), the disbelievers admit that a warner came to them, but they rejected it. Allah *the Almighty* sent prophets to the people in different periods of times so that they would have no arguments against Him, saying: '...there came not to us any bringer of good tidings or a warner...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 19). Prophets already warned the people against the Day of Judgment, but the disbelievers utterly denied the Prophets and the revelation.

Regarding the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...but we did not believe him. We said, "Allah has revealed nothing..."' (*al-Mulk*: 9), the denial of the truth is a detestable matter that denotes the rejection of the denier. It implies adopting a hostile stance and turning away from the Divine Way of Guidance. The disbelievers have three stages regarding rejecting belief: abandonment, denial, and derision. Abandonment is a negative response while denial is a positive one even though it runs counter to belief. As for derision, it exceeds the denial and embodies clashing with the believers. The disbelievers do not

praise and exalt Allah *Glorified is He* as duly as required because they claim: ‘...Allah has revealed nothing...’ (*al-Mulk*: 9).

In this vein, Allah *the Almighty* also says, ‘And they did not praise Allah with true praise when they said, “Allah did not reveal to a human being anything...”’ (*al-An‘am*: 91). So, Allah *Glorified is He* replies to those deniers: ‘...say, “Who revealed the Scripture that Musa (Moses) brought as light and guidance to the people?”...’ (*al-An‘am*: 91) The disbelievers denied that Allah *the Almighty* selected some of His servants to receive His Way of Guidance and communicate it to other people.

Some people of the Book were among those who claimed: ‘...Allah has revealed nothing...’ (*al-Mulk*: 9). In Prophet Muhammad’s biography, it is related that a rabbi called Malik ibn As-Sayf used to argue against Islam. While a rabbi should be an ascetic who devotes himself to knowledge and worship, he was obese as he used to overeat in contrast to other devoted rabbis. Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* knew that such a rabbi was in the habit of impugning Islam. So one day they met and he *peace and blessings be upon him* said to him, ‘Is it true that the Torah says, “Allah hates the fat rabbi?”’ He stood thunderstruck and immediately said, ‘Allah did not reveal to a human being anything’, meaning that Allah did not reveal anything of what he *peace and blessings be upon him* said to a human. Thus, we know that such claims are made by the people of the Book.

After Malik ibn As-Sayf made this allegation, some Jews criticised him for his statement. He said to them, ‘Muhammad infuriated me, so I had to respond to him by this falsehood.’ Thereupon, they said, ‘So you are not qualified for being a rabbi as you disgraced us.’ They indeed deposed him and appointed Ka’b ibn Al-Ashraf as the new rabbi.⁽¹⁾

(1) In his *Tafsir*, As-Suyuti narrates this account and ascribes it to Ibn Jarir, Ibn Al-Mundhir and Ibn Abu Hatim on the authority of Sa’id ibn Jubayr who said, ‘A Jew called Malik ibn As-Sayf came to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and disputed with him. He *peace and blessings be upon him* said to him, “I adjure you by the One who sent down the Torah upon Musa (Moses). Do you read in the Torah that Allah hates the fat rabbi?” Malik ibn As-Sayf was indeed an obese man. He was angered by the Messenger’s question and said, “I swear that Allah did not reveal anything to a human.” Thereupon, the companions of Malik ibn As-Sayf said to him, “Woe betide you! Even to Musa (Moses)?”’ See *As-Suyuti, Ad-Durr Al-Manthur*, 3/314.

Allah *the Almighty* judges the disbelievers saying, ‘...you are not but in great error.’ (*al-Mulk*: 9) The short clause ‘You are not but’ occurs in many Quranic verses, as in Allah’s saying: ‘And to `Ad [We sent] their brother Hud. He said, “O my people, worship Allah; you have no deity other than Him. You are not but inventors [of falsehood].”’ (*Hud*: 50) This verse means they are fabricators of lies regarding worshipping idols besides Allah *Glorified is He*. Another related example is the verse reading: ‘Their messengers said, “Can there be doubt about Allah, Creator of the heavens and earth? He invites you that He may forgive you of your sins, and He delays your death for a specified term.” They said, “You are not but men like us.”’ (*Ibrahim*: 10) According to this verse, the opponents of the messengers argue that they are human beings like them, and thus they assume that the messengers have no advantage over them.

Likewise, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘And We have certainly presented to the people in this Quran from every [kind of] example. But [O Muhammad], if you should bring them a sign, the disbelievers will surely say, “You [believers] are but falsifiers.”’ (*ar-Rum*: 58) Here, the disbelievers label Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and his Companions as liars and inventors of falsehoods. Thus, all the disbelievers accused the messengers who conveyed the Message of Allah *Glorified is He* of being liars. That is why Allah *the Almighty* says to these disbelievers: ‘...you are not but in great error.’ (*al-Mulk*: 9)

The Arabic word *dalal* (error) means following a way that does not lead you to your desired destination. Those who deviate from the Right Path no longer have a guide. This word has several meanings: firstly, getting lost and perishing, a meaning which is clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘And they say, “When we are lost within the earth, will we indeed be [recreated] in a new creation?” Rather, they are, in [the matter of] the meeting with their Lord, disbelievers.’ (*as-Sajda*: 10); secondly, not following the right way or not being rightly guided as in the verse reading: ‘And He found you lost and guided [you].’ (*ad-Duha*: 7) It is as if Allah *the Almighty* is saying: ‘Muhammad, you did not approve of idolatry like the people of Quraysh. So, you kept on searching for the sound Way of Guidance till Allah guided you and sent down upon you the Right Path. You were lost and looked for spiritual guidance and finally Allah conferred on you this great blessing’. Thirdly,

swerving from the Right Path, after having recognised it, and adopting human approaches based on personal inclinations.

Deviation regarding worldly and material matters may not achieve your desired goal; rather, it may cause a greater evil. About deviation from the true religion, it does not only make you fail to attain your desired goal, namely paradise, but it also leads you to the opposite, hell. This is the manifest error.

So, deviation means that a person follows a route that does not lead to his desired goal. Each step a person takes towards his error keeps him away from this desired goal. This is called the extreme error or deviation.

This extreme error is extensive as Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘And whoever disbelieves in Allah, His angels, His Books, His Messengers and the Last Day has certainly gone far astray.’ (*an-Nisa*: 136) The phrase ‘gone far astray’ means that the person deviated from the Right Path and was misguided. Once a person strays from his desired goal, he is said to have swerved from the right path. As for one who ‘...has certainly gone far astray’ (*an-Nisa*: 136), he is the person who sinks into the deep abyss of disbelief.

Misguidance is repairable whereas extreme error and sinking into the abyss of disbelief is irreparable. The error of the person who is involved in deviation from the Right Path will stop at the end of his life. On the other hand, misguiding and leading others astray elongates the effect of error beyond the person’s life. In other words, the error will outlive the one misleading himself as the succeeding generations inherit error from him.

Going astray is contrary to being rightly guided; the former means that a person does not follow the Path leading to the desired goal, while the latter denotes reaching the desired goal. Also, a person who is unaware of the true way that is conducive to the desired goal is in error. As for the disbeliever, he is the one who knows the True Path but goes astray. When Allah *the Almighty* talks about the disbelievers, He describes them as being engaged in extreme error. This is because they recognise the route to spiritual guidance, but they do not follow it. This is the apex of error.

Regarding the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...You are not but in great error.’ (*al-Mulk*: 9), their error is described as ‘great’ because the disbelievers excessively went stray from the Truth and Right Path.

Some exegetes are of the opinion that the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...you are not but in great error.' (*al-Mulk*: 9) is among the words of the disbelievers themselves and that it functions as a supplement of their previous words: '...we said, 'Allah has revealed nothing...' (*al-Mulk*: 9). They went to say these words to their prophets: '...you are not but in great error.' (*al-Mulk*: 9)

Allah *the Almighty* mentions to us some similar statements in the Quran. For example, He says about Prophet Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him*: 'The people of Nuh (Noah) denied before them, and they denied Our servant and said, "A madman", and he was repelled.' (*al-Qamar*: 9) According to this verse, the people of Nuh (Noah) accused him of lunacy. Allah *the Almighty* also tells us about him: 'And he constructed the ship, and whenever an assembly of the eminent of his people passed by him, they ridiculed him. He said, "If you ridicule us, then we will ridicule you just as you ridicule."' (*Hud*: 38)

Nuh's (Noah's) people made fun of him and wondered how the ark could sail from Naynawa⁽¹⁾ to the sea, while there were no seas or rivers nearby. They did not realise that he *peace be upon him* knew that the floodwater would make the ark float and sail. They went as far as to say to him: '...indeed, we see you in clear error.' (*al-A'raf*: 60) They feared that the call Prophet Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* should be the Straight Path. So, they deluded themselves into believing that his call was a deviation from the Straight Path and project their error onto him.

Allah *the Almighty* then continues to relate what the disbelievers will say:

وَقَالُوا لَوْ كُنَّا نَسْمَعُ أَوْ نَعْقِلُ مَا كُنَّا فِي أَصْحَابِ السَّعِيرِ

**They will say, 'If only we had listened, or reasoned,
we would not be with the inhabitants of the blazing fire' [10]
(The Quran, *al-Mulk*: 10)**

So, they confessed their error, saying, 'if we had minds to reason properly or listen carefully and meditatively to the Truth that Allah revealed, we would

(1) Naynawa is a governorate in the north of Iraq and its city centre is Mosul, the second largest city of Iraq. It is 402 km from Baghdad. The Mosque of Prophet Yunus (Jonah), located on a foothill, is one of the landmarks of the city.

not have been with the inhabitants of the blazing Fire'. Some other scholars state that this verse means that if they had listened consciously or thought perceptively, they would not have been among the denizens of hell.

Listening attentively and reasoning are among the ways of discernment and guidance. As for listening attentively, it is directed at what Allah *the Almighty* revealed to the Prophets, while reasoning helps a person recognise facts and attain to faith. Thus, it is as if the disbelievers' means of discernment broke down. Their ears were deaf to listen to the call to the Right Path; their tongues failed to express what was within their hearts; and their eyes were blind to Allah's signs in the universe. Hence, their faculties of spiritual discernment were broken-down. Allah *the Almighty* describes such disbelievers, saying: 'The example of those who disbelieve is like that of one who shouts at what hears nothing but calls and cries cattle or sheep - deaf, dumb and blind, so they do not understand.' (*al-Baqara*: 171) There is something that obstructed their ears and made them deaf, for if a person does not hear, he does not speak. Ears help one to hear what is useful, but their ears cannot hear the call guidance, so they seemed to be out of order.

The mind helps one to think, but if a person does not think properly and logically, he will seem to be mindless. A deaf person is better than another person who has the sense of hearing but does not understand. This is because the person who is born deaf or dumb is excusable, and so is the mad person.

Reasoning occurs after one listens carefully and uses his faculties. As a matter of fact, the primary constitution of the human being is kinetic and sensory; he sees, hears, and tastes. Then, he formulates his rational thoughts. The fact that the disbelievers do not hear does not mean that their ears are out of order. Actually, they listen with their ears but do not understand that to which they listen. That is why Allah *the Almighty* says about them: '...so what is [the matter] with those people that they can hardly understand any statement?' (*an-Nisa*': 78) When you say, 'So-and-so does not understand', this means that his mind is hindered from understanding. But if you say, 'So-and-so can hardly understand', this means that such a person almost does not understand. Thinking and employing the mind lead to understanding. So, when the disbelievers do not understand, we wonder at their lack of understanding

because the matter put forward is intelligible. Understanding is to have the faculty of comprehending what is said to you. So, it is the first stage, while knowledge is the second one. In this connection, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Have they not travelled in the land so that they should have hearts with which to understand, or ears with which to hear? For surely it is not the eyes that are blind, but blind are the hearts which are in the breasts.' (*al-Hajj*: 46)


Does a person understand with his heart? As we know, our minds are in our brains, while our hearts are in our breasts. Any person has means of perception, namely; the senses which receive what is tangible like eyesight and touching. When a person perceives things through his senses, his mind intervenes to filter them and choose what is suitable among them. After the mind decides on and compares between the alternatives, it reaches the judgment of which a person is convinced. This final judgment does not require further perception or choosing between alternatives.

In addition to choosing and comparing between alternatives, reason has other functions: it prevents a person from wrongdoing and safeguards him against falling into labyrinths. Some people hold the erroneous belief that the intellect entails freedom of thought and thus gives free rein to one's ideas. In fact, the opposite is true. Linguistically, the Arabic word '*aql* (intellect) is derived from the word '*iqal* which means a hobble with which a camel is tied to prevent it from running away. So, the intellect does not mean that you indulge yourself excessively in your thoughts; rather, it functions as a regulator and controller of your thoughts and behaviour. It says to you, 'Consider your ideas carefully. Do not let your own inclinations influence your ideas so that you do what is correct and say what is proper'.

The disbelievers subjected themselves to their errors and unsound personal inclinations. They do not listen to Allah's Guidance in a useful, reasonable, and deliberate way that stops them from falling into disbelief and error. As they do not listen thoughtfully or meditate, they deserved to be among the denizens of the blazing fire. What is more, the Satan himself entraps them and leads them to that catastrophic fate, a fact which is crystal clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Indeed, Satan is an enemy to you; so take him as an enemy. He only invites his party to be among the companions of the Blaze.' (*Fatir*: 6)

The disbelievers will be among the companions of the blaze as if there is intimacy between both. Allah *the Almighty* says in the verse under discussion: ‘...would not be with the inhabitants of the blazing fire.’ (*al-Mulk*: 10) Here, Allah *the Almighty* uses the Arabic preposition *fi* (in), instead of *min* (among), to indicate that those mentioned in the verse are in the centre of hell, while its other dwellers surround them. We conclude this from the connotation of the preposition *fi*. But why do these disbelievers deserve being in the centre of hell, while other dwellers are around them?!

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says:


 فَأَعْرِفُوا بِذُنُوبِهِمْ فَسُحْقًا لِأَصْحَابِ السَّعِيرِ

**And they will confess their sins. Away with
the inhabitants of the blazing fire! [11]**
(The Quran, *al-Mulk*: 11)

The companions of the blazing fire confess to doing their sins and wrongdoings. As a matter of fact, confession is the strongest evidence. Allah *the Almighty* refers to their admission in other verses, saying: ‘And their declaration when Our punishment came to them was only that they said, “Indeed, we were wrongdoers!”’ (*al-A‘raf*: 5); ‘They said, “O woe to us! Indeed, we were wrongdoers.”’ (*al-Anbiya*: 14) They wronged themselves by disbelieving in Allah *Glorified is He* as He says in another verse: ‘Lest a soul should say, “Oh [how great is] my regret over what I neglected in regard to Allah.”’ (*az-Zumar*: 56)

Allah *the Almighty* also tells us about another kind of people, saying: ‘And [there are] others who have acknowledged their sins. They had mixed a righteous deed with another that was bad. Perhaps Allah will turn to them in forgiveness. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.’ (*at-Tawba*: 102) This verse shows that those people confessed their sins and did not persist in hypocrisy and disbelief. On the contrary, the disbelievers and hypocrites only admit their sins when facing the punishment of hell. In the verse in question, they confessed to only one sin, namely, disbelief, as Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘And they will confess their sin...’ (*al-Mulk*: 11). About Allah’s saying: ‘...others who have acknowledged their sins...’ (*at-Tawba*: 102), it refers to

multiple sins though those who committed them were believers. So, the word 'sin' comes in the plural form 'sins' because they are different from one another.

Confessing sins is of two types: penitence-based confession and brazenness-based confession. The example of the second type is to ask someone else, 'Did you hit so-and-so?' and that person says, 'Yes, I did', and brazenly adds, 'I will also hit any person trying to defend him'. As for the first type, which is accepted by Allah *the Almighty* it denotes that a person admits a sin and asks for pardon. Accordingly, the verse reading: '...others who have acknowledged their sins...' (*at-Tawba*: 102), refers to a confession based on penitence. This is also supported by Allah's saying: '...they had mixed a righteous deed with another that was bad...' (*at-Tawba*: 102). The 'righteous deed' denotes here their admission of their sin and recognising that their confession in the worldly life is less serious than their confession in the Hereafter. The bad deed here is desisting from jihad and spending money charitably. So, their confession is based on penitence.

One of the admissions of the disbelievers is stated in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'If you asked them, "Who created the heavens and earth and subjected the sun and the moon?" they would surely say, "Allah." Then how are they deluded?' (*al-'Ankabut*: 61) The question of creation is so clear that none should deny it. So, the disbelievers answer here by saying: '...Allah...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 61). This acknowledgement obliges the believers to thank Allah *Glorified is He* and say to themselves, 'Thanks to Allah! The disbelievers have recognised this indubitable fact. Thanks to Allah Who made them tell the truth and thus He showed the argument that refuted their disbelief'. Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* says at the end of the verse: '...Then how are they deluded?' (*al-'Ankabut*: 61) How do they turn their backs on Him *Glorified is He* and the truth after such an acknowledgement?

Allah *the Almighty* says, 'And they will confess their sin...' (*al-Qalam*: 11). Now, what is the point of this admission? How does it benefit the confessors, while they face the final Reckoning? Such an admission is similar to that of Pharaoh before he drowned: '...I believe that there is no deity except that in whom the Children of Israel believe...' (*Yunus*: 90). So, Allah *the Almighty* replies to him: 'Now?! And you had disobeyed [Him] before and were of the corrupters?' (*Yunus*: 91)

Pharaoh disbelieved in Allah *the Almighty* and disobeyed His commands. How did he acknowledge Resurrection and final Judgment, while he only committed the acts of disbelief and disobedience? Moreover, he used to deny what Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* conveyed to him.

Even if the human soul has its own desires, its sound state of mind makes it feel sorry when its owner commits a sin or an act of disobedience. Thus, we see a lot of people suffer from troubles because of their sins. They want to confess these sins before anyone. But those who receive confession are unable to eliminate the aftereffects of these sins as they have already happened. What does a person who admits his sin before someone else want? A person confesses to unbosom himself. Each activity a person does can have an effect. For example, when someone provokes your anger, you tend to retaliate. Thus, Islam orders one to shift his position when someone else infuriates him. So, regarding the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘And they will confess their sin...’ (*al-Mulk*: 11), those disbelievers admitted their guilt the moment when they are at their wits’ end. They will say, ‘Unless Allah has mercy on us and forgives us, we will be destroyed’. This indicates their confession to their sin and turning to Allah *Glorified is He* for help.

Their sin is their denial of Allah’s Existence, which is the gravest sin. To such people, it will be said, ‘...Away with the inhabitants of the blazing Fire.’ (*al-Mulk*: 11) This means they are excluded from the Mercy of Allah *the Almighty*. Moreover, their final fate is loss and wretchedness. How miserable and destructible they are! They will lose His reward and be punished with the blazing fire that will burn their bodies. For them, the reward and Mercy of Allah are unattainable.

The Arabic word *suhqan* (destruction) is in the accusative case as a verbal noun and it means that Allah *Glorified is He* inflicted upon them great destruction. Allah *the Almighty* also says, ‘...then away with the wrongdoing people.’ (*al-Mu’minun*: 41) So, the wrongdoing people will not obtain the Mercy and Bliss of Allah *the Almighty* which they are promised in case they believe in Him. This does not mean that they are far above being punished. Distance can be in time or place. So, to say, ‘this is remote or distant’ means that it is far away in time or place. What is meant here is that they will not attain the bliss

that awaits them in case they believe, and they are not far away from the punishment. Allah *the Almighty* also says, '...so away with a people who do not believe.' (*an-Nur*: 44) This verse means that the disbelievers are away from Allah's Mercy and Bliss which they would attain in case they believe. He who turns away from Allah *Glorified is He* He makes him more distant once and for all.

In the same vein, concerning the people of Hud, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'And they were [therefore] followed in this world with a curse and [as well] on the Day of Resurrection. Unquestionably, 'Ad denied their Lord; then away with 'Ad, the people of Hud.' (*Hud*: 60) The people of Hud deserved the destruction and punishment inflicted on them and none pitied them because of their grave sin. The phrase 'away with' does not denote an imprecation against the people of Hud because they had already been ruined. The root of the Arabic word *bu'd* (away with) is *b-a-d* (to be far away). It is used for separation that is either followed by a meeting or not. Thus, Allah *the Almighty* says, '...then, away with Midyan as Thamud was taken away.' (*Hud*: 95) Remoteness meant by this verse denotes separation that is not followed by a meeting except when Allah *Glorified is He* gathers all mankind on the Day of Judgment. A poet wrote:

They say while burying me, 'Do not go away';

But that is the only distant place I will settle at.

The grave is the faraway place a person goes to and never returns. In the same vein, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* will say on the Day of Judgment to those who deviate from the Way of Allah and change the religious matters, 'Be off with you'. He said to his companions, 'I will reach the fountain ahead of you.' They said, 'O Messenger of Allah, how will you recognise those of your *ummah* who have not yet come?' He said, 'If a man has a horse with a blaze on its forehead and white feet, do you not think that he will recognise it among horses that are deep black in colour?' They said, 'Of course.' He said, 'On the Day of Resurrection, they will come with radiant faces, hands, and feet because of the traces of ablution.' He said, 'I will reach the fountain ahead of you.' Then he said, 'Men will be driven away from my fountain just as stray camels are driven away. And I will call to

them, “Come here!” But it will be said, “They changed after you were gone, and they kept turning on their heels.” So I will say, “Be off with you! Be off with you!”⁽¹⁾ Some exegetes state that *as-suhq* is a valley in hell in which fire is kindled and its dwellers will be the companions of the blazing fire.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُم بِالْغَيْبِ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ كَبِيرٌ ﴿١٢﴾

**there is forgiveness and a great reward for those
who fear their Lord though they cannot see Him [12]
(The Quran, *al-Mulk*: 12)**

The true believer fears Allah *the Almighty* Alone because he knows for certain that Allah *Glorified is He* is the Omnipotent. So, when he embarks on something, he fears none except Him. Everyone must fear Him and put His Way of Guidance into practice.

The Arabic word *khashya* (fear) means to fear someone who is able to harm you. As no one but Allah *the Almighty* is fully Able to bring benefit or cause harm, a person should not fear someone like him. So, it is not true to think that a ruler or someone in power is able to harm you. Let everyone fear Allah *Glorified is He* Alone as He instructs us to dread Him.

Hence, as Allah is the One Who causes harm, He orders us to fear Him. Out of veneration and exaltation, the believers fear Him because He is their Lord and Creator. You may fear something, while you hate or despise it, whereas when you fear Him *the Almighty* you hold Him in awe and veneration.

An example of awe is to fear that your father or teacher should see you neglect your duties. As for dreading Allah *the Almighty* it means your fear that you may fall short of doing the obligations Allah *the Almighty* imposes on you. It is the pious people who fear their Lord even though they cannot see Him, a fact which is crystal clear in Allah’s saying: ‘We gave Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron) [the Scripture] that distinguishes right from wrong, a light and

(1) This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him. See Ibn Maja, Sunnan, Hadith no. 4306; see also Malik, Muwatta`, Hadith no. 72; and Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 9292.

a reminder for those who are mindful of Allah, those who stand in awe of their Lord, though He is unseen, and who fear the Hour.' (*al-Anbiya'*: 48-49)

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...though they cannot see Him...' (*al-Mulk*: 12), it means that the believers fear Him *the Almighty* though they do not see Him with their eyes, but rather through the signs of His Creation. Another possible interpretation is that they fear Him *Glorified is He* through the unseen things about which He informs them. Thus, these unseen matters became as clear to them as what they see with their eyes. Moreover, the verse could mean that the believers fear Him *the Almighty* when they are alone. They dread Him even when they are in solitude, unlike those who pretend to be Allah fearing only before others.

Those who stand in awe of their Lord though He is unseen also: '...fear the Hour.' (*al-Anbiya'*: 49) The Arabic word *al-ishfaq* means 'fear,' which is accompanied by being cautious about what you fear. Hence, fearing Allah *the Almighty* is associated with awe and reverence while dreading the Hour is accompanied by being cautious about it, lest it should take place before one prepares oneself fully for it. Dread is a strong fear of something. The person can fear something, but he hopes for salvation and protection against it. That is to say that he hopes that there is a chance to avert what he fears. But your dread of Allah *the Almighty* leaves no room for hope. So, if you fear His punishment, you should not think that there is a chance to escape from it if you do what incurs it.

Fear is of two categories which are referred to in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...and you feared the people, while Allah has more right that you fear Him...' (*al-Ahzab*: 37). The first category is your fear of something that may harm you, and the second one is the fear which is provoked by diffidence. The fear of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* stated in Allah's saying: '...and you feared the people...' (*al-Ahzab*: 37) is provoked by diffidence. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says, '...surely this gives the Prophet trouble, but he forbears from you, and Allah does not forbear from the truth...' (*al-Ahzab*: 53). He *peace and blessings be upon him* was afraid that the disbelievers should spread rumours about him and say that he *peace and blessings be upon him* married the wife of his adopted son. But it slipped their minds that Allah *the Almighty* abolished adoption.

It is normal that he *peace and blessings be upon him* fears the slanders of the disbelievers because he came to change the bad traditions and customs of the pre-Islamic period. He *peace and blessings be upon him* was destined to bear the consequences of this transformation as it was carried out by him. He was shy about his marriage to Zaynab, the ex-wife of his adopted son, and the gossip of the people and thus wanted to clear himself of anything dishonourable. He always disproved any doubts about him.

Once, some of his companions saw him meeting a woman. They walked quickly so that they would not embarrass him. He called them and said, 'Wait! This is my wife Safiyya.' They said, 'We never have any misgivings about you, O Messenger of Allah.' He said, 'Satan's evil suggestions run through the mind of the son of Adam as blood runs [through his body].'⁽¹⁾ He *peace and blessings be upon him* wanted to eliminate any suspects concerning him so that no one would assume that he concealed something wrong about himself. Thus, his fear was not about anything that might harm him; rather, it was based on his diffidence as he desired to refute any suspicions about him.

The prophets never feared to convey anything from Allah *the Almighty*. So, Allah *the Almighty* tells us that Messenger Muhammad's fear was not due to conveying the Message; rather, it was due to his diffidence about the rumours that might circulate concerning him. In fact, he knows for sure that they cannot harm him in anyway. Thus, Allah *the Almighty* describes all His prophets, saying: '[Allah praises] those who convey the messages of Allah and fear Him and do not fear anyone but Allah. And sufficient is Allah as Accountant.' (*al-Ahzab*: 39)

(1) It was narrated that Safiyya Bint Huyayy, the wife of Prophet Muhammad, went to him while he was staying in the mosque during the last ten nights of the month of Ramadan. She spoke to him for a while at night and then she got up to return home. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* got up to accompany her and when they reached the gate of the mosque opposite the dwelling place of Um Salama, the wife of Prophet Muhammad, two Ansari men passed by and greeted Messenger Muhammad, then they quickly went ahead. He *peace and blessings be upon him* said to them, 'Do not be in a hurry. She is Safiyya, the daughter of Huyayy.' They said, 'Exalted is Allah! O Allah's Messenger (how dare we suspect you).' That was a great thing for both them. He *peace and blessings be upon him* then said, 'Satan runs in the body of the sons of Adam as his blood circulates in it, and I was afraid that he (Satan) might insert an evil thought in your hearts.' See Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 26863; see also Ibn Maja, Sunnan, Hadith no. 1779.

The believers dread their Lord though He is unseen. The unseen is what cannot be perceived by the means of perception. None differs over the concrete things we notice with our senses. So, it is said, 'There is no evidence besides the eyes'. As for the unseen, it is not perceived with the senses. They, the believers, fear Allah, their Lord and Creator, as a token of veneration and exaltation for Him. The wise believers also fear the evil Reckoning in the Hereafter, and thus they strain every nerve to follow Allah's Commands and shun all what provokes His Anger.

So, Allah *the Almighty* says here: 'But there is forgiveness and a great reward for those who fear their Lord though they cannot see Him.' (*al-Mulk*: 12) Fearing Him *the Almighty* leads a servant to join those who are referred to in Allah's saying: 'Indeed, the Muslim men and Muslim women, the believing men and believing women, the obedient men and obedient women, the truthful men and truthful women, the patient men and patient women, the humble men and humble women, the charitable men and charitable women, the fasting men and fasting women, the men who guard their private parts and the women who do so, and the men who remember Allah often and the women who do so - for them Allah has prepared forgiveness and a great reward.' (*al-Ahzab*: 35)

But for one's fear of Allah *the Almighty* and recalling His punishment and reward, he would not be a devout, truthful, patient, humble, benevolent, fasting, and chaste Muslim. For such a Muslim, 'Allah has prepared forgiveness and a great reward.' (*al-Ahzab*: 35) After all these characteristics of the Muslim, he needs forgiveness. Thus, Allah *the Almighty* purges the believer of sins before he receives his final reward.

This final reward is abundant and great. Any reward a person gets in this worldly life for an achievement lasts for a specified time and comes to an end. By contrast, the reward of the Hereafter lasts forever, and a believer will not miss it. Thus, it is described as 'great'. Anything is given or done for the sake of Allah *the Almighty* never gets lost, as He says, '...and whatever good you send before for yourselves, you shall find it with Allah; surely Allah sees what you do...' (*al-Baqara*: 110).

Every believer should feel reassured that he will be rewarded for each good deed he does. When he performs Prayer, pays *zakat*, gives alms, fasts, or

performs Pilgrimage, he obtains a reward for all this. The reward a believer gets is not according to the actual amount or value of the good deed; rather, it is doubled too many times. It also depends on the Power of Allah *the Almighty* not the human abilities. Furthermore, this reward is not transient; on the contrary, it is eternal.

You do not keep the reward for the righteous deeds with yourself or with someone else who may deny it one day. It is Allah *the Almighty* Who saves it for you. So, you should be confident that Allah *the Almighty* will multiply your reward for you many times so that you will find it when you are in a dire need for it, that is, on the Day of Judgment.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says:

وَأَسِرُّوا قَوْلَكُمْ أَوِ اجْهَرُوا بِهِ ۚ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ ﴿١٣﴾

Whether you keep your words secret or state them openly, He knows the contents of every heart [13] (The Quran, *al-Mulk*: 13)

How do you call your Lord who is closer to you than your jugular vein?! How do you call Him while He hears you before you speak a word?! If Allah *the Almighty* is Ever-Watchful over you, what is the purpose of calling Him? Your calling of others differs from invoking Allah *Glorified is He*. You need to raise your voice to make others hear you, but when you call Him *the Almighty* you supplicate to the One Who knows the public and private matters alike. One of the approved of practices of supplication is to invoke Him as He instructs us, saying: ‘Call upon your Lord in humility and privately...’ (*al-A‘raf*: 55). He *the Almighty*: ‘...knows the secret and what is [even] more hidden.’ (*Ta Ha*: 7) So, Allah *Glorified is He* knows what is more hidden than secrets because He knows the secret before it becomes so.

Allah *the Almighty* teaches us that the best supplication is that which is private and covert. Perhaps a person invokes Him *the Almighty* aloud and someone else hears the supplication and thus disparages him, as the person may confess his sins in his supplication. Thus, the supplication should be private so that one’s personal affairs will not be known by others. After all, Allah *the Almighty* likes concealing people’s faults even if they are sinners.

Sometimes a pious person invokes Allah *the Almighty* and pleads Him for something private. The supplication of Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* is a case in point. Allah *the Almighty* says, 'This is a mention of the Mercy of your Lord to His servant Zakaryya (Zechariah). When he addressed his Lord with private supplication, He said, "My Lord, indeed my bones have weakened, and my head has filled with white, and never have I been in my supplication to You, my Lord, unhappy. And indeed, I fear the successors after me, and my wife has been barren, so give me from Yourself an heir Who will inherit me and inherit from the family of Ya`qub (Jacob). And make him, my Lord, pleasing [to You]."' (*Maryam*: 1-6)

Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* invoked Allah *the Almighty* in private because he asked Him *Glorified is He* to bestow a child on him despite the presence of his paternal cousins who would be in charge of his righteous path after his demise. But he had no confidence in them because their lifestyles were inconsistent with his approach. So, how could he *peace be upon him* entrust them with the Path of Allah *the Almighty*, while they could not be entrusted with themselves? If he *peace be upon him* had invoked Allah *the Almighty* in public to grant him a male child to inherit prophethood from him, his relatives would have showed enmity towards him. Therefore, he invoked Him *Glorified is He* in private.

Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And if you speak aloud - then indeed, He knows the secret and what is [even] more hidden.' (*Ta Ha*: 7) As Allah *the Almighty* knows what is overt and secret, He is also fully Aware of what is more hidden. To say something aloud means to let others hear you, while what the secret means what is known about by a limited number of people and kept hidden from others.

So, whether you speak publicly or privately, '...He knows the contents of every heart. (*al-Mulk*: 13) This verse means that Allah *the Almighty* knows your innermost thoughts and feelings before you express them. Moreover, He says, 'And We have already created man and know what his soul whispers to him...' (*Qaf*: 16). Misgivings and innermost thoughts are more hidden than secrets. Therefore, we have what is public, what is secret, and what is more hidden than secrets. In the same vein, He *the Almighty* says,

‘And your Lord knows what their breasts conceal and what they declare.’ (*al-Qasas*: 69) ‘Indeed, He knows what is declared of speech, and He knows what you conceal.’ (*al-Anbiya*: 110)

As for Allah’s saying: ‘...knows the contents of every heart’ (*al-Mulk*: 13), it means what stays at and accompanies the breasts. One keeps his inner thoughts hidden from others within his breast as he keeps the secrets of his friend. The same phrase also denotes the inner feelings that always exist in hearts such as hatred, spite or the senses that do not appear through ordinary actions such as good or bad intentions.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says:

أَلَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ خَلَقَ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيفُ الْخَبِيرُ ﴿١٤﴾

**How could He who created not know His own
creation, when He is the Most Subtle, the
All Aware? [14] (The Quran, *al-Mulk*: 14)**

Allah’s Way of Guidance is the most optimal and appropriate way as it comes from the Creator Who knows best about His creations. For example, a human maker is supposed to know best about the object he makes and gives a set of instructions for its operation and maintenance. This, in turn, guarantees good performance and safe use. If you use your machine according to the rules and instructions of its maker, it will carry out its functions accurately and efficiently and be devoid of any failures or breakdowns. Similarly, the One Who created the human beings is more acquainted with the do’s and do not’s of reforming them. The big problem with the people, who are created by Allah *the Almighty* is that they renounce His Laws and derive their laws from other humans. This is even though these man-made laws are defective and can never be on an equal footing with those of Allah *the Almighty*. His Laws are superior to any man-made ones.

So, life cannot be sound and optimal without Allah’s Way of Guidance. Whoever adopts this Divine Way will enjoy optimal life and the well-being of belief. This in itself is a great bestowal that one obtains in this worldly life. On the other hand, Allah *the Almighty* informs us of what is better than this

worldly bestowal, that is, the bliss of the Hereafter. So, Allah *the Almighty* grants us the bliss of this worldly life and that of the Hereafter together.

In fact, you enjoy blissful life in case you follow Allah's moderate and precise approach. It ensures righteousness, peace, and secure coexistence with others. This is corroborated by the following Quranic verses: 'And when guidance comes to you from Me, whoever follows My guidance – there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve.' (*al-Baqara*: 38); '...then whoever follows My Guidance will neither go astray [in the world] nor suffer [in the Hereafter].' (*Ta Ha*: 123); 'Whoever does good whether male or female and he is a believer, We will most certainly make him live a happy life, and We will most certainly give them their reward for the best of what they did.' (*an-Nahl*: 97)

Allah *the Almighty* is fully Aware of everything about mankind and does not involve them in a labyrinth. He says to us: 'How could He who created not know His own creation, when He is the Most Subtle, the All Aware?' (*al-Mulk*: 14) Let us give an example to clarify this point; a chair maker knows well that the chair is made of wood, be it beech, oak or mahogany and that the nail that joins parts together is made out of steel or another metal. Also, the chair maker knows which kind of glue is used to stick the parts of the chair and the paint materials with which the chair is painted.

So, the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'How could He who created not know His own creation, when He is the Most Subtle, the All Aware?' (*al-Mulk*: 14), is indisputable. Let us offer another example; the carpenter who wants to display his product would tell a customer, 'I will make a chair for you out of beech and you should pass by me every day to see the stages of making the chair'. Then the chair maker begins to make the chair under the supervision of the customer. Likewise, a nomadic Bedouin knows how to make a saddle or a tent.

Allah *the Almighty* states what refutes any arguments and polemics based on premises and conclusions in His decisive saying: 'How could He who created not know His own creation, when He is the Most Subtle, the All Aware?' (*al-Mulk*: 14) Allah *the Almighty* is the Omniscient Whose Knowledge encompasses everything, and it is He Who created all the human beings and thus He knows best about the laws most suitable for them.

According to our human traditions, the person who makes an object lays down the code of its maintenance so that it functions properly. Likewise, Allah *the Almighty* Who created humankind laid down the code of their maintenance through do's and do not's. That is why He says, 'How could He who created not know His own creation, when He is the Most Subtle, the All Aware?' (*al-Mulk*: 14) For example, one takes his watch and goes to the watchmaker who examines the watch, identifies its problem, and repairs it. This is what we do to repair a watch, so what about the human being? It is Allah *the Almighty* Who lays down the Laws that reform our lives because He is our Creator; thereby, He is fully Aware of what is good and what is bad for us.

The prevailing corruption in our worldly life is ascribable to the fact that people who are firmly convinced that Allah *Glorified is He* created them lay down laws far from His Way of Guidance. We say to them, 'Let the Creator of mankind lay down for you the code of your maintenance through do's and do not's. If the humans want to make laws, they should do that in the light of the Divine Way of Guidance. In this way, if a failure or problem arises, a person should remit it to the code of the maintenance of the Supreme Creator, namely; the Quran'.

Troubles result from the fact that the human being sometimes ignores that he is a creature of Allah's and thus tries to make laws far removed from His Laws. Thus, what eliminates the sufferings of humanity is to return to the code of its maintenance which the Supreme Creator laid down.

In our daily life, we find that a person makes a device, machine or tool and other people make use of it. Such a person clarifies the specifications of using the device or the machine even if it is a thresher or plough. By following these instructions, the device or the machine will work properly and smoothly.

In the same connection, if a person's car breaks down, he calls a mechanic to examine and mend it. If the mechanic is honest, he will diagnose the problem with the car correctly and repairs it. If he is dishonest, he will damage the parts that work well and increase maintenance works which the car does not need.

Thus, we see that every maker knows well about his product. So, what do we think of the Great Creator *Glorified is He* Who is fully Acquainted with

everything? Knowledge is required because a maker who produces something must be aware of what is good and bad for it. This also necessitates the ability of comprehension, for knowledge alone is insufficient.

Every maker is aware of his own product and he alone lays down the code of its maintenance. As regards Allah's Way of Guidance, which is composed of do's and do not's, it allows of neither addition nor modification. You must adopt it as it is. If the human beings go beyond the framework which He *the Almighty* provides for them, they will cause a great deal of corruption and disorder in the universe through disobeying the commands and committing the prohibitions. As every maker knows well about the minute details of his product and what causes its ruin, Allah *the Almighty* is fully Aware of what is good and bad for the human beings and He laid down His Laws accordingly.

The maker of a product provides a manual along with it to show how to maintain it. The first failure in the universe is done at the hands of the people who desire to lay down a code of maintenance by themselves. This is wrong because the one who makes laws for others must meet certain conditions. The most important condition is that the lawmaker must have extensive knowledge that allows of no further amendments. As for the humans, their knowledge is limited and often proves unsuitable, wrong, and rectifiable. Only the Laws of Allah *the Almighty* cannot be amended or corrected because of His Omniscience. Moreover, all the humans are equal before Him and He does not favour a group of them over others. He has no wife or children. That is why Allah *the Almighty* reassures us, saying: 'And that He— Exalted be the Majesty of our Lord— has not taken a consort, nor a son.' (*al-Jinn*: 3) It seems as if Allah *Glorified is He* is saying to us: 'Be reassured that your Lord has neither a wife who can influence Him nor a child to favour him'. After all, the wife and children can be a weakness point and lead to deviations regarding legislation.

Allah *the Almighty* does not get benefit from what He legislates for us as He created us with His Power and He does not derive benefit from people's obedience, nor is He harmed by our disobedience. Consequently, it is Allah *the Almighty* Alone Who fulfils the conditions of lawgiving and is entitled to it.

Allah *the Almighty* Alone has the right to lawgiving as He is the Omniscient, the Fully Aware Who knows best about everything, be it visible or invisible.

All knowledge comes from Him and it makes Him create everything wisely. Allah *the Almighty* also knows about the mysteries and subtleties of humankind since His Knowledge is intrinsic.

If the humans derive their laws from Allah's Knowledge, the whole world will be in harmony. Allah *Glorified is He* is Fully Aware of the mysteries of His servants and their natural characteristics. He knows from eternity about all human actions and mysteries and what is beneficial for mankind at all times and in all places.

In another verse, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Allah is He Who created you from a state of weakness then He gave strength after weakness, then ordained weakness and hoary hair after strength; He creates what He pleases, and He is the Knowing, the Powerful.' (*ar-Rum*: 54) As for Allah's saying here: '...and He is the Knowing, the Powerful.' (*ar-Rum*: 54), it means that creation is based on Knowledge, but Knowledge alone is not enough. You may have knowledge, but you are unable to put it into practice. For example, an electrical engineer can have a lot of information about his field but he may be unable to install an electric grid or an electric plant. So he asks a financier to help him install the grid or the electric plant. About Allah, He describes Himself as the All Knowing and the All Powerful as in the two verses reading: 'Allah's is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth; He creates what He pleases; He grants to whom He pleases daughters and grants to whom He pleases sons. Or He makes them of both sorts, male and female; and He makes whom He pleases barren; surely, He is the Knowing, the Powerful.' (*ash-Shura*: 49-50)

Allah *the Almighty* is All Knowledgeable about the laws He made for the human beings and is Fully Able to enforce these laws. Allah *Glorified is He* is the Subtle as He says, 'Vision comprehends Him not, and He Comprehends (all) vision; and He is the Knower of subtleties, the Aware.' (*al-An'am*: 103) As believers, we believe that Allah *the Almighty* can never be seen with eyes, yet He knows about everything hidden from you.

There are certain things in the universe which we do not perceive. However, Allah *the Almighty* created them for our benefit. Even when you manage to discover them, they continue to be at your service. If Allah *the Almighty* tells you about something unseen by you, you should not say, 'As such a thing is

unperceivable, it does not exist'. Let us offer an example to illustrate this point; you cannot see electricity or gravity. Further, none knows the place of the spirit which is the ever-unsolved mystery of life and if it exits from your body, you become dead. No one sees, hears, smells, tastes, or touches this spirit. It is present in your entire body but you do not notice it. Thus, if you are unable to see one of the creatures of Allah *the Almighty* then how is it possible for you to see the Creator? If you should see Him, He would not be a God because in this case He becomes the object of your senses.

The Arabic word *latif* (Subtle) has many connotations. It may refer to something minute. For example, we have discovered microbes only recently because they are too tiny to be seen with the naked eye. When the microscope was invented, we became able to see these microbes. The more minute something is, the more difficult it is to be seen. Also, the subtler a thing is, the nobler it becomes. So, we can say, 'Allah is Subtle and Kind towards His servants'.

So, the Arabic word *latif* (kind) is an active participle like *akil* (eater). When this adjective is used regarding Allah *the Almighty* it denotes an intensiveness form as Allah *the Almighty* is All Kind towards all the humans and all the creatures. Also, the Divine Attribute 'Most Merciful' expresses intensiveness because His Mercy encompasses all His servants.

The first form of the Subtlety and Grace of Allah *the Almighty* is clear in managing people's delicate matters in a way that serves their interests in this worldly life. If we, for example, want to bring a glass of water for every person, we will need to exert a lot of effort. What do we think about Allah's management of all His servants needs?

Allah *the Almighty* created the earth and made three quarters of its area consist of bodies of water while the remaining quarter is land. He willed to increase the area of water so that evaporation would be easier and more. If water was deep and its area was small, evaporation would be at a superficial level only. Thereupon, clouds will not bring the rainwater sufficient for all creatures. So, Allah *the Almighty* increased the area of the bodies of water so that water would evaporate and form clouds in the sky and then rain would fall as fresh water over a cold area in order that its dwellers drink, water their cattle, and irrigate their crops thereof.

There are other indescribable forms of the Subtlety of Allah. So, each scholar looks at one of the aspects of Allah's Kindness and Mercy towards His creatures. These aspects are as follows: plentiful and wide-ranging bestowals; precise management; conferring numberless blessings upon all creatures as Allah's Favours are numerous and never run out or decrease.

So, the manifestations of Allah's Subtlety and Kindness are innumerable. He is the All Subtle Who answers your invocations when you supplicate Him, Who gives you protection when you seek refuge with Him, Who favours you when you love Him, Who rewards you generously when you obey Him, Who grants you well-being and care when you give charity and interest-free loans and Who calls you when you turn away from Him.

A scholar impressed by Allah's Subtlety and Kindness said, 'The Subtle One is the One Who rewards you when you fulfil your obligations and pardons you when you are negligent.' Another scholar added to the meaning of Subtlety and Kindness by saying, 'He who takes pride in Him will be honoured; he who shows his need for Him will be self-sufficient.' A third scholar referred yet to an additional form of Subtlety, saying, 'Allah's Bestowals are forms of goodness and His withholding of Favours are kept in reserve for the person in the Hereafter.' All of these are forms of His Subtlety and Kindness.

Allah *Glorified is He* describes Himself as: '...the Most Subtle, the All Aware.' (*al-Mulk*: 14) He is the Most Subtle as He knows what permeates things, the All-Aware of everything and the All Powerful over everything. Allah *the Almighty* also says: '...my Lord is Most Subtle in achieving what He wills; He is the All Knowing, the Truly Wise.' (*Yusuf*: 100) Allah *the Almighty* is the Manager from Whom nothing is hidden.

The Arabic word *lutf* (fineness) is the opposite of *kathafa* (density). As for the adjective *latif*, it refers to the tiny objects. The tinier an object is, the more intense it is since there are no obstacles in its way.

Nothing hampers Allah *the Almighty* Who knows best about the whereabouts of all things. So He combines Subtlety and Acquaintance. Being Subtle, Allah *the Almighty* is never hindered by anything. Nothing can be hidden from Him or stand against His Will.

In fact, Allah's Knowledge is absolute, and He is All Wise as He manages all the affairs for subtle purposes. None can add to or decrease anything from His Knowledge or Wisdom and He is the Possessor of Unlimited Perfection. Further, He is the All-Aware Whose Knowledge encompasses everything.

An expert differs from a scholar; the latter knows general matters, while the former is a trained specialist. So, the two Attributes 'the Most Subtle and the All-Aware' are often used together since 'the All-Aware' denotes knowledge about the positions of things whereas 'the Most Subtle' means knowing how to reach these positions. For example, you can know that a person hides in a mountain. But mere knowledge is not enough to reach the whereabouts of the hiding person. What is needed in this situation are subtlety and accuracy. So, we depend upon an expert who knows about mysterious matters, particularly the important, mundane ones. About a normal specialist, he is unable to know such mysterious matters. An expert has a lot of accurate information. Thus, it is said, 'Ask the one who is well-versed'. So, the expert is a person who is well-informed about things.⁽¹⁾

Subtlety and meticulousness mean to handle matters and come to good results even if your means are limited. As we said earlier, the tinier the harmful objects are the stronger and more effective they are. For example, the metal bars you fix into your windows to protect yourself against wolves are different from those you fix to protect yourself against snakes, mosquitoes, flies and so on. We also note that the most deadly diseases result from microscopic viruses.

The proper handling of matters means to attain your goals regardless of their complexity. For example, you may need to insert your hand into a narrow object to take out something inside it. If you fail, you can ask a little boy whose hand is smaller than yours are to help you take out the thing you want. If this fails, you can use a gadget for this purpose.

To sum up, the attribute 'subtle' is complemented by the attribute 'aware'. The former means being meticulous and precise about dealing with matters

(1) Allah *the Almighty* says, '...so ask about Him one well informed.' (*al-Furqan*: 59) To say, 'So-and-so is well-versed in such a matter' means that he is well-more informed about this matter than someone else.

and the latter denotes being well informed about a situation. Having subtle knowledge is only achieved by having a practical experience.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says:

هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ ذَلُولًا فَامْشُوا فِي مَنَاكِبِهَا
وَكُلُوا مِنْ رِزْقِهِ ۚ وَإِلَيْهِ النُّشُورُ ﴿١٥﴾

**It is He who has made the earth manageable for you —
travel its regions; eat His provision – and to Him you
will be resurrected [15] (The Quran, *al-Mulk*: 15)**

In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* draws our attention to the creation of the earth on which human beings live. None claimed to have created or originated the earth. In the same regard, we should note that there is a difference between ‘creation’ and ‘making’. With respect to Allah *Glorified is He* creating is to bring something out of nothing while ‘making’ means to direct a creature towards its function in life. None of Allah’s creatures have the power to create anything, for creation and making are exclusive to Him *the Almighty*. As human beings, we must single out everything for its predetermined function in life that Allah *the Almighty* willed for it. To put it differently, we are bound to leave determination and direction to Him *the Almighty* Alone. For example, Allah *Glorified is He* created pigs to eat garbage. By prohibiting people from eating pork, Allah *the Almighty* protects them from many illnesses and harms. The human being is obliged to designate pigs for this function, not to consume their meat. This is because changing the primary function of any of Allah’s creatures harms the human being who, in turn, is created to be a vicegerent on the earth.

It is Allah, the Creator, Who ‘creates’ and ‘determines’. An example of this is Allah’s saying: ‘It is He who made the sun a shining light and the moon a derived light.’ (*Yunus*: 5) In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* does not only remind us that He created the sun and the moon, but He also refers to the original functions of both celestial bodies.

As a matter of fact, corruption arises in the universe when we change the primary function of something which Allah *Glorified is He* created for us. We should take it for granted that everything is created for a special function. So,

we are not allowed to direct a thing to a function different from its original one. If we do so, this has serious consequences.

Allah *the Almighty* created the earth and determined its definite functions; Allah *the Almighty* says, '[He] who made the earth a resting place...' (*al-Baqara*: 22). 'Resting place' suggests that Allah *the Almighty* prepared the earth in a comfortable way for mankind. This looks like a mat you spread out on the ground to sit or lie on so that you have comfort.

The earth, which we inherit, generation after another, is suitable for our life. From the moment the earth was created till the Day of Resurrection, it will remain as a prepared land for the human being. Even after the world became more civilised and prosperous, the earth remains as a resting place despite the other physical comforts that man may experience in his life.

Thus, Allah *the Almighty* prepared the earth for us in a way that suited every generation. Allah *Glorified is He* endowed each generation with a life of ease. By virtue of the modern civilisation and the advancement of science, Allah *the Almighty* makes the earth more subservient to the human being.

Allah *the Almighty* says in another verse: '[The one] who has made for you the earth a bed.' (*az-Zukhruf*: 10) The Arabic word *al-mahd* (a bed) means 'a cradle' which is used as a small bed for babies. It should be comfortable because if it is not restful, the baby is not able to make it restful itself. Thus, a mother prepares her baby's cradle well so that it can sleep peacefully. So, the Arabic word *al-mahd* is derived from arranging and preparing an object to be fit for its function as when you tidy your bed before sleeping. The small bed of a baby is called a cradle because you prepare it and remove any inconveniences for the sake of the baby's comfort.

So, the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '[It is He] who has made for you the earth as a bed [spread out]' (*Ta Ha*: 53) means that Allah *Glorified is He* prepared the earth and made it suitable for your life and livelihoods. It does not mean that Allah *Glorified is He* levelled and paved the earth. It denotes that He adapted it to its function since it contains mountains and valleys without which we cannot live. Preparing the earth entails making it fit for the function of living on it despite its straight, sinuous, high, or low parts.

Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘And whoever does righteousness - they are for themselves preparing.’ (*ar-Rum*: 44) This verse shows that the person who does good deeds in this worldly life prepares a palace for himself in the Hereafter. In this connection, Abu Mansur ibn Hazim narrated that 'Abu 'Abdullah Al-Husayn said, ‘Good deeds precede their doer to the paradise to prepare a bed for him as a servant tidies a bed for any of you’.

Allah *the Almighty* made the earth manageable and subservient, and thus the human being can travel through it and benefit from what it yields. It is serviceable and tractable. These attributes are mentioned in the story of the Cow which Allah *the Almighty* ordered the Jews to slaughter. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘It is a perfect and unblemished cow, not trained to till the earth or water the fields. They said, “Now you have brought the truth”, and so they slaughtered it, though they almost failed to do so.’ (*al-Baqara*: 71) The Cow was not trained to carry out farming works. A tractable cow is the domesticated one which works smoothly and easily. Also, trained horses do not put those who ride them to hardship. The first characteristic of the cow of the children of Israel was that it was undomesticated. It used to graze freely and was intractable. It was not used for ploughing soil or irrigating it. Allah *the Almighty* made cattle serviceable and tractable for us, a fact which is crystal clear in Allah’s saying: ‘Do they not see that We have created cattle for them, out of what Our hands have wrought, so they are their masters? And We have subjected them to them, so some of them they have to ride upon, and some of them they eat.’ (*Ya Sin*: 71-72)

The believers should consider that Allah *the Almighty* made camels manageable by their owners and enabled even a little child to order a camel to kneel to put heavy loads on it and rise up. But if a person sees a snake or serpent, he cannot make it tractable. Here, Allah *Glorified is He* draws our attention to His Absolute Power: He made huge animals like the camel manageable for the humans and made them frightened of snakes.

There are other types of tractable animals. For example, the donkeys that farmers use for carrying manure do not object to this task. In another case, the farmer can work as a chief of the guards and orders that his donkey should be washed and a saddle be put on its back for him to ride it when he meets the police commissioner. The donkey does not disobey in both cases as it is tractable.

The human being should beware of thinking that his skills alone make animals tractable. If he relies on his skills alone, he cannot control the small flea which attacks him at any time. A flea may also disturb you all night and force an entire family to stay up late.

It is Allah *the Almighty* Who renders some animals manageable for the human being. If it was not for Him *the Almighty* the human being could never make them tractable. By virtue of His Wisdom and Mercy, He made all things we need to live with serviceable for us. For example, a little boy can drive a huge camel, make it kneel down or carry heavy loads because Allah *the Almighty* made it serviceable. However, if the camel angers, none can control it. Thus, it is not controlled by one's power; rather, Allah *Glorified is He* made it subservient to the human being.

Let us offer another example; a snake, despite its small size, is dangerous and everyone fears to get near it because Allah *Glorified is He* did not make it tractable for us. There is a rationale behind this. It is as if Allah *the Almighty* is telling us, 'Anything I make serviceable for you, even if it is a camel or elephant, you can use it, and if I do not make it tractable for you, you will be unable to render it so even if it is small'. Hence the matter does not depend on your abilities or skills. That is why you must use the creatures which are subservient to us according to the function for which Allah *the Almighty* created them. In this connection, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'And We have tamed them for them...' (*an-Nahl*: 69). Thus, Allah *the Almighty* subjected these animals to us and they are not controlled by the human abilities.

In the same vein, Allah *the Almighty* commands the bees, saying, '...and follows the ways of your Lord laid down [for you]...' (*an-Nahl*: 69). This verse means that the bees are commanded to follow the ways which Allah *Glorified is He* facilitated for them and to move freely from a flower to another. So, we cannot build houses for bees to live therein since they have to move from a garden to another. As for Allah's saying: '...laid down [for you]...' (*an-Nahl*: 69), it means that the ways are facilitated and arranged for the bees; they follow these facilitated ways smoothly and fly from a flower to another. Have we ever heard that a tree repelled a bee?! This does not take place because Allah *the Almighty* facilitated the life of bees.

Therefore, the universe is serviceable for the human being. This means that there are some manageable phenomena in the universe. At the same time, there are other universal phenomena uncontrollable by mankind such as floods, volcanoes and other natural disasters. These unmanageable phenomena in the universe draw our attention to the fact that everything in it is serviceable by Allah's Command and Power, not by our control. If the creatures serve you through your own power, can you control them when they get intractable? Everything in the universe is subject to His Omnipotence and so are the causes and effects. The existence of flooding, storms, earthquakes and volcanoes proves that the human being is incapable of controlling the universe he lives in. Interestingly, some animals feel earthquakes before they happen and run away from the locations of these earthquakes. On the other hand, despite the human being's mental capabilities; he cannot comprehend what will occur.

Allah *the Almighty* made the earth easy to plough, grow crops and walk through, a fact which is crystal clear in Allah's saying: '...disperse within the land and seek from the bounty of Allah...' (*al-Jumu'a*: 10). In the verse under discussion, Allah *Glorified is He* also orders us to travel through the earth, saying: '...travel its regions...' (*al-Mulk*: 15).

Allah *Glorified is He* mentions those who travel throughout the land to earn their livings side by side with those who fight in His cause, saying: 'Indeed, your Lord knows, [O Muhammad], that you stand [in prayer] almost two thirds of the night or half of it or a third of it, and [so do] a group of those with you. And Allah determines [the extent of] the night and the day. He has known that you [Muslims] will not be able to do it and has turned to you in forgiveness, so recite what is easy [for you] of the Quran. He has known that there will be among you those who are ill and others traveling throughout the land seeking [something] of the bounty of Allah and others fighting for the cause of Allah. So, recite what is easy from it...' (*al-Muzzammil*: 20).

The code of reformation which Allah *Glorified is He* lays down for humans' life is based on two foundations: travelling through the earth to satisfy the necessities of life and fighting in the Way of Allah to protect the Islamic Call and the Divine Way of Guidance. These two foundations protect both the material and spiritual aspects. If the *ummah* neglects either of these foundations,

it becomes a coveted object for its enemies. That is why we note that underdeveloped countries live on the financial aids of the rich ones. This is attributable to the fact that the underdeveloped countries neglect Allah's favours and desist from construction⁽¹⁾ and reclamation.

The human being should make the best use of the earth as it is serviceable for him. He should seek his provision by traveling through the earth and planting it. Travelling through the land can be for the purpose of meditating on the realms of the heavens and the earth and concluding the proofs that strengthen and consolidate one's belief in Allah *the Almighty*. Besides, one can go throughout the land to earn his provision.

In the verse in question, Allah *the Almighty* attributes the provision to Himself, saying: '...eat of His provision...' (*al-Mulk*: 15). In other verses, He ascribes it to the human being, saying: 'And as for man, when his Lord tries him and [thus] is generous to him and favours him, he says, "My Lord has honoured me." But when He tries him and restricts his provision, he says, "My Lord has humiliated me."' (*al-Fajr*: 15-16) Allah *the Almighty* reassures everyone that his sustenance inevitably reaches him, even from an unexpected source. As for seeking hard to earn your living, it is something different, for you may work to provide for someone else, not yourself. For example, you can grow wheat and leave the crop to travel abroad. So, others consume your wheat crop, while you eat out of someone else's crop.

The Provision of Allah *the Almighty* is everything He confers upon you. You can get it by multiple means and from different sources. That is why Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Allah extends provision for whom He wills and restricts [it]. And they rejoice in the worldly life, while the worldly life is not, compared to the Hereafter, except [brief] enjoyment.' (*ar-Ra'd*: 26)

People look at sustenance from just one angle. They think that it is only money and thus divide people into rich and poor. However, sustenance is not

(1) Ibn 'Arabi said, 'Some Shafi' jurists state that *al-ist'amar* means construction.' As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...and settled you in it...' (*Hud*: 61), it means that He created you to construct the earth. In his *Tafsir*, Sheikh Rashid Rida writes: 'Allah created you to populate the earth as they [the people of Thamud] were farmers, artisans and builders.' The word '*ist'amar*' (colonialism) has been used in the sense of seizing and subjugating poor countries by powerful states. See Rashid Rida, *Tafsir Al-Manar*, 12/101.

confined to money. It is anything beneficial for a person, be it reasoning, physical strength, or any other useful thing. Thus, we should not look at sustenance from one angle; rather, we should bear in mind the various faculties and talents that Allah *Glorified is He* endows others with like good health, strength, intelligence, forbearance and bravery. People vary in these forms of Divine Bestowals.

Allah *Glorified is He* is the Highest Provider of Sustenance and from His favours all the creatures benefit. His Provision is based on Wisdom and Predestination; granting abundant provision is not a token of tribute, nor is giving little provision a sign of offense. This is proven by the fact that He *the Almighty* gave Qarun great wealth and then inflicted an exemplary punishment upon him.

In this vein, Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘O My servants who have believed, indeed My earth is spacious, so worship only Me.’ (*al-’Ankabut*: 56) This verse means that if you fail to make a decent living somewhere, try to make it somewhere else, for the whole earth belongs to Him *Glorified is He*. Once people divided it and demarcated borders that hindered movement, a lot of problems arose and humans found it difficult to travel for reflection or finding work to earn good livings.

The Sudan, for example, owns vast areas of fertile land which can be sufficient for the whole Arab world if they are grown. Are we able to go there to grow this fertile land? If we went there, others would claim, ‘They come to occupy our land’. So, when I had an opportunity to speak at the UN Organization, I said, ‘The current problems of the world cannot be solved. Allah made us vicegerents on the earth to settle and construct it, a matter which requires us to move throughout the land. As Allah wills us to move about and construct the earth, there must be some activities and procedures to organise travelling and regulate some diverse arts which are necessary for constructing the earth like architecture. Allah distributes the energies of these arts in the form of talents and natural abilities.’

Every action that leads to the construction of the universe and extracting the mysteries of existence is regarded as an act of worship. This is because when we get out the treasures which Allah *the Almighty* placed into the earth, the people turn their attention to the truth of belief. In this regard, Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘And the earth He laid [out] for the creatures.’ (*ar-Rahman*: 10)

Thus, Allah *the Almighty* created the earth for all creatures, not for a specific group of them apart from the others.

Allah *the Almighty* concludes the verse in question, saying: '...and to Him you will be resurrected.' (*al-Mulk*: 15) The Arabic word *an-Nashr* (dispersion) linguistically means 'moving throughout the earth' as in the verse reading: '...disperse within the land and seek from the bounty of Allah...' (*al-Jumu'a*: 10). Allah *Glorified is He* also made day as a time of movement and activity, while night is a period of repose and sleep, a fact which is crystal clear in Allah's saying: 'And He it is Who made the night a covering for you, and the sleep a rest, and He made the day to rise up again...' (*al-Furqan*: 47).

As other living beings do, the humans need rest according to their efforts and activity. Thus, time is divided into night in which people sleep and take rest, and day in which they earn their livelihoods. Allah *the Almighty* knows from eternity that night is not a time of torpor for all people, for there must be some people who keep wakeful to perform their duties during the night. Concerning this kind of people, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'And of His signs are your sleep by night and day...' (*ar-Rum*: 23).

Allah *the Almighty* gives a chance to those who keep wakeful all night to have rest by day. He made day and night alternate. If night or day were endless, life would be impossible. Therefore, He swears by specific times, saying: 'By the morning brightness. And [by] the night when it covers with darkness.' (*ad-Duha*: 1-2) Forenoon which is one of the periods of the day is a time of activity, while night is a time of repose. Hence, both the day and night must exist together.

The Resurrection means rising from graves on the Day of Judgment, as Allah *the Almighty* says, '...and they possess not [power to cause] death or life or resurrection.' (*al-Furqan*: 3) The false deities that the disbelievers worship have no ability to cause death, give life or resurrect the dead, for only Allah *Glorified is He* has the Power to do that. So, the Arabic word *an-nushur* refers to the Resurrection that precedes the final Reckoning, while *an-nashr* means 'spreading something through a limited area'. There is something rolled and there is something else that is spread. The rolled object coalesces and its space is narrow, while the spread object scatters and is wide. In this vein, Allah *the Almighty*

says, ‘O mankind, fear your Lord, Who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women.’ (*an-Nisa*: 1) The verb ‘dispersed’ means spreading something in different directions. This very word points out that people must scatter through the earth so that they all benefit from Allah’s favours that Allah *Glorified is He* placed on the earth.

A believer must turn his life to useful work that can benefit him and others who are unable to work. Not only does Allah *Glorified is He* order us to travel through the earth to satisfy our daily needs but also to benefit those who are not able to work. In this way, the society embodies everyone and gets rid of spite, envy, and hatred.

Further, Allah *the Almighty* wants our work to be noble and honest. One must earn his living through his own efforts. Before a person thinks of eating, he should work to eat. In other words, he should not wait for the fruit of others’ work. This is because laziness diffuses chaos in the society as the idle person, who satisfies his daily needs through the efforts of others, can become an example, and even persuades others to stop working and live as parasites. As a result, the movement of life will cease, the fruit of hard-working people will go in vain, and everyone will starve. Thus, Allah *the Almighty* wants the humans to work so as to satisfy their basic needs and so that life cycle continues.

In conclusion, Allah *Glorified is He* wants us to have the honour of work and to do whatever is useful for us. Our efforts are good for us and for others. When the people vie for noble work, they will all take part in it. On the contrary, when some people simply depend on the fruit of other’s work, the chaos will prevail in the society.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says:

ءَأَمِنْتُمْ مَّنْ فِي السَّمَاءِ أَن يَخْسِفَ بِكُمُ الْأَرْضَ فَإِذَا هِيَ تَمُورُ ﴿١٦﴾

Are you sure that He who is in Heaven will not make the earth swallow you up with a violent shudder? [16] (The Quran, *al-Mulk*: 16)

In this regard, Allah *Glorified is He* also says, ‘And He it is Who is Allah in the heavens and Allah in the earth...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 84). Concerning feeling

secure from His Plan, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'But no one feels secure from the plan of Allah except the losing people....' (*al-A'raf*: 99) Feeling secure from His Plan is one of the major sins, as He says, 'Then, did the people of the cities feel secure from Our Punishment coming to them at night, while they were asleep? Or did the people of the cities feel secure from Our Punishment coming to them in the morning, while they were at play? Then did they feel secure from the plan of Allah? But no one feels secure from the plan of Allah except the losing people.' (*al-A'raf*: 97-99)

What is it that makes the disbelievers feel safe from the same punishment that befell the previous nations? So, one should not think that he can escape the punishment during the night or in the daytime. Safety means lack of fear or trouble. To say, 'So-and-so is safe' means that such a person leads a tranquil life.

We should consider that Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Then did they feel secure from the plan of Allah?' (*al-A'raf*: 99) We may mistakenly think that some of the Actions Allah *Glorified is He* attributes to Himself do not behove Him. We wonder, 'Does our Lord scheme?' for we consider scheming improper for Him *the Almighty*. We should note that the Quran says: '...but the evil plot does not encompass except its own people...' (*Fatir*: 43). According to this verse, scheming on the part of Allah *the Almighty* is good and beneficial. So, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Then did they feel secure from the plan of Allah? But no one feels secure from the plan of Allah except the losing people.' (*al-A'raf*: 99) All the stories of the prophets affirm that those who feel secure from His Plan are losers.

Thus, Allah's plans are stronger and more forceful than those of humans. The plans of humans can be detected or thwarted by other people. On the other hand, if Allah *Glorified is He* makes plans against the humans, can they discover them? Of course not!

In the chapter of *al-Isra'*, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Then do you feel secure that [instead] He will not cause a part of the land to swallow you or send against you a storm of stones? Then you would not find for yourselves an advocate. Or do you feel secure that He will not send you back into the sea another time and send upon you a hurricane of wind and drown you for what

you denied? Then you would not find for yourselves against Us an avenger.’ (*al-Isra’*: 68-69) You should not think that the earth is safe. It can be dangerous to you whether you are on land or at sea.

The Arabic word *al-khasf* means causing the earth to swallow what is on it. The object that is swallowed by the earth is that which sinks into the ground. With the same Arabic word, we refer to ‘the lunar eclipse’. Allah *Glorified is He* punished Qarun by causing the land to swallow him along with all his material possessions, a fact which is crystal clear in Allah’s saying: ‘And We caused the earth to swallow him and his home...’ (*al-Qasas*: 81). This type of punishment is mentioned in several Quranic verses like the one reading: ‘So each We seized for his sin; and among them were those upon whom We sent a storm of stones, and among them were those who were seized by the blast [from the sky], and among them were those whom We caused the earth to swallow...’ (*al-Ankabut*: 40).

So, the Arabic word *al-khasf* means that the ground splits and swallows what is on it. This was exactly what happened to Qarun when the earth swallowed him along with his house, treasures, and all his possessions. Is there anyone who feels secure from being swallowed by the earth while it shakes and sways? If this happens, the ground shakes violently till the thing swallowed reaches the lower earth and is buried therein.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

أَمْ أَمِنْتُمْ مَّن فِي السَّمَاءِ أَنْ يُرْسِلَ عَلَيْكُمْ حَاصِبًا ۖ فَسَتَعْلَمُونَ كَيْفَ نَذِيرِ ﴿١٧﴾

Are you sure that He who is in Heaven will not send a whirlwind to pelt you with stones? You will come to know what My warning means [17] (The Quran, *al-Mulk*: 17)

The punishment that the humans inflict on one another is governed by their own capabilities and laws. As for the punishment of Allah *the Almighty* it matches His Power. So, can we withstand or endure His punishment? Of course, we cannot. His punishment sometimes comes suddenly and at times occurs openly.

Punishment occurs surprisingly so that the person anticipates it at any time and takes place openly so that he will be terrified and frightened before it

occurs. In this connection, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Say, "Have you considered if the punishment of Allah should come to you unexpectedly or manifestly, will any be destroyed but the wrongdoing people?"' (*al-An'am*: 47); '..."we will never believe you until we see Allah outright"; so the thunderbolt took you while you were looking on.' (*al-Baqara*: 55) If death comes to them suddenly, they will not feel its shock and horribleness except at the moment in which it happens. But if it occurs openly, they will experience it while they are in panic and terror. Are you safe from the punishment of Allah? You must safeguard yourselves against it as you are not able to endure it. It occurs suddenly or outright so that no one argues, 'If punishment does not occur unexpectedly, I will take my precautions'. Further, it occurs, while the people are hopeless and desperate; they cannot find any way out.

So, what is the rationale behind inflicting the punishment suddenly and outright? Sudden punishment proves to those who worship idols and false deities that they are deluded into worshipping these false deities. If those deities and idols were true gods, they would not accept that their worshippers would be punished without their knowledge. Consequently, unexpected punishment evidences the powerlessness of idols and false deities as they are unable to protect their worshippers.

As for the disbelievers who argue, the '...punishment occurs suddenly, but if it comes outright, we will be able to confront and resist it', Allah *the Almighty* inflicts the punishment outright on them. As they are unable to resist it, then their arguments are baseless. However, such obstinate disbelievers keep blind to the truth of belief.

Hence, no one can repel or prevent the punishment of Allah *Glorified is He* as He says, '...and indeed, there will reach them a punishment that cannot be repelled.' (*Hud*: 76) Here, Allah *the Almighty* reminds the wrongdoers that His punishment is irresistible so that they bear in mind that the punishment may befall them at any moment and none would be able to prevent it.

By studying the history of previous nations, we learn the normative precept of destroying the wrongdoers. The peoples of Nuh (Noah), 'Ad, Thamud and Lut (Lot) faced the punishment of annihilation. Concerning the punishment that happened to those peoples, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'So each We seized for

his sin; and among them were those upon whom We sent a storm of stones, and among them were those who were seized by the blast [from the sky], and among them were those whom We caused the earth to swallow.’ (*al-’Ankabut*: 40)

It is Allah *the Almighty* Who inflicts the punishment upon the disbelievers and wrongdoers. He did not order any of the former Prophets before Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to fight for the sake of His Faith. For example, Prophet `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* was sent to guide the people to the true faith, not to protect his faith by means of war.

Regarding the Muslim *ummah*, it is allowed to carry the sword to discipline those who stand in the way of the Right Faith. We should strongly emphasise that force is not permitted to impose religion. Rather, it aims at protecting people’s freedom of religion. Instead of leaving the people being compelled to embrace wrong faiths, Muslims use force against those who subdue and oppress other peoples. By so doing, the people can be free to choose their religious beliefs.

The disbelievers from among the peoples of ‘Ad, Thamud, Midyan, Lut (Lot) and Qarun, Pharaoh and Haman were on an equal footing regarding disbelief but varied in punishment. The first type of these penalties, which is mentioned in the chapter of *al-’Ankabut* and here in the chapter of *al-Mulk*, is sending a tempest of stones against the disbelievers, as Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘So each We seized for his sin; and among them were those upon whom We sent a storm of stones...’ (*al-’Ankabut*: 40); ‘Are you sure that He who is in Heaven will not send a whirlwind to pelt you with stones?’ (*al-Mulk*: 17); ‘Then do you feel secure that [instead], He will not cause a part of the land to swallow you or send against you a storm of stones? Then you would not find for yourselves an advocate.’ (*al-Isra’*: 68) This last verse means that Allah *the Almighty* can send against the people a storm of stones that hits them violently. None can resist this kind of punishment and that is why He, *the Glorified is He* says, ‘...then you would not find for yourselves an advocate.’ (*al-Isra’*: 68) It means that the people will not find any protector. So, they should not feel secure from the punishment whether they are on the ground or at the sea.

The Arabic word *al-hasib* (A storm of stones) denotes ‘small stones’ that are violently hurled to burn and scorch slowly when a strong wind stirs them up. Allah *Glorified is He* does not say here: ‘He will send against you a Fire’

because fire may burn disbelievers to death at once, while scorching, small stones burn them and make their pains last longer. So, we hear some people say, 'I will burn it on a slow fire', denoting that they will make the painful punishment lasts as long as possible.

Wind is described as 'a storm of stones' because it hurls pebbles at those destined to be punished. The saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...send a whirlwind to pelt you...' (*al-Mulk*: 17), implies that this storm is set against each individual from among the disbelievers. Similar examples are the verses reading: 'There will be sent upon you a flame of fire...' (*ar-Rahman*: 35); 'Or do you feel secure that He will not send you back into the sea another time and send upon you a hurricane of wind and drown you for what you denied? Then you would not find for yourselves against Us an avenger.' (*al-Isra'*: 69)

The stony wind is sent upon disbelievers from above. In this connection, the people of Lut (Lot) were punished by sending against them a storm of stones like that which destroyed the soldiers who intended to demolish the *Ka'ba*.

One may argue, 'Allah refers here to the sinking down of the earth first and then He mentions the punishment that comes from the heaven, as He says: "Are you sure that He who is in Heaven will not make the earth swallow you up with a violent shudder? Are you sure that He who is in Heaven will not send a whirlwind to pelt you with stones?"' (*al-Mulk*: 16-17) Elsewhere, however, He says, "Say, 'He is the [one] Able to send upon you affliction from above you or from beneath your feet..." (*al-An'am*: 65). So, why is the punishment that descends from the heaven mentioned before that of the earth in the last verse, unlike the previous two verses'?

This is an example of the exceptionally inimitable expressions of the Quran. The chapter of *al-Mulk* says: 'It is He Who has made the earth manageable for you—travel its regions; eat His provision— and to Him you will be resurrected.' (*al-Mulk*: 15) What suits this context is to remind the disbelievers that Allah *the Almighty* is fully Able to cause the earth to swallow them. Regarding the chapter of *al-An'am*, He *the Almighty* says, 'And He is the subjugator over His servants, and He sends over you guardian-angels...' (*al-An'am*: 61). So, it is more proper to say afterwards: 'Say, "He is the [one] Able to send upon you affliction from above you..."' (*al-An'am*: 65). Here, Allah *Glorified is He* mentions the punishment that comes from above the disbelievers, not from the earth.

Allah *the Almighty* concludes the verse under discussion, saying: ‘...you will come to know what My Warning means.’ (*al-Qalam*: 17) It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* is saying, ‘You, people of Mecca, will realise how serious the consequence of My Warning is once punishment befalls you’. In other verses, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Ad denied; and how [severe] were My punishment and warning. Indeed, We sent upon them a screaming wind on a day of continuous misfortune. Extracting the people as if they were trunks of palm trees uprooted. And how [severe] were My punishment and warning.’ (*al-Qamar*: 18-21) As a matter of fact, the warning of Allah *the Almighty* precedes His punishment, for He does not punish anyone without prior warning. The conjunction ‘and’ in the verse that reads: ‘...My punishment and warning...’ (*al-Qamar*: 18), does not connote sequence; it just joins the two actions together.

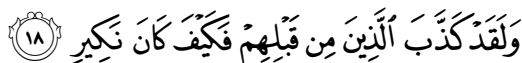
Sending prophets gives the disbelievers the warning that they will face Allah’s punishment in case they insist on disbelieving in Him, His prophets, and the Sacred Books. In this regard, Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘...And never would We punish until We sent a Messenger.’ (*al-Isra*: 15) He is the All Merciful towards the human beings as He sent prophets to show them the Right Path and distinguish it from the wrong one. There is no punishment without incrimination that is based on unequivocal texts conveyed to the people through the prophets who warn them against the punishment.

Abu Umama *Allah be pleased with him* narrated that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘Some people of this *ummah* will spend the night eating, drinking and amusing themselves [in an unreasonable and illegal way]. And in the morning, they will be metamorphosed into monkeys and pigs, and they will be swallowed by the earth to the point that people will say, “So-and-so people were swallowed by the earth yesterday; the buildings of so-and-so sank into the ground yesterday.” A storm of stones from the sky will be sent, as was the case with the people of Lut (Lot), against some tribes and their houses. A barren wind like that which destroyed the people of ‘Ad will be set against some tribes and their houses for their consumption of wine, wearing silk clothes, having songstresses, practicing usury and severing good ties with kith and kin.’⁽¹⁾

(1) See Abu Dawud At-Tayalisi, *Musnad*, Hadith no. 1233.

Thus, you should not do what provokes Allah's Anger to avert the punishment that befell those who preceded you. You must safeguard yourselves against hell and the Wrath of Allah *Glorified is He*. As for the ill-gotten gains, they never bring good results. If your basic needs are satisfied from illicit money, your entire body will be affected by it. Moreover, your actions and characteristics will resemble those of monkeys and pigs.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says:



**Those who went before them also disbelieved –
how terrible was My condemnation! [18]
(The Quran, *al-Mulk*: 18)**

The disbelievers of Mecca were not the first to disbelieve in and deny the Divine Message, for so did the peoples who preceded them, a fact which is crystal clear in the saying of Allah *Glorified is He*: ‘And certainly did the companions of Thamud deny the Messengers.’ (*al-Hijr*: 80); ‘[Theirs is] like the custom of the people of Pharaoh and those before them. They denied Our signs, so Allah seized them for their sins. And Allah is severe in penalty.’ (*Al-Imran*: 11) The people of Pharaoh were in the habit of disbelief and tyranny, and thus Allah *the Almighty* inflicted on them an exemplary punishment.

Denial is an act of rejection on the part of the denier, and it also implies repudiating a statement or an action. It also means barring the people from believing in Allah *the Almighty*. Further, it was the cause of drowning those who disbelieved in Prophet Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* a fact which is crystal clear in Allah's saying: ‘But they denied him, so We saved him and those who were with him in the ship. And We drowned those who denied Our signs. Indeed, they were a blind people.’ (*al-A'raf*: 64). According to this verse, drowning was the first punitive event in the history of the messages as Prophet Nuh's (Noah's) Message was the first one to be denied and rejected.

Denying the signs of Allah *Glorified is He* entails rendering them false and unreal. The category of the deniers includes the atheists; those who believe in a god, but not in any prophet; or believe in a God and a prophet but not in

what was sent down upon Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Denial was a phenomenon from which all former Prophets suffered because they announced to their peoples what they would reject at first blush. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘And if they deny you, [O Muhammad] - so, before them, did the people of Nuh (Noah) and ‘Ad and Thamud deny [their prophets].’ (*al-Hajj*: 42) It is as if Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘As the people of Mecca deny and encumber your Message, Muhammad, know that you are not the first prophet to meet this reaction. Many previous Prophets were denied. But the question of disbelief is not separated from its consequences. Yes, your people have denied your Message, but sooner or later they will face the same punishment as the previous deniers.’ That is why Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘And if you [people] deny [the Message] - already nations before you have denied.’ (*al-Ankabut*: 18). You have to be alert to what happened to the previous disbelievers and how severe their punishment was. It is as if He is telling Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: ‘Since your people have disbelieved you, do not grieve, for many former prophets were disbelieved too. Muhammad, you are not the first prophet to be disbelieved and obdurately opposed. So be completely sure that I will support you’.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty* in the verse in question: ‘...how terrible was My condemnation!’ (*al-Mulk*: 18), the statement is made in the form of questions so that the addressees confirm its veracity. The meaning is: ‘Did We give them their just punishment?’ Thus, the addressee confirms that this happened.

The Arabic word *nakir* (condemnation) means reproaching and neglecting a person. For example, suppose that a person treats you kindly and generously and suddenly stops doing that, whereupon you wonder, ‘Why does he shun me like this?’ So the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...how terrible was My condemnation!’ (*al-Mulk*: 18), means Allah *Glorified is He* condemned their ingratitude for His favours and thus He replaced them with calamities that befell them.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا إِلَى الطَّيْرِ فَوْقَهُمْ صَفَّتْ وَيَقِضْنَ مَا يَمْسُكُهُنَّ
 إِلَّا الرَّحْمَنُ إِنَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ بَصِيرٌ ﴿١٩﴾

**Do they not see the birds above them spreading
 and closing their wings? It is only the Lord of
 Mercy who holds them up: He watches over
 everything [19] (The Quran, *al-Mulk*: 19)**

In this verse Allah *Glorified is He* draws the attention of the deniers, who disbelieve in Allah, His Messenger, and the Book, to reflect on the sky. Allah *the Almighty* states this point in the form of a question: ‘Do they not see...?’ (*al-Mulk*: 19) This indicates that those disbelievers have noticed this matter. So why do they disbelieve? Similarly, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Do they not see that We have created for them from what Our hands have made, grazing livestock, and [then] they are their owners? And we have tamed them for them, so some of them they ride and some of them they eat.’ (*Ya Sin*: 71-72); ‘Have they not seen that We set upon the land, reducing it from its borders? And Allah decides; there is no adjuster of His Decision. And He is swift in account.’ (*ar-Ra’d*: 41)

Allah *the Almighty* reminds the people of Mecca about something they themselves have experienced in their lives, saying: ‘Have they not seen that We made [Mecca] a safe sanctuary...’ (*al-Ankabut*: 67). Further, Allah *Glorified is He* says about the people of `Ad: ‘As for `Ad, they were arrogant upon the earth without right and said, “Who is greater than us in strength?” Did they not consider that Allah who created them was greater than them in strength? But they were rejecting Our signs.’ (*Fussilat*: 15)

Regarding the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘Do they not see...’ (*al-Mulk*: 19), He does not say, ‘Do they not know?’ because knowledge could be unseen. So, He uses the verb ‘to see’ to denote that the sign mentioned in this verse is clearly witnessed and perceived by their eyes. This expression directs people’s attention to consider and reflect on the creations of Allah *Glorified is He*. Among His creations is water which He sends to the barren land, a fact which is crystal clear in the verse reading: ‘Have they not seen that We drive the water [in clouds] to barren land and bring forth thereby crops from which their livestock eat and [they] themselves? Then do they not see?’ (*as-Sajda*: 27)

In the verse in question, Allah *the Almighty* draws our attention to the birds which fly in the sky, saying: ‘Do they not see the birds above them spreading and closing their wings?’ (*al-Mulk*: 19) The birds fly aloft by the motion of their wings which push air away and resist gravity so that they do not fall down. Also, a predatory animal pushes water away with its forelegs to swim. If a bird folds its wings while flying, it does not fall. So, who keeps it aloft in this case? The birds you observe glorify and praise Allah *Glorified is He*. This fact is supported by the verse saying: ‘Do you not see that Allah is exalted by whoever is within the heavens and the earth and [by] the birds with wings spread [in flight]? Each [of them] has known his [means of] prayer and exalting [Him].’ (*an-Nur*: 41)

We see the birds fly high. In this regard Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘Do they not see the birds controlled in the atmosphere of the sky? None holds them up except Allah. Indeed, in that are signs for a people who believe.’ (*an-Nahl*: 79) This does not refer to the flapping of wings, for we watch the birds fold their wings while they are high in the air, yet they do not fall down. So, there must be a power that prevents them from falling. That is why Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Do they not see the birds above them spreading and closing their wings?’ (*al-Mulk*: 19) This means that whether the birds spread out or fold their wings, they keep flying and do not fall over. On the other hand, we notice that some other birds have long wings but they do not fly, like the geese. Accordingly, the matter has nothing to do with having wings; rather, it is one of Allah’s miraculous signs: the birds fly through the air freely without being hindered by the gravity; they lift off and land whenever they want.

Allah *Glorified is He* wants to make birds as an example of something greater. The birds are subject to the law of gravity that attracts anything heavy in the air towards the ground. Nevertheless, Allah *the Almighty* breaks this law regarding the birds which stretch and fold their wings through the air and do not fall over. So, He says here: ‘Do they not see the birds above them spreading and closing their wings? It is only the Lord of Mercy who holds them up...’ (*al-Mulk*: 19).

You can see birds stretching out their wings and staying steady in the air without falling; nothing but Allah’s Power holds them up in the air. It is as if

Allah *Glorified is He* is asking us to take such a view of the birds as an example and a means of clarification for His following saying: '...And He withholds the heaven from falling on the earth except with His permission...' (*al-Hajj*: 65). We must believe in and accept such truth. Furthermore, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'surely Allah upholds the heavens and the earth lest they come to naught; and if they should come to naught, there is none who can uphold them after Him...' (*Fatir*: 41). As we recognise the fact that He *the Almighty* is fully Able to hold the flying birds up, we should, by analogy, acknowledge that He has the Power to uphold the heaven and the earth. In this way, we use the tangible phenomena to recognise the facts which are beyond our sensory perception.

Regarding the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Surely, Allah upholds the heavens and the earth lest they come to naught; and if they should come to naught, there is none who can uphold them after Him; surely, He is the Forbearing, the Forgiving.' (*Fatir*: 41), He *the Almighty* reassures us that the heavens and the earth are maintained in a wondrous and amazing state of stability. If Allah *Glorified is He* destined them to cease to exist, no one can safeguard them against disappearance, for they are maintained only by His Omnipotence.

Allah *Glorified is He* upholds the heavens and the earth so that they achieve their appointed function. Further, He *the Almighty* has wonderfully laid down the rules of gravity that protect the cosmos against disorder. We should note that gravity had existed before being discovered lately. Thus, upholding the heaven and the earth totally depends on Allah's Omnipotence. Despite the absence of any pillar that supports the heaven, it cannot fall on the earth, as it is upheld by His Omnipotence.

In this vein, He *the Almighty* says: '...and never are We heedless of creation.' (*al-Mu'minun*: 17) So, Allah *Glorified is He* is Fully Aware of the heaven and He holds it. Holding the birds up in the sky is material evidence that He *the Almighty* keeps the heaven from falling on the earth.

As Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who holds the heavens, the earth and the birds, He deserves to be described as 'the Lord of Mercy' in His saying here: '...it is only the Lord of Mercy who holds them up...' (*al-Mulk*: 19).

The Arabic word *Ar-Rahman* (the Lord of Mercy) is an intensive form of the Divine Attribute of Mercy; it is the exaggeration of 'being Merciful'. The

same is true for the Divine Name *Rahim* (the Giver of Mercy). Allah *the Almighty* is the Lord of Mercy in the worldly life and the Giver of Mercy in the Hereafter.

‘The Lord of Mercy’ is a Divine Name that indicates that Allah’s Mercy includes all the creation and that He bestows all the blessings. His Attribute of Mercy is meant for softening the hearts of the human beings. Allah *Glorified is He* does not say that the sky is held by the Omnipotent or the Almighty, though these Divine Actions of holding the sky from falling down on earth and holding the birds up in the sky are more understandable, from a superficial viewpoint, to be done by the Divine Attributes of Omnipotence and Almightyness. After all, He *the Almighty* holds them by His Omnipotence and Mightiness. These two Divine Names, i.e. *the Almighty* and the Omnipotent are two of the causes of Mercy. Allah *Glorified is He* bestows His Mercy upon His servants even by these two Attributes. He is the Most Merciful and His Mercy includes everything. Thus, all the affairs of the creation are managed within the scope of Mercy.

Allah *Glorified is He* is All Merciful towards the believer and the disbeliever, for He created both. Therefore, He grants them blessings out of His Mercy and not due to what they actually deserve. For example, the sun rises on both the believers and disbelievers; it does not reflect its rays on the believers and block them from the disbelievers. Further, the sky rains on those who worship Him *the Almighty* and those who worship the idols. Moreover, both of those who testify that there is no god but Allah and those who deny this testimony can breathe fresh air.

Thus, out of His Mercy to all His creatures in the worldly life, Allah *the Almighty* bestows His Blessings on them. Further, His Lordship over both the obedient and the disobedient people and His Acceptance of their repentance are forms of Mercy.

He *the Almighty* concludes the verse in question, saying: ‘...He watches over everything.’ (*al-Mulk*: 19) You should beware of thinking that there is anything that can be concealed from Allah *Glorified is He* or that anyone can deceive Him, for He watches over and knows everything – not only the things that we reveal but also the things that we conceal inside ourselves and hide them from others. Thus, He *the Almighty* hears and watches over us and we are under His protection.

In this regard, Allah *Glorified is He* commands Prophet Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* saying: 'Build the Ark under Our [watchful] eyes and with Our Inspiration. Do not plead with me for those who have done evil– they will be drowned.' (*Hud*: 37) His saying: '...Our [watchful] eyes...' (*Hud*: 37) means that he *peace be upon him* is under Allah's complete care and perfect protection.

Allah says:

أَمَّنْ هَذَا الَّذِي هُوَ جُنْدٌ لَكُمْ يَنْصُرُكُمْ مِنْ دُونِ الرَّحْمَنِ إِنَّ الْكَافِرِينَ إِلَّا فِي غُرُورٍ ﴿٢٠﴾

What force can help you if the Lord of Mercy does not?

The disbelievers are truly deluded [20]

(The Quran, *al-Mulk*: 20)

The Arabic word *jund* (force) is a singular form, but it indicates a plural form. Its original linguistic meaning refers to the hard, solid, and strong land. Since forces are supposed to be strong and powerful, they are called '*jund*'. Although it is a singular form, it refers to a tribe or a group of people, that is, it is a collective noun.

In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* asks the disbelievers to tell Him what force can help them if He wanted to harm them. Who can protect them against His Will?! Here, the expression: 'What force...' (*al-Mulk*: 20), is a reprimand and a criticism in the form of interrogation.

None of these statues and idols that the disbelievers worship can preserve and save them from Allah's Punishment, a fact which is crystal clear in His saying: 'Do they have gods who can defend them against Us? Their gods have no power to help themselves, nor can they be protected from Us.'⁽¹⁾ (*al-Anbiya*': 43) These false gods cannot protect themselves, so how can they protect and save their worshippers from Allah's punishment if it befalls them?

(1) The Arabic word *yushabun* (be protected from Us) means that there is no one or friend who can save them from Allah's Punishment. In his lexicon, Ibn Mandhur says, 'The root of the word '*sahib*' means to save and protect, as in the verse reading: '...nor can they be protected from Us.' (*al-Anbiya*': 43) It is said in Arabic '*Sahebak Allah*' which means 'may Allah protect you'. See *Al-Qamus Al-Qawim*, 1/369; and Ibn Mandhur, *Lisan Al-'Arab*.

As for His saying: ‘...nor can they be protected from Us.’ (*al-Anbiya*: 43), it means that these disbelievers have no friends to protect them from the punishment. Thus, as they are not the allies of Allah *the Almighty* He will not save them from the punishment, nor will anyone be able to do so.

So, His saying: ‘What force...’ (*al-Mulk*: 20), is a rhetoric question directed to the disbelievers to criticise and threaten them, and to prove that their allegations are groundless. No force can save them if He *the Almighty* wants to punish them, for there is no protector, saviour or supporter but Him *the Almighty*. No one can save or support the disbelievers if they persist in opposing the Divine Way of Guidance. As Allah *Glorified is He* abandons such disbelievers, no one can save them, given the fact that there is no saviour or supporter but Him *the Almighty*.

Elsewhere in the Quran, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Ibrahim (Abraham) said to them, “You have chosen idols⁽¹⁾ instead of Allah but your love for them will only last for the present life: on the Day of Resurrection, you will disown and reject one another. Hell will be your home and no one will help you.”’ (*al-Ankabut*: 25) Thus, the disbelievers have no Protector from among the idols that they worship instead of Allah *Glorified is He*. After all, they are asking for the help of rocks and idols which cannot speak or answer them.

In the same vein, He *the Almighty* says: ‘I will make the disbelievers suffer severely in this world and the next; no one will help them.’ (*Al-Imran*: 56) This verse asserts the same idea, i.e. no one of the disbelievers can find a helper because there is no supporter whatsoever to someone defeated and punished by Him *the Almighty*.

The wrongdoers will have no one to save them from Allah’s punishment; no one will offer help or intercession to them. So, no one will say, ‘There is a person who is being punished, let us help him’. Thus, no one will support them or help them escape the punishment.

The same meaning is crystal clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘And halt them for questioning: “Why do you not support each other now?”’—no

(1) The Arabic word *awthan* means idols. The singular of this word is *wathan* (idol) and its root is *wathana* which means to stay and rest in a place. See *Al-Qamus Al-Qawim*, 2/320.

indeed! They will be in complete submission on that Day.’ (*as-Saffat*: 24-26) Where will the disbelievers’ powerful helpers be to save them at that time?! The aim of this question is to ridicule and criticise them; it is as if Allah *the Almighty* asks them, ‘Why are you not defending each other as you used to do in the worldly life’?! The followers from among the disbelievers used to help their masters who, in turn, were collecting, supporting, and stimulating their followers. As there is no one to defend or support them, they will be in complete surrender, defeatism, humiliation, and submissiveness. They have no power or argument to defend themselves and they are submissively and humbly waiting for Allah’s Judgment.

Allah *the Almighty* says in the verse in question: ‘...can help you...’ (*al-Mulk*: 20). The Arabic word *al-nasir* (helper) refers to the one who defends somebody with his power and ability. Therefore, it is as if Allah *Glorified is He* is asking them, ‘Where are your helpers who can defend you against Allah?! Who can save you if I wanted to punish you’?! Indeed, there will be no force or support to save them.

The saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...what force...’ (*al-Mulk*: 20), is put in a way that draws the attention of the disbelievers because He *the Almighty* is warning, threatening and alerting them. So, the Arabic particle ‘*ha*’ which is used for drawing attention, is suitably used in this context to intensify the tone of warning and to draw more attention to the situation they are involved in.

The Arabic word *nusra* (help) has two meanings; it denotes that a person cannot be defeated or that he can have a power which defends and helps him. But the idols worshipped by these disbelievers instead of Allah *the Almighty* will offer them no support. After all, they are asking for help from stones and idols which neither can speak nor respond to them.

In the same connection, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...they will have no one but Him to protect them and no one to intercede— so that they may beware.’ (*al-An‘am*: 51) The Arabic word *wali* (guardian) refers to the one who protects another when facing a problem. The greatest problem that a disbeliever faces will be in the Hereafter because no one will protect him from Allah’s Punishment. As for His saying: ‘...and no one to intercede...’ (*al-An‘am*: 51), it means that there will be no one to intercede and ask forgiveness for him from the One Who has the Power to save him, i.e. Allah *the Almighty*. When someone

loves another and cannot help him, he seeks help from someone else who can help the one he loves. Even this option will not be available for those who do not learn the lesson, remember Allah *Glorified is He* or follow the Straight Path.

In the verse under discussion, He *the Almighty* says: ‘...if the Lord of Mercy does not?’ (*al-Mulk*: 20) Here, Allah *Glorified is He* makes mention of His Attribute of Mercy and being the Lord of Mercy. He *the Almighty* does not say, ‘If Allah does not’; rather, He says: ‘...if the Lord of Mercy does not?’ (*al-Mulk*: 20) This is a reminder for all His servants that Allah *Glorified is He* is the Most Merciful. So, if they are abandoned by their supporters, He is there to protect and help them, out of His Mercy, if they believed in Him. Allah *Glorified is He* wants His servants to be believers not disbelievers, for He will have no benefit from punishing them, a fact which is crystal clear in His saying: ‘Why should Allah make you suffer torment if you are thankful and believe in Him? Allah always rewards gratitude and He knows everything.’ (*an-Nisa*: 147)

Allah *the Almighty* then concludes the verse in question, saying: ‘...the disbelievers are truly deluded.’ (*al-Mulk*: 20) Some people may be deluded by the vain comforts of the worldly life and think that they are safeguarded against Allah’s punishment and that they will not meet Him.

There are two diacritical marks for the Arabic word *ghurour* (be deluded); one with a ‘u’ (*ghurour*), and another with an ‘a’ (*gharour*). The one with a ‘u’ means to see something as if it is a truth, but in reality, it is an illusion. As for the one with an ‘a’, it refers to the one who practices such deception. That is why Satan is called ‘*Al-Gharour*’ (the deceiver) as he beautifies for the human being the untrue things and affects him in the same way the mirage affects the thirsty who mistakenly thinks the refraction of sunrays as water. Allah *Glorified is He* says about this state: ‘...like a mirage in a desert: the thirsty person thinks there will be water but, when he gets there, he finds nothing...’ (*an-Nur*: 39).

Similarly, Satan beautifies a false thing to the human being and makes him falsely think it will delight him, but when he is involved with this thing, he discovers it is not a reality; rather, it is delusion. So, ‘being deluded’ means to desire something that cannot be reached or achieved. When we say to somebody, Allah forbids, ‘You are deceived’, we mean that he is following the wrong path that will not get him to the desired target.

There are other verses in the Quran stating the same meaning. For example, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'People! Allah's Promise is true, so do not let the present life deceive you. Do not let the Deceiver deceive you about Allah.' (*Fatir*: 5), and 'Bear in mind that the present life is just a game, a diversion, an attraction, a cause of boasting among you, of rivalry in wealth and children. It is like plants that spring up after the rain: their growth at first delights the sowers, but then you see them wither away, turn yellow, and become stubble. There is terrible punishment in the next life as well as forgiveness and approval from Allah; the life of this world is only an illusory pleasure.' (*al-Hadid*: 20)

When we describe a person as *ghirr* (inexperienced), this means that he does things without having previous experience about them, so he does not reap a benefit from them. Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* describes Satan as the 'Deceiver' because he deceives the humans by illusory things that will not really happen.

Delusion leads the human being to vainly waste his lifetime because he deviated from the Right Path, and the serious consequences of this action will extend to the Hereafter. In the same vein, He *the Almighty* says: '...the lies they have invented have deluded them in their own religion.' (*Al-Imran*: 24) Those disbelievers become totally dominated by delusion; meanwhile, they are fully enjoying the blessings that Allah *Glorified is He* granted to them. So, they suddenly face His punishment because they consented to the promises of Satan which are nothing but vain promises, a fact which is crystal clear in the verse reading: '...Satan promises them nothing but delusion.' (*al-Isra'*: 64)

Allah *Glorified is He* warns us so that we will not be deluded by this worldly life, for the one who does not follow the Divine Way of Guidance will be indulged in the sea of delusion and arrogance. Therefore, the Arabic word *ghurour* (delusion) means to be deluded so that you separate the blessings you have from the One Who granted them to you, that is, Allah *the Almighty* and attribute these blessing to yourself, as in the case of Qarun who was beguiled by his wealth and knowledge.

In the Quran, Allah *the Almighty* uses the linguistic style of 'enna' then 'ella' (Truly nothing but) to assert the idea that the disbelievers are truly having nothing but delusion and their state does not imply any other interpretation.

They are actually deluding themselves by a fleeting worldly life and unreal gods which can neither benefit nor harm them.

Regarding the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...Satan promises them nothing but delusion.’ (*al-Isra*: 64), we should consider that Satan cannot deceive anyone by his promises except those who are in delusion and heedlessness. Thus, the act of deluding someone means that the falsehood is beautified for him to look like the truth.

In fact, no one can deceive another person and persuade him that the falsehood is the truth unless he has a limited understanding and an absent mind. But if he became aware, he would be able to distinguish the truth from the falsehood. So, only the heedless person can be deceived.

A verse of poetry⁽¹⁾ explains the meaning of being in delusion. A poet was talking to his beloved and stating how she was neglecting⁽²⁾ him, so he said, ‘Nothing deluded you into thinking that I am going to forgive you but the fact, which you are fully sure of, that your love overwhelms me and whatever you say my heart obeys.’

In brief, to delude someone is to make him full of delusion so that he accepts things and involves in acts in the light of such delusions.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says:

أَمَّنْ هَذَا الَّذِي يَرْزُقُكُمْ إِنْ أَمْسَكَ رِزْقَهُ، بَلْ لَجُوا فِي عُتُوٍّ وَنُفُورٍ ﴿٢١﴾

**Who can provide for you if He withholds His provision?
Yet they persist in their insolence and their avoidance
of the Truth [21] (The Quran, *al-Mulk*: 21)**

It is as if Allah *the Almighty* is asking the disbelievers, ‘who can feed, provide you with water and provide you with sustenance if I withhold My Provision?!

(1) The poet is Imru' Al-Qays ibn Hajar ibn Al-Harith Al-Kindi, one of the most famous Arab poets. He is from Yemen and was born in *Najd* in 130 before *Hijra*. His father was the king of *Asd* and *Ghatafan*. His mother's brother was Al-Muhalhel, a famous poet. His uncle taught him poetry in his early childhood, and he composed it at that early age. He was known as ‘the aimless king’ because his life was not stable, and ‘the ulcerous [king]’ because of the illness he suffered from before his death. He died in 80 before *Hijra* at the age of 50.

(2) These lines of poetry are part of the *Mu`allaqa* of Imru' Al-Qays.

Who else can provide for you?! Can any of those false gods provide for you if I withhold My Provision'?

As a matter of fact, no one gives, withholds, creates, or gives provision and help but Allah *the Almighty*. Allah *Glorified is He* gives the human beings the benefits of the worldly life and the means of getting His Provision. For example, He provides them with the rains, but if He *the Almighty* wills, He can stop the wind from blowing or makes water sink deep and disappears in the earth, as He *the Almighty* says at the end of *al-Mulk*: 'Say, "Just think; if all your water were to sink deep into the earth who could give you flowing water in its place?"' (*al-Mulk*: 30)

The Arabic word *amsak* (to withhold) indicates a state of close connection. If someone is connected to something, it means that he upholds it. The derivatives of this word include 'to catch, to keep holding and to stay connected'. The verb 'to hold fast' is also one of its derivatives which intensifies the meaning of the word, as in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...but as for those who hold fast to the Scripture...' (*al-A'raf*: 170).

Regarding His saying: '...if He withholds His Provision...' (*al-Mulk*: 21), we should note that the Provision here is ascribed to Allah *Glorified is He*. In the Quran, we notice that the word 'provision' is ascribed two times to Allah *the Almighty* and two times to the human being, as in His saying in the chapter of *at-Talaq*: '...and let the wealthy man spend according to his wealth. But let him whose provision is restricted...' ⁽¹⁾ (*at-Talaq*: 7); and the chapter of *al-Fajr*: '...but when He tries him through the restriction of his provision...' (*al-Fajr*: 16).

The two times in which the provision is ascribed to Allah *Glorified is He* are mentioned in His saying in the chapter of *al-Mulk*: 'It is He who has made the earth manageable for you—travel its regions; eat His provision...' (*al-Mulk*: 15), and 'Who can provide for you if He withholds His Provision?' (*al-Mulk*: 21) It is He *the Almighty* Who provides with sustenance. Ascribing the provision to Him *the Almighty* suits the context of the chapter of *al-Mulk*

(1) If Allah *Glorified is He* restricted the provision by His Will, it means that He made it limited to the necessary needs with no surplus. The same meaning is mentioned in His saying in the chapter of *al-Fajr*: '...through the restriction of his provision...' (*al-Fajr*: 16). See *Al-Qamus Al-Qawim*, 2/102.

which begins with His saying: ‘Exalted is He who holds all control in His Hands...’ (*al-Mulk*: 1). He *the Almighty* controls and has Power over everything.

When the issue of provision is discussed, many people mistakenly think that provision is only to have money. But this is untrue, for the provision is everything that can be of a benefit; power, knowledge, wisdom, modesty and different forms of provision and so is everything that helps in the development of life.

Likewise, the rain and the plants that grow therefrom are forms of provision, as Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...Who spread out the earth for you and built the sky; who sent water down from it and with that water produced fruits as a provision for you. Do not, knowing this, set up rivals to Allah.’ (*al-Baqara*: 22) So, it is a provision for us that the rain falls so that the plants and the fruits grow. Thus, the provision is what can benefit the human being and not what he earns. Money is one of the forms of provision and so are the health, children, food, Allah’s Blessing and all His Graces.

Allah *Glorified is He* draws our attention to the fact that the provision is sent to us from above, saying: ‘...Who sent water down from the sky and with that water produced fruits as a provision for you...’ (*al-Baqara*: 22), and ‘In the sky is your provision and all that you are promised.’ (*adh-Dhariyat*: 22)

Allah *Glorified is He* in the verse under discussion says: ‘Who can provide for you if He withholds His Provision? Yet they persist in their insolence and their avoidance of the Truth.’ (*al-Mulk*: 21). Some scholars say that ‘provision’ refers to the rain. So, it is as if He *the Almighty* says, ‘Who will provide you with rain if Allah withholds the water of the sky from you?’ Some people mistakenly say that rain pours as a normal result of the natural laws of the universe. So, Allah *the Almighty* draws our attention to the incorrectness of this conception by the fact that there come times of draught where no rain pours, even a drop. In this way, we come to know that rain does not fall because of the natural laws, but rather due to the Will of the Creator of the universe Who laid down its laws. If the natural laws act by themselves in the case of the fall of the rain, for example, who stopped its fall during the seasons of dryness? In fact, Allah’s Will is above these laws; if He *the Almighty* wants, He will stop them from acting. Thus, everything in the universe is attributed to Allah

Glorified is He; He is the One Who gives, withholds, and makes some creatures subservient to others.

At the time of our first creation, He *the Almighty* did not govern us with one rule, i.e. He did not make all things obligatory on us. We are only compelled in the sense that our will and acts do not interfere in the matters that affect the essential movement of life, i.e. He did not make the sun, the moon, the winds, and rain under our control.

All these matters are under Allah's Control. This is because they are brought to existence before the human being could have a life and a will. They were created to pave the way for the life that the human being was going to be granted. If Allah *Glorified is He* had left all these matters under the human being's control, their creation would have been delayed until the will, power, and knowledge were granted to the human being.

Out of Allah's Wisdom, He created tunnels for water under the ground so that the very hot countries can reach groundwater and so that the water spread on wide areas are protected from evaporation. In this regard, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...Allah sends water down from the sky, guides it along to form springs in the earth...' (*az-Zumar*: 21).

Allah *the Almighty* hides some amount of water under the ground for the sake of preserving the life of the human being. In hot countries, we can also find salt on the surface of the soil which is clear evidence that Allah *Glorified is He* has laid down the rule of distillation of sweet-water so that it becomes drinkable and ready to be used for cultivation.

Further, Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who sends water down from the sky, and no creature has any role in this process; water has been always evaporating without the human being's awareness of this fact, which was discovered a few centuries ago. Now, we know how clouds are formed and then the rain falls. As the human being has nothing to do with this process, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Have you [Prophet] not considered how Allah sends water down from the sky...?' (*al-Hajj*: 63)

Did the disbelievers receive Allah's Blessings in the universe by faith, or by an obstinate and arrogant refusal to believe? The answer is provided in

His saying: ‘...yet they persist in their insolence and their avoidance of the Truth.’ (*al-Mulk*: 21)

The Arabic word *bal* (yet) is used for negating what comes before it and affirms what comes after it. This means that they did not believe or follow the Right Path. They were expected to follow that Path after knowing about the messages of the prophets, yet they rejected it and followed the path of denial and persistence on avoiding the Truth. So, the Arabic particle *bal* (yet) is used for negating what is said before it and confirming the new speech which is said after it.

With regard, to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...yet they persist...’ (*al-Mulk*: 21), it means that they persistently continued in their insolence and avoidance of belief and refused to follow other than this wrong path. They neither consider nor think wisely; rather, they insist on their transgression and persist in staying away from faith. The Arabic word *lajju* (entering persistently) means deeply involved in sins; they involved in this wrongdoing regardless of the clear proofs that called them to stay away from it. They continued in their transgression, lies, and error. Thus, they insisted on their insolence and refusal of the Truth.

So, regarding His saying: ‘...yet they persist in their insolence and their avoidance of the Truth.’ (*al-Mulk*: 21), the Arabic word *utaww* (insolence) means arrogance and refusal. Here, it means that the disbelievers refused, disobeyed, and avoided the Truth. This is the utmost level of corruptness. This word means to exaggerate in transgression, challenge, and exceeding of limits. The insolent transgressor is the one who reached the extreme level of aggression such as the tyrant. The more people fear him, the more he becomes confident and powerful.

Utaww also means disbelief, transgression, tyranny, and gross corruption. In this regard Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Those who do not fear to meet Us say, “Why are the angels not sent down to us?” or “Why can we not see our Lord?” They are too proud of themselves and too insolent.’ (*al-Furqan*: 21) They are too arrogant and try to give themselves a value above what they deserve, neglecting the fact that every human being is of a specific value.

Nufour (avoidance) means to disbelieve and to arrogantly avoid believing and following the Truth and the Path of Faith. So, *utaww* (insolence) means to insist on disbelief, while *nufour* (avoidance) means to avoid the Truth. Thus, the disbelievers' arrogant persistence led them to avoid and disbelieve in the Truth.

Does a person shun the Truth and refuse to believe in Allah *the Almighty*? The answer is provided in His saying: 'Whenever Allah is mentioned on His Own, the hearts of those who do not believe in the Hereafter shrink with aversion, but they rejoice when gods other than Him are mentioned.' (*az-Zumar*: 45) His saying: '...shrink with aversion...' (*az-Zumar*: 45) means that their hearts turn away. When anyone feels unpleasant things, the feelings of annoyance appear on his face. Afterwards, the feeling of rejection overwhelms him and then he turns away from that thing. Similarly, when Allah *Glorified is He* is mentioned, the disbelievers' souls shrink and turn away from believing in His Oneness. Shrinkage of hearts is a hidden feeling, but it appears on the face due to the soul agitation.

Allah *the Almighty* also says: 'We have explained things in various ways⁽¹⁾ in this Quran so that such people might take notice, but it has only turned them further away.' (*al-Isra'*: 41) Instead of returning to the Right Path, the disbelievers persistently continued in their rejection and avoidance of the Truth. But, why did they refuse the Message of Truth? This is because it came with certain principles and teachings that run counter to their interests and give rise to their fear and annoyance, so they turn away in fear and rejection.

Nufour (avoidance) is to keep yourself away from something because you hate it. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Yet when they are told to bow down before the Lord of Mercy, they say, "What is the Lord of Mercy? Should we bow down before anything you command?" and they turn even further away.' (*al-Furqan*: 60)

Elsewhere in the Quran, Allah *Glorified is He* gives us an image for their avoidance of the Truth, shunning belief and neglecting the Divine Warning,

(1) *Sarraffna* (clarified in many ways) here means that Allah *the Almighty* has provided explanations in various types of speech, i.e. telling stories and lessons from the past nations to be learned, giving examples, using techniques such as imperative, prohibition, giving of advice and reproach. Allah *Glorified is He* has given us examples for everything.

saying: ‘What is the matter with them? Why do they turn away from the warning, like frightened zebras⁽¹⁾ fleeing from a lion⁽²⁾?’ (*al-Muddaththir*: 49-51) They should not have turned away from the Reminder, but they turned away violently, not in normal reasonable attitude, just like the attitude of zebras when they encounter a sudden attack of a lion.

They behave haphazardly without thinking about reasons for persistence in disbelief. This is not the attitude of the sane people; they are like the zebras who are escaping from the lions fearfully and panicky. They have no purpose but to flee. Similarly, those disbelievers escape aimlessly from the Message, and continue in their wrong way with no guidance.

Then, Allah *the Almighty* says:

أَفَمَنْ يَمْشِي مُكِبًّا عَلَىٰ وَجْهِهِ أَهْدَىٰ أَمَّنْ يَمْشِي سَوِيًّا عَلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٢٢﴾

**Who is better guided: someone who falls on his face,
or someone who walks steadily on a straight path? [22]
(The Quran, *al-Mulk*: 22)**

Here, Allah *Glorified is He* draws a comparison between two types of people. First, those who walk and then fall on their faces for they turned away from the Path of the Truth and chose the way of wrongfulness and deviation instead; second, those who follow the Straight Path. Allah *the Almighty* makes this comparison in the form of interrogation, saying: ‘Who is better guided: someone who falls on his face, or someone who walks steadily on a straight path?’ (*al-Mulk*: 22) Which one of the two is better guided and following the Right Path? To be truly guided, one must follow Allah’s Way of Guidance. It is the Straight Path that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* clarified

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- (1) *Humur* (zebras) is the plural of zebra; it refers to zebras because Allah *the Almighty* follows this verse by saying: ‘Fleeing from a lion.’ (*al-Mudaththir*: 51) So, Allah *Glorified is He* is describing wild life. But the donkey is mentioned in other verses, as in His saying: ‘...are like donkeys carrying books...’ (*al-Jumu’a*: 5); and ‘...for the ugliest of all voices is the braying of donkeys.’ (*Lugman*: 19).
- (2) *Qaswara* means a lion. This word has other meanings according to Ibn Mandhur. He said, ‘Ibn Al-A’rabi and Ibn Al-Athir say that *qaswara* means hunting archers.’ So, it may mean in this verse that the zebras fled from the hunters and their arrows. See *Al-Qamus Al-Qawim*, 2/115; Ibn Mandhur, *Lisan Al-‘Arab*, the root q-s-r.

for us in his saying, 'None of you [truly] believes until his desires are subservient to that which I have brought.'⁽¹⁾

As for the ways and the approaches leading to wrongfulness and error, they are numerous; there are thousands of them. This is clear in the verse where Allah *the Almighty* says: 'This is My Path, leading straight, so follow it, and do not follow other ways: they will lead you away from it...' (*al-An'am*: 153). When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* read this verse, he drew, for his companions, a straight line surrounded by zigzag lines, and then he pointed to the straight one and said, 'This is what I am upon and my companions.'⁽²⁾

Thus, the path towards guidance is only one, but misguidance has thousands of doctrines and approaches. If we look to those who are following the path of misguidance, we will find that they have various ideologies and every one of them has his own inclinations. In this connection, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Anyone Allah guides is truly guided, and you will find no protector other than Him for anyone He leaves astray. On the Day of Resurrection We shall gather them, lying on their faces, blind, dumb and deaf. Hell will be their Home. Whenever the Fire goes down⁽³⁾, We shall make it blaze more fiercely for them.' (*al-Isra'*: 97)

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- (1) This Hadith is narrated by Ibn Abu 'Asim and Al-Hasan ibn Sufyan. Al-Albani Allah rest his soul said that its chain of narrations is weak; the narrators are all trusted, except Nu'aym ibn Hammad for he frequently erred. See Ibn Abu 'Asim, *As-Sunna*, Hadith no. 15; Al-Albani, *Dhila' al-Janna Fi Takhrij As-Sunna*, 2/12; and Al-Hasan ibn Sufyan, *Al-Arb'in*, 1/65.
 - (2) In his *Musnad*, Imam Ahmad narrates this Hadith on the authority of Ibn Mas'ud and Jabir ibn 'Abdullah. In his *Sunnan*, Ibn Maja narrates it on the authority of Jabir ibn 'Abdullah who said, 'We were with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* then he drew a line with his hands, then he drew two other lines to the left, and two to the right. Then he put his hand on the middle line and said that this is the way to Allah. Then he recited the verse: 'This is My Path, leading straight, so follow it, and do not follow other ways: they will lead you away from it...' (*al-An'am*: 153). As for the Hadith: 'This is what I am upon and my companions' it was narrated by 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'What befell the children of Israel will befall my ummah, step by step. Indeed, the children of Israel split into seventy-two sects, and my ummah will split into seventy-three sects. All of them are in fire except one sect. It is what I am upon and my companions.' See Ahmad, *Musnad*, Hadith no. 4142 and 15277; Ibn Maja, *Sunnan*, Hadith no. 11; and At-Tirmidhi, *Sunnan*, Hadith no. 2641.
 - (3) In his *Tafsir*, Mujahid says, 'Whenever the Fire goes down' means every time the fire fades away.' In his *Tafsir*, Muqatil ibn Sulaiman says, 'This happens when the Fire=

Abu Hurayra *Allah be pleased with him* said that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘People will be gathered in three classes on the Day of Resurrection: A class walking, a class riding and a class upon their faces.’ It was said, ‘O Messenger of Allah! How will they walk upon their faces?’ He said, ‘Indeed the One Who made them walk upon their feet is Able to make them walk upon their faces. Indeed, they will try to protect their faces from every bump and thorn.’⁽¹⁾

What is strange about the fact that the disbelievers will walk upon their faces?! We can already see that creatures have different kinds of movement, a fact which is clear in His saying: ‘And Allah created each animal out of [its own] fluid: some of them crawl on their bellies, some walk on two legs and some on four. Allah creates whatever He wills; Allah has Power over everything.’ (*an-Nur*: 45) Can we not see how the snakes move fast on their bellies? The Creator of snakes is fully Able to make those who went astray walk on their bellies. This matter depends on Allah’s Omnipotence Who wills to humiliate and degrade the disbelievers. Such degradation and humiliation do not stop at that extent, as He *the Almighty* says: ‘...We shall gather them, lying on their faces, blind, dumb and deaf...’ (*al-Isra*: 97). This is a continuation of the methods of humiliation. In addition to walking on their faces blindly with no guidance, the disbelievers are deaf and dumb; they can neither hear any call nor say anything.

These are the descriptions of disbelievers in the worldly life too, i.e. they lay on their faces following the path of wrongfulness with no guidance; Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Allah is mocking them, and allowing them more slack to wander blindly in their insolence.’ (*al-Baqara*: 15) Here, wandering blindly refers to the blindness of insight. ‘To wander blindly’ means that the disbelievers become unguided. They are wandering blindly in a material sense, for they

= totally burns their bodies and nothing remains but their bones and they turn into coal. Then the Fire fades away.’ See Mujahid, *Tafsir*, 1/442; and Muqatil, *Tafsir*, 2/552.

(1) In his *Musnad*, Imam Ahmed narrates this Hadith on the authority of Abu Hurayra and also Anas ibn Malik in a summarised form. The core of its meaning is narrated by Muslim as follows: ‘A man came to Prophet Muhammad and asked him, ‘O Messenger of Allah! How will the disbelievers walk upon their faces on the day of Resurrection?’ See Ahmad, *Musnad*, Hadith no. 8647 and 12708; see also Muslim, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 2806.

have no sight; they are morally unguided, losing the insight that guides them to the way of morality and the Divine Path.

Wandering blindly also means to be hesitant and perplexed, i.e. the disbelievers are going in their wrongfulness hesitantly with no reason or insight; they are confused and unable to make the right choices; they are perplexed and blind to righteousness and the Right Path; they cannot distinguish the good from the evil; and they do not know where to go!

Allah *the Almighty* says about them: 'Deaf, dumb (and) blind, so they will not turn back.' (*al-Baqara*: 18) Their means of perception do not work properly. So, they cannot realise the signs of Allah *Glorified is He* to reach the absolute faith. Further, they do not listen to the Quran or understand its verses. This is because all the doors towards apprehension are closed in front of them.

They are not only deaf and dumb, but they also turn away from guidance, as Allah *the Almighty* says: 'You [Prophet] cannot make the dead hear and you cannot make the deaf hear your call when they turn their backs and leave.' (*ar-Rum*: 52) As they turn their backs, they become with no means for receiving guidance and having perception. There is no hope for guiding them as they are deaf, dumb and, due to turning their backs, blind. So, blindness hinders the way towards guidance, particularly if the blind insisted on being so, i.e. he continues in his way of wrongfulness and disbelief. His heart is blinded, thus follows his desires without any guidance from Allah *Glorified is He*. He is completely blind, that on the Day of Judgment, he cannot see what is before him, or what is on his right or left side. This is because such a disbeliever '...falls on his face...' (*al-Mulk*: 22). This means that he walks with a lowered head. This indicates that the disbelievers eagerly committed sins in the worldly life, so they will be resurrected on their faces. In this regard, when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was asked, 'How will the disbelievers walk upon their faces?' he said, 'Indeed the One Who made them walk upon their feet, is Able to make them walk upon their faces on the Day of Resurrection.'⁽¹⁾

(1) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Anas ibn Malik Allah be pleased with him. See Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith no. 13392; see also Abd ibn Hamid, Musnad, Hadith no. 1181; Ibn Hibban, Sahih, Hadith no. 7323; and Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 2806.*

The disbelievers walk aimlessly in the darkness, with no insight; they cannot see the way of guidance. They have neither insight nor sight and they cannot see on their right or left sides.

So, the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...falls on his face...’ (*al-Mulk*: 22), portrays a retrogression and decline of the normal creation of the human being, given the fact that Allah *Glorified is He* has created him: ‘...in the finest state.’ (*at-Tin*: 4) Every living creature is created with its face facing the ground, except for the human being, for He *the Almighty* has created him on an upright status, i.e. he walks on his feet and eats by his hands.

Allah *Glorified is He* tells us that disbelievers are not like the cattle which just eat and drink only, but, they are also even worse, as the cattle are performing their due function in life, while those disbelievers are not, i.e. they do not worship Allah *the Almighty*. This fact is clearly mentioned in His saying: ‘We have created many jinn and people who are destined for hell, with hearts they do not use for comprehension, eyes they do not use for sight, ears they do not use for hearing. They are like cattle, no, even further astray: these are the ones who are entirely heedless.’ (*al-A‘raf*: 179) Cattle do not go astray as they are bounded by their instincts and do not have the freedom of choice. But as for the disbelievers from among the jinn and mankind, they do not give Allah *Glorified is He* His due Esteem, while cattle, the inanimate objects and the plants do, a fact which is crystal clear in His saying: ‘...there is not a single thing that does not celebrate His praise, though you do not understand their praise...’ (*al-Isra*: 44).

The disbelievers of Quraysh asked some of the rabbis about who is better guided; is it they or Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*? Allah *the Almighty* makes mention of this incident, saying: ‘[Prophet], have you considered those who claim purity for themselves? No! Allah purifies whomever He wills: no one will be wronged by as much as the husk of a date stone. See how they invent lies about Allah, this in itself is a flagrant sin! Do you not see how those given a share of the Scripture, [evidently] now believe in idols and evil powers? They say of the disbelievers, “They are more rightly guided than the believers.”’ (*an-Nisa*: 49-51) Some of Quraysh’s leaders said to the Jew scholars, ‘You are the People of the Book and knowledge, give us your

opinion about us and about Muhammad.' They said, 'Who are you and who Muhammad is?' They said, 'We slaughter dromedaries⁽¹⁾, provide water with milk, release captives, maintain the bonds of kinship, provide water for pilgrims while Muhammad severs the bonds of kinship.' The rabbis said, 'You are better guided than him.'⁽²⁾

The Jews said that the idolaters are better guided than Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and his followers. They said so even though their Books told them that he *peace and blessings be upon him* would be sent with the final Divine Message. They even were saying to the disbelievers of Medina, 'There is a prophet to be sent and we will follow him. We will fight with him and kill you as 'Ad and Iram have been killed.'⁽³⁾

The argument in question raised in the verse under discussion: 'Who is better guided: someone who falls on his face, or someone who walks steadily on a straight path?' (*al-Mulk*: 22), and will remain until the Day of Resurrection. Who is better guided?! The one who rebels against and disobeys his Creator and walks with his face down to ground as if he falls on it, or he who walks steadily on a straight path? Are they equal?!

The word Sawiyya (walks steadily) means that the body stands upright with no curvature. Here, Allah *the Almighty* describes the one who follows the Path of Faith as 'walking steadily'. Sometimes He *the Almighty* describes the Path itself as 'even', as in His saying: '...so follow me: I will guide you to an even path.' (*Maryam*: 43) An even path is a straight path which easily leads you to your target in the shortest possible time. It is a path with no curves, so it is the closest to your target because the curved path takes a longer time to deliver you to the desired target.

(1) *Kawma* (dromedary) refers to a type of camels with a very big and high hump. See *Al-Qasim ibn Salam, Gharib Al-Hadith*, 3/84; and *Az-Zamakhshari, Al-Fa'iq Fi Gharib Al-Hadith Wa Al-Athar*, 1/388.

(2) *This Hadith is narrated by At-Tabari and As-Suyuti who ascribes it to At-Tabarani and Al-Bayhaqi in Dala'il An-Nubuwwa on the authority of 'Ikrima from Ibn 'Abbas. See At-Tabari, Jame' Al-Bayan*, p. 9789; and *As-Suyuti, Ad-Durr Al-Manthur*, 2/562.

(3) *In his Tafsir, At-Tabari narrates this narration when he was giving the explanation of the verse: 'When a Scripture came to them from Allah confirming what they already had, and when they had been praying for victory against the disbelievers...' (al-Baqara: 89). See At-Tabari, Jame' Al-Bayan*, 2/333.

What is meant by a ‘path’? It is a way leading to a destination. A straight path is the shortest way to reach a destination as the straight line is the shortest between two points. Accordingly, if you want to go to a place, the shortest road to take is the straight un-crooked one. Deviation from a straight path may not be noticeable at the beginning, but it ultimately leads to a wide divergence from the desired destination.

We can take the railway tracks as an example. If we watch a train when it starts to change its direction, we will find that it deviates only few millimetres at the very beginning. The deviation at the beginning of the shunting point is too small, but it gets wider as the train continues its track. Ultimately, we find that the end of the road is tens and may be hundreds of kilometres away from the beginning. Regarding the Way of Guidance, any deviation, regardless how much it is simple, turns you greatly away from the Straight Path. The even path is a straight path which leads you to the target with the least effort and in the shortest time.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

قُلْ هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْشَأَكُمْ وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَرَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

Say [Prophet], ‘It is He who brought you into being, He who endowed you with hearing, sight, and understanding – what small thanks you give!’ [23] (The Quran, *al-Mulk*: 23)

Here, Allah *the Almighty* orders Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to state that it is Allah *Glorified is He* Who brought us into existence. He *the Almighty* does not mention here what we are created from, but He mentions this point in other verses, as in His saying: ‘It is He who first produced you from a single soul, then gave you a place to stay [in life] and a resting place [after death]...’ (*al-An‘am*: 98); ‘It was He who brought you into being from the earth and made you inhabit it...’ (*Hud*: 61); and ‘...just as He produced you from the offspring of other people’ (*al-An‘am*: 133). To bring something into being means to initiate its creation with no other helping means, that is, to create it without making use of something else. That is why it is not said about the one who makes an invention that he is a creator because he makes use of certain things to make his invention. He may use a material extracted

from mountains, depending meanwhile on the precedent experiences. By contrast, Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who creates things out of nothing. So, there are two types of bringing something non-existent into being: to create something by using existing beings or out of nothing.

The latter type, i.e. 'bringing something out of nothing' is only attributed to Allah *Glorified is He* and it clearly manifests the Divine Will. He *the Almighty* brings the human being into being through sexual intercourse between a man and a woman.

If we returned to the first creation of the human being, i.e. the creation of Adam *peace be upon him* we find that he was created out of the same substance of the earth, which in turn is created by Allah *the Almighty*. The semen of a man and the ovum of a woman are formed from blood which is an extract of the food coming from the earth. So, whether we attribute the creation of the human being to the bringing of Adam into being out of the earth or just to the normal process of the creation of his offspring, both eventually are attributed to Allah's Will.

Bringing something into being is a process of construction. Allah, the Creator, says that we are created from dust, mud, dark mud and dried clay like an earthenware. Water is added to the dust and it turns into mud. The mud is left until its colour changes and it becomes dried clay. Then, it becomes stiffer and turns into dark mud. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* moulded it and breathed from His Spirit into it, and then it became a human being. Lastly, death time comes and destroys life. Destruction of anything means the opposite of its construction.

To construct a building, you start from down to up, but it is destroyed from up to down. Also, if you are heading to a place, the last point you reach is the first point you start from on your way back. For example, if you are travelling to Alexandria, the last place you reached is the first place you will start from in your way back.

The first thing that goes out of our bodies at the moment of death is the Spirit, which is the last thing breathed into it. Then the body toughens and becomes like dark mud, then it rots and becomes like clay, then water vaporises and it turns into dust. Thus, according to the life stages that Allah *Glorified is He* has clarified for us, death stages are the reverse to those of life.

Allah *the Almighty* gives us a description for the stages of creating the human being inside his mother's womb, saying: 'We created man from an essence of clay, then We placed him as a drop of fluid in a safe place, then We made that drop into a clinging form, and We made that form into a lump of flesh, and We made that lump into bones, and We clothed those bones with flesh, and later We made him into other forms glory be to Allah, the best of creators!' (*al-Mu'minun*: 12-14) He *the Almighty* creates the human being inside his mother's womb in phases and stages during which he depends on his mother. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* puts him in another form and state of creation after he is born and granted a chance for another new life in which he does not depend on any one. In other words, the human being depends on his mother as long as he is in her womb, and then He *the Almighty* turns him into an independent creature. During the delivery process, the infant's head is directed downwards and it is the first thing that appears of him. Afterwards, he begins to breathe. At this moment, he is separated from his mother and gains his own self. This way of delivering the baby is a Mercy from Allah *the Almighty* because even if the rest of his body is obstructed for a while in the womb, he will still have a chance to breathe and there will be no risk to suffer from asphyxiation while dealing with the rest of the body.

The foetus through all such phases—being a drop of fluid, a clinging form, a lump of flesh, bones and then clothing those bones with flesh—is still dependant on his mother as it is fed from her. When it is born by the Will of Allah *the Almighty* it is separated from its mother and begins to manage its life on its own.

Allah *Glorified is He* has created us out of nothing and moulded us in an upright structure and in the best stature, a fact which is crystal clear in His saying: 'Who created [all things] in due proportion; who determined their destinies and guided them.' (*al-A'la*: 2-3) This moulding was done at the beginning to the first man who was created directly from clay. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: '...when I have fashioned him and breathed My Spirit into him, bow down before him.' (*al-Hijr*: 29) He *the Almighty* further explains this fact in another verse, saying: '...Who gave everything its perfect form. He first created man from clay, then made his descendants

from an extract of underrated⁽¹⁾ fluid. Then He moulded him; He breathed from His Spirit into him; He gave you hearing, sight, and minds. How seldom you are grateful!' (*as-Sajda*: 7-9)

Adam *peace be upon him* had passed through such a process of perfect forming which is mentioned in the last verse, i.e. the clay was moulded and shaped in the form of a man and then the Spirit was breathed into him. Similarly, He *the Almighty* perfects the formation of Adam's descendants who pass through certain stages, including being a drop of fluid, then a clinging form, then a lump of flesh and finally Allah *Glorified is He* breathes from His Spirit into them.

After He *the Almighty* brings the human being into existence and creates him from his father's semen and his mother's ovum, Allah *Glorified is He* gives him hearing, sight, and mind. The Arabic verb *ja'al* (gave) differs from the verbs 'to create' and 'to bring into being'. Creation is to bring something into being out of nothing. But *ja'al* linguistically means 'to make' or 'to direct'. For example, the Divine Act of creating the sun and the moon differs from making the sun a source of light, and the moon for reflecting that light.

Human beings, on their part, can make a pot or any other earthenware from clay. Also, we can use cotton for making cloth. However, these materials are not of our creation.

As for Allah *the Almighty* He has brought Adam out of nothing, and has created the materials from which he was created, i.e. water and dust which turned into clay. Then He *the Almighty* endowed him with hearing and sight to perform his mission. Thus, *al-ja'l* (to give /make) means to direct the creature towards its mission.

In this vein, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'It is Allah Who brought you out of your mothers' wombs knowing nothing, and gave you hearing and sight and minds so that you might be thankful.' (*an-Nahl*: 78) Those three things, i.e. the hearing, the sight, and the mind are the means and the senses needed for

(1) *Mahin* (underrated) means something which is fiddling and of no value; it also means weak. The semen of the male is weak that anything can affect the sperms contained in it and they become unable to fertilise the female ovum. Allah *the Almighty* reminds the human being that he is created of such semen so that he may not become arrogant. See *Al-Qamus Al-Qawim*, 2/243.

perception and for gaining knowledge. The master of those senses is the eyes. You can hear someone's experience about something, but when you experience it yourself, you find it different. That is why it is said, 'What is seen is more certain than what is heard'.

Allah *Glorified is He* mentions first the hearing and the sight for they are the basic two means of perception. Then He mentions the 'mind' which is related to the perception of the abstract conceptions, emotions, etc. The two senses of perception, hearing and sight, are the ones which enable the human being to gain experience.

So, the means of perception are hearing, sight, and mind. What the eye witnesses represents the human being's own experience, but what he hears represents the experience of others. Therefore, the experience gained through the sense of hearing is much broader than that gained by the eyes.

The sense of hearing is the first means of perception that the human being is endowed with when he is born. If we look to a newborn baby, we find that he is not affected when something comes close to his eyes because he cannot see well. This may last for ten days, and then the process of sight begins. However, if that baby heard a sound beside him, he makes a reaction. Thus, hearing is the first sense with which Allah *the Almighty* endows the human being, then comes the sense of sight, then comes the 'mind'.

Al-Ja'l (giving/making) here means that Allah *Glorified is He* has allocated some of the human being's cells to form the eyes, some others to form the ears and the tongue. He *the Almighty* has set the tasks of these senses. The ears begin performing their task upon delivery, while the eyes begin after a while; the hearing first, then the sight. So, through hearing and sight, knowledge is gained, and intellectual information is constituted.

For example, when a child gets close to a fire, he is warned against touching it so that he may not be burnt. But he may not believe that and get attracted by its light. When he touches it, he gets burnt, and after that there is no need to remind him that he may get burnt by fire, for he has developed an intellectual experience. Thus, hearing came in the first place, then sight, then the mind at last. The human being's means of perceiving knowledge are the senses of

hearing, sight, taste, touch, and smell. Through these five senses, he can perceive knowledge after he was born without having any knowledge.

Here arises a question, which is, 'Why is the word hearing mentioned in the singular form, while the words 'sight' and 'mind' are mentioned in the plural in Allah's saying: '...Hearing, sight and minds...' (*al-Mulk*: 23)? We can say that the ears receive various sounds at the same time, but the scope of our vision is limited. When we do not need to see something, we can easily turn our eyes away, but you cannot prevent our ears from receiving sounds from everywhere. Therefore, the hearing came in the singular form, while the sight came in the plural one. Every person may see something different from the other, but the ears hear all sounds whether we are asleep or awake. Therefore, hearing is the main sense for calling or awaking someone.

Hearing and sight are the masters of the senses. In fact, the miraculous signs in the universe need the eyes to see them, and the messages of the prophets need ears to hear them. 'Ali ibn Abu Taleb *Allah be pleased with him* drew our attention to some of the wonders relating to the creation of the human being, saying, 'The human being is a wonderful creature; he sees through the layers of fat (the eyes), speaks through a lump of flesh (the tongue), hears through a bone (the ears) and breathes through a hole (the nose).' Someone added, 'Smell through a cartilage (the nose), touch through skin and thought by dough (the brain).' When the human being is born, his brain is like a piece of dough receiving information from the universe. These pieces of information will be stored to be the base for constituting the intellectual abilities after that.

When the scholars were considering the meanings of words, they concluded a maxim: 'If some items of the same category are spoken about differently, there must be a reason for making this difference.' Here, the sense of hearing is one of the means of perception, and so is the sight. So, why does Allah *Glorified is He* talk about hearing in the singular form and about sight in the plural form? Why does not He *the Almighty* use one form for both?

The Speaker here is Allah *the Almighty* and certainly every word He says has a profound wisdom and is perfectly chosen. As a matter of fact, we hear sounds in every place around us. On the contrary, the eyes see only in one

direction; if we need to look to the right, we turn our eyes to the right side, and if we need to see what is behind our backs, we change our position. So, the ears hear everything and we do not have a control or a choice to prevent our ears from hearing. However, the sight needs several processes so that we can see what we want, and we can control it by turning our eyes away or closing them.

The human being will be held accountable for what he hears by his ears, sees by his eyes and believes in by his heart, a fact which is crystal clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘Surely, ears, eyes and heart, you will be questioned about all these.’ (*al-Isra*: 36) Every Muslim should know that he will be questioned on the Day of Resurrection about his hearing, sight, heart, and tongue. He should not be careless about perfecting his words and deeds so that he does not fear either in the worldly life or in the Hereafter.

Everyone is individually responsible for his hearing, sight, tongue and all the rest of his senses. He will be questioned about his own hearing, sight and heart, and not that of other people. The one who protects his tongue from saying evil and indecent words keeps his dignity and gains the respect of others, as they will value his exquisite speech. We should consider that all of one’s organs will be witnesses on what he has done, including the sins he has committed and the corruption he has caused in the worldly life, a fact which is crystal clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...their ears, eyes and skins will, when they reach it, testify against them for their misdeeds. They will say to their skins, ‘Why did you testify against us?’ and their skins will reply, “Allah who gave speech to everything, has given us speech...”’ (*Fussilat*: 20-21). Therefore, the feet, the skin, and the other organs of the body will be witnesses on the Day of Judgment. In the worldly life, they are under our control, i.e. we can order our hand, saying, ‘Do this!’, our feet, ‘Go to this place!’ and our tongues, ‘Insult this person!’

Allah *the Almighty* subjected the body organs to their owner’s will in the worldly life. But, will we have control on them on the Day of Resurrection? No, they will be out of our control, as Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘They will say to their skins, “Why did you testify against us?” and their skins will reply, “Allah, who gave speech to everything, has given us speech...”’ (*Fussilat*: 21). So, the organs

of the human being's body, including the hands, the feet and the skin, will speak on the Day of Resurrection. Do we consider what will they say in the Hereafter? All these organs will speak to establish the proof against those sinners. These organs were the means they used to commit their crimes. That is to say that they stole by their hands; uttered false statements by their tongues; headed towards sins with their legs; and these crimes were determined by their hearts.

As a matter of fact, the human being is composed of certain organs with specific systems that altogether constitute the human being. The whole body is managed by the mind. It orders the hands either to steal or to pat on an orphan; the eyes to either look at the beauty in the universe and to contemplate the events occurring around or to look at the unlawful. Similarly, the hands can be used either for hitting and attacking or for offering help and giving charity to the needy. The legs can walk either to the mosques or to the public houses.

The organs of the human being and his abilities are subjected to his will. He can order his tongue to say that there is no god but Allah, or to say that there is no god at all or that Allah is the third of three. The tongue obeys him and does not violate the orders. Allah *Glorified is He* has granted the human being this freedom and guaranteed for him the freedom of choice only because He *the Almighty* will hold him accountable on the Day of Resurrection: did he seek the good that Allah *Glorified is He* has guided him to, or the evil from which he was ordered to refrain?

One's control on his organs will come to an end on the Day of Resurrection when Allah *Glorified is He* calls for His creatures and says: '...Who has control today? Allah, the One, the All Powerful.' (*Ghafir*: 16) The organs will testify against their owners and speak as if they will be speaking tongues, a fact which is crystal clear in His saying: 'On the Day when their own tongues, hands, and feet will testify against them about what they have done.' (*an-Nur*: 24)

The organs become free of the constraints of the human being's will, and now they can complain to Allah *the Almighty* and say the truth they could not utter before due to being under the human being's control. With regard to His saying: '...Allah, Who gave speech to everything, has given us speech...' (*Fussilat*: 21), it means that Allah *Glorified is He* has made for everything in the universe its unique way of speech, as He *the Almighty* tells us about the ant

which said: ‘...Ants! Go into your homes...’ (*an-Naml*: 18); and the hoopoe which said: ‘...I have learned something you did not know: I come to you from Sheba with firm news.’ (*an-Naml*: 22)

The organs itself have their own life and speech that we cannot comprehend, for their lives are different from ours. Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who created the hearing, the sight, the heart, and the tongue for us. That is why He *the Almighty* says in the verse in question: ‘Say [Prophet], “It is He Who brought you into being, He who gave you hearing, sight and minds— what small thanks you give!”’ (*al-Mulk*: 23) We can thank Him *Glorified is He* for endowing us with these organs, whether our hearing, sight or tongues, by not using them for committing sins.

As for the tongue, we have to hold it from saying evil and rude words. We talk to people by using the ability of speaking that Allah *the Almighty* has granted to our tongues, and if He wanted, He would have made us dumb and speechless. We, therefore, have to thank Him *Glorified is He* and give Him His due Praise.

In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* clearly tells us that we rarely thank Him for His Blessings. But in another verse, Allah *Glorified is He* reminds us of the Gifts He granted to us, so that we may give Him His due Praise, saying: ‘It is Allah Who brought you out of your mothers’ wombs knowing nothing, and gave you hearing and sight and minds so that you might be thankful.’ (*an-Nahl*: 78)

The expression ‘so that you might be thankful’ means that if the orders are obeyed, a great reward will be granted. The normally expected act when a blessing is received is to give thanks. Thus, when we thank Allah *Glorified is He* for a blessing, we expect another blessing that cannot be attained except by giving thanks.

As we have said before, the hearing, the sight, and the minds are the means of perception. Allah *Glorified is He* explains to us that He has created such means of perception so that we might be thankful as we notice their impacts on ourselves, and how they help us to perceive the matters.

Giving thanks means the giving of praise to the giver of a blessing by the one who received it. As for His saying: ‘...what small thanks you give!’, it demonstrates that there are different types of people who give thanks; some people thank Allah for all His Blessings in general, others thank Him for

every blessing, and some others give Him special thanks, not only for every blessing, but for the detail of every single blessing.

Before eating, the Muslim should say, 'In the name of Allah' and after finishing his meal, he should say, 'All praise is due to Allah'. Someone may say, 'In the Name of Allah' with every morsel he has, and may say, 'All Praise is due to Allah' with every morsel of food he masticates and swallows, thanking Allah *the Almighty* because it did not stick in his throat.

Similarly, when we drink water, we should drink it in three portions, saying, 'In the Name of Allah' before we drink each one, and we should say, 'All Praise is due to Allah' after finishing each. Who does this is not expected to commit sins as long as the benefit of this sip of water remains in his body because he said before taking it, 'In the Name of Allah', which will protect him from committing sins. If we ever contemplated every single blessing, we will find that it contains many other blessings.

When we do not thank Allah *the Almighty* for His Blessings, we lessen the number of blessings that we might get. By contrast, if we thank Him *Glorified is He* we will have more blessings, a fact which is crystal clear in His saying: '...if you are thankful, I will give you more...' (*Ibrahim: 7*). So, it is an act of foolishness not to thank Allah *the Almighty*.

As a matter of fact, the thanks are mainly given when getting a blessing. The means of perception, including the hearing, the sight, and the mind, are of His Blessings for which we should thank Him. Through these means, we are able to acquire perceptual knowledge after we were having no knowledge at all. Therefore, thanks are due to Allah *the Almighty* for endowing us with these means.

Allah *Glorified is He* did not oblige to thank Him, but He left this issue for our volition. Whenever we hear a sound, see a beautiful scene, or smell a nice smell, we should thank Him for endowing us with ears, eyes, and noses, respectively, to perceive such things. All these blessings require that we thank Allah, the All Giver.

We should look at the blessings we have and consider those who are deprived of them. We should also make a comparison between their state and ours, and how they are deprived of enjoying the blessings which we are enjoying.

Regarding Allah's saying: '...what small thanks you give!' (*al-Mulk: 23*), some scholars say that 'the small thanks' refers to the act of not giving thanks

at all. But this interpretation is incorrect, for He *the Almighty* says that His servants do thank Him, but they give little thanks, while Allah *Glorified is He* wants them to thank Him endlessly for every single blessing they are endowed with.

When we see the blind who are deprived of the blessing of sight blundering in the street, we should thank Allah *the Almighty* that we are enjoying this blessing. In fact, we may not notice such blessings except when we see those who are deprived of them.

In order to keep a blessing, we should keep remembering of Allah *the Almighty* and if we want to preserve it, we should not forget that Allah *Glorified is He* is the Giver of that blessing and He is the Only One Who is Fully Able to keep and preserve it. As a matter of fact, the human being is not deprived of a blessing except when he fails to remember its Giver and neglects thankfulness for it.

So, the first act of wisdom regarding the blessings is to thank Allah *Glorified is He* as the fruit of these thanks returns to the one who gives them. The believers' thanks to Him *the Almighty* should be endless. To give thanks for the blessings of having a tongue and the ability to speak, we should refrain and protect our tongues from insulting and offending people. It is good to know that He *the Almighty* has made the teeth and lips like doors to our tongue, so why do we unreasonably open them?

In this connection, it was narrated by `Amr ibn Dinar that a man was talking in the presence of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and was extremely expatiating. So, he *peace and blessings be upon him* said to him, 'How many doors are before your tongue?' He said, 'My teeth and lips.' He *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Are they not enough to stop you from talking?'⁽¹⁾

We should either say what is good, or keep silent. In this regard, Luqman *peace be upon him* said, 'Silence is a form of wisdom, yet few people practice

(1) In his book, *Al-Ghazali* narrates this Hadith on the authority of `Amr ibn Dinar who said, 'A man was talking in the presence of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings upon him* and extremely elaborated. So, he *peace and blessings upon him* said, 'How many barriers before your tongue?' He said, 'My lips and teeth.' He *peace and blessings upon him* said, 'Are they not enough to stop you from talking?' *Al-Hafizh Al-Iraqi* said it was narrated by Ibn Abu Ad-Dunya in this way without mentioning the Companion from whom it was transmitted, and its narrators are trusted. See *Al-Ghazali, Ihya` 'Ulum Ad-Din*.

it.'⁽¹⁾ Further, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'He who truly believes in Allah and the Last Day should either utter good words or better keep silence.'⁽²⁾

The best form of silence is to be like the servants of the Lord of Mercy about whom Allah *the Almighty* says: '...who, when the foolish address them, reply, "Peace"' (*al-Furqan*: 63). The foolish is the silly person who speaks carelessly and irrationally and does not understand the principles of morality and good manners.

If a person foolishly talked to you, you should never answer him back in the same foolish manner. Rather, you should just admonish him gently and say: '...peace...' (*al-Furqan*: 63), to make him feel the difference between both of you. Imam Ash-Shafi'i⁽³⁾ said good words in this sense:

If a foolish man speaks, answer him nothing. Silence is better than answering.

If you retaliated, he would be pleased; and if not, out of anger, he could be dead.

If this foolish person exceeded the limits and his transgression intensified, you should stop such transgression and retaliate equally because when you treated him kindly, he did not decline. Contrarily, he regarded your kindness as weakness, and so you should show him the difference between being weak and being kind.

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- (1) In his *Tafsir*, As-Suyuti attributes this narration to Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal Allah rest his soul who narrated that Abu Najih said, 'Luqman peace be upon him said, 'Silence is a form of wisdom, yet few people practice it.' Al-Maydani said in *Al-Amthal*, that the Arabic word *hukm* means wisdom as Allah the Almighty says about Prophet 'Isa (Jesus): '...while he was still a boy, We granted him wisdom.' (*Maryam*: 12). It means that keeping silent is a form of wisdom, but few who do this. See As-Suyuti, *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur*, 6/519
 - (2) This Hadith is narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim in the chapter of 'Encouragement to honour one's neighbour'. The rest of the Hadith is: 'And he who believes in Allah and the Last Day should treat his neighbour with kindness and he who believes in Allah and the Last Day should show hospitality to his guest.' See Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 6475, 6138, 6136 and 6018; and Muslim, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 74/47 and 75/47
 - (3) Mohammed ibn Idris Al-Hashimi Al-Qurashi, Abu 'Abdullah. He is one of the four prominent Sunni scholars. He was born in 150 A.H. He visited Baghdad twice, and came to Egypt in 199 A.H. at the age of 49, and died there in 204 A.H. at the age of 54. He was a distinguished poet and linguist, and an authority on Arab history, Islamic Jurisprudence and Hadith. He wrote *Al-Umm*, *Ar-Risala* and *Musnad*, etc.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says:

قُلْ هُوَ الَّذِي ذَرَأَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَإِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

Say, ‘It is He who scattered you throughout the earth,
He to whom you will be gathered’ [24]
(The Quran, *al-Mulk*: 24)

As a matter of fact, Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who scattered and spread us throughout the earth to inhabit it in full. We sometimes wonder why there are some people insisting on living in mountains and desolate bare deserts, accepting no other alternatives. They face hardships and difficulties to maintain their lives there, to the extent that you may say, ‘Why do not they leave this place and go to another fertile one?’ This is because Allah *Glorified is He* has distributed equally His Blessings all over the earth. In other words, every vertical piece of land has as much resources as the other pieces have.

We have seen the example of Yemen, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait and how their people endured the poor state that Allah *Glorified is He* has destined for such desert countries which were bare lands. In Yemen, for example, people suffered a lot after it was totally drowned by the flood of the dam. People of those countries narrated how much they suffered and how much life was hard. But their patience has borne fruits; these mountains and deserts became the richest countries in the world. They accepted Allah’s Predestination and that is why He has rewarded them for their forbearance for the boiling hot temperature of the desert that blessing, i.e. oil without which those who are living in comfort in the worldly life would have died of cold.

Allah *Glorified is He* has scattered and spread out His creatures all over the earth for a profound wisdom He intended. *Dhara`* (scattered) means that He *the Almighty* created, spread out and scattered people all over the earth. He granted His creatures the ability to reproduce by themselves, whether when the females become pregnant through the males— in the case of the human beings, animals and plants—or by hatching in the case of the birds.

The verb *dhara`* (scattered) differs from creating in an absolute sense. It is the type of creation in which the creature is granted the ability to reproduce by itself. Allah *the Almighty* has created Adam *peace be upon him* first, then He

created his descendants from him. They are consequently able to reproduce by themselves when the two spouses have sexual intercourse, a fact which is clearly manifested in His saying: 'People, be mindful of your Lord, who created you from a single soul, and from it created its mate, and from the pair of them spread countless men and women far and wide...' (*an-Nisa'*: 1). Allah *Glorified is He* has created from Adam and Hawwa' (Eve). Then, from both of them, He *the Almighty* spread many people who, in their turn, produced even more people.

Whenever a new group is brought into life, the number of the human beings grows. If we compared a population of any country one century ago to its population now, we will find the former too much fewer. For example, Egypt's population was estimated maximally five million people one century ago; two centuries before, it was fewer, and so on and so forth. Thus, as long as we are heading to the future, the number of the people in the world is increasing as Allah *Glorified is He* spreads from the males and the females more men and women who will reproduce larger numbers.

We explained that the verb 'to scatter' means to spread out, but we notice here in the last verse that Allah *the Almighty* mentions 'men' first, saying: '...spread countless men and women far and wide...' (*an-Nisa'*: 1). This means that 'men' are the ones who are responsible for exerting effort and spreading out throughout the earth. They are addressed in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...travel its regions; eat His provision.' (*al-Mulk*: 15) Women, on the other hand, should stay in their houses to manage their affairs and to make them a place of tranquillity. This is the basic job of the woman, while the man is required to deal with the outer world. However, He *the Almighty* does not say 'countless men' only, but rather, He includes women by using the conjunction 'and'. Women are the counterpart of men⁽¹⁾, yet they are not the ones who are asked to spread out in the earth.⁽²⁾

(1) 'Aisha Allah be pleased with her said, 'Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him was asked about a person who found moisture (on his body or clothes) after having a wet dream. He replied, "He should take a bath." He was asked about a person who remembered that he had a wet dream but did not find moisture. He replied, "A bath is not necessary for him." Umm Salama then asked, "Is washing necessary for a woman if she sees that (in her dream)?" He replied, "Yes. Women are counterpart of men."' See Ahmad, *Musnad*, *Hadith no. 26195*

(2) Sheikh Ash-Sha'rawi Allah rest his soul here means that women are not required to face the hardships and difficulties of the outer world, and it is the man's job to keep women safe and secure. (The translator)

Those who are scattered throughout the earth are two types: those who have power to achieve their interest on their own, and those who are weak and cannot manage their own needs alone, i.e. women and orphans.

In another verse, Allah *the Almighty* portrays for us how such spreading on the earth ought to be, saying: ‘Another of His signs is that He created spouses from among yourselves for you to live with in tranquillity...’ (*ar-Rum*: 21). Allah *Glorified is He* originally created Adam *peace be upon him* from clay, which is dust mixed with water. How such clay turned into a human being of flesh and blood who has the ability to reproduce by its own? Allah *Glorified is He* puts this fact in His saying: ‘One of His signs is that He created you from dust and– lo and behold!– you became human and scattered far and wide.’ (*ar-Rum*: 20) He *the Almighty* created Adam *peace be upon him* from dust and then his descendants grew rapidly and spread out the earth. That is why the particle ‘*idha*’ (lo and behold), which indicates a sudden occurrence of something, is used in the aforementioned verse.

All the human beings should spread out throughout the earth and make use of Allah’s Blessings which are scattered throughout it. To spread something is to make it scattered throughout a space. This is the opposite of folding something which entails gathering it in a limited space. Thus, the space in which something is gathered is narrow, while the space available for a scattered thing is wide.

So, the human beings should spread throughout and inhabit all parts of the earth. Allah *Glorified is He* has ordered His believing servants to disperse in the land with the aim of seeking provision. In this regard, He *the Almighty* says: ‘...disperse in the land and seek out Allah’s bounty...’ (*al-Jumu’a*: 10). We disperse in the land to seek Allah’s Provision in a place which is uninhabited or whose resources are not exploited yet. ‘Spreading out throughout the earth’ does not only mean to be just distributed on various parts, but here it means to work, exert effort, and extract the benefits contained in it. He *the Almighty* has equally distributed such benefits and provisions all over the earth.

The earth continuously gives us some of its blessings that Allah *Glorified is He* hid in it. At the early ages, we have known nothing but agriculture, but later,

with the advancement of science and discoveries and the development of the human being's tools, we discovered minerals, oil, and other treasures hidden in the earth.

Allah *the Almighty* concludes the verse in question, saying: '...He to whom you will be gathered.' (*al-Mulk*: 24) Here, Allah *Glorified is He* tells us to beware of thinking that, after He has scattered us on the earth and we inhabited all of it, we may escape from Him or that He would not be Able to gather us again. Contrarily, as He scattered us for a reason, He will, due to His Profound Wisdom, gather us, and no one can go beyond His Control.

Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who is fully Able to resurrect and gather us, and no one will go against His Will, as He *the Almighty* says: 'Among His signs is the creation of the heavens and earth and all the living creatures He has scattered throughout them: He has the power to gather them all together whenever He will.' (*ash-Shura*: 29)

Al-Hashr (gathering) means to gather and assemble. The Day of Gathering is the Day when all people, from the time of Adam *peace be upon him* till the Day of Judgement will be gathered in one place and for one purpose. If we are complaining of the crowdedness of the earth, while we are only one of the generations, can we imagine the situation when all the beings throughout the whole ages till the Day of Judgement will be gathered?!

In this vein, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Allah will gather all beings and say: "O My servants, prepare your arguments to facilitate your responds. You are going to be assembled, called to account and held responsible for your deeds. O My angels, tell my servants to stand in rows and on the tip of their toes because they are going to be called to account."' (1)

(1) In his *Tafsir*, As-Suyuti attributes this Hadith to Ibn Manda in his book, *At-Tawhid*. Mu`adh ibn Jabal narrated that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'On the Day of Resurrection, Allah will call and say, "O My servants, I am Allah, there is no god but Me, the Most Merciful, the Most Decisive of Judges and the Swiftest of Reckoners..." See As-Suyuti, *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur*, 5/400.

Then, Allah *the Almighty* says:

وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَى هَذَا الْوَعْدُ إِن كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٢٥﴾

They say, ‘If what you say is true, when will this promise be fulfilled?’ [25] (The Quran, *al-Mulk*: 25)

The disbelievers reject the fact that Allah *the Almighty* will gather and assemble them, after they have become dust, on the Day of Resurrection. They also reject the fact that they will be held accountable for their deeds. Such denial, rejection, and sarcasm are the approach of the disbelievers and atheists throughout all ages and places. Nevertheless, Allah’s Promise is true and will be fulfilled. They ask sarcastically, ‘When will this promise of punishment be fulfilled’?

Asking, in such sarcastic manner, about the time of the fulfilment of this promise, using the word ‘when’, means that they have the feeling that such a promise will not be fulfilled. They disbelieve in the veracity of the Last Day when they will for sure stand before Allah *the Almighty* and will be punished for their disbelief by the hellfire which will burn their skins away, then they will be replaced with new skins.

Those who do not believe in the Day of Resurrection and the Hereafter will say: ‘If what you say is true, when will this promise be fulfilled?’ (*al-Mulk*: 25) The promise here refers to the coming of the Day of Resurrection. They called what Allah *Glorified is He* has told them about the Resurrection a ‘promise’, while it is a ‘threat’.

There is a difference between ‘promising’ and ‘threatening’; the former is used for expressing something good, while the latter expresses something bad. Though the disbelievers of Mecca were a people of eloquence, Allah *the Almighty* hindered their tongue from speaking well, and they said: ‘When will this promise be fulfilled?’ (*an-Naml*: 71), though it is a ‘threat’ for them. In fact, threatening the disbelievers is simultaneously a promise for the believers.

Indeed, the promise of Allah *Glorified is He* will be definitely fulfilled, a fact which is crystal clear in His saying: ‘What you are promised is sure to come, and you cannot escape.’ (*al-An‘am*: 134) When He *the Almighty* makes a promise, it will surely be fulfilled, and if He makes threats against something,

they will surely be carried out. As we have said before, a 'promise', unlike a 'threat', entails something good.

What is awkward about their question is that they say: '...if what you say is true.' (*al-Mulk*: 25) They forgot that breaking promises or the inability to carry out a threat is only expected from the creatures. It is an act of those who are subject to change and may change their minds so that they are no longer expected to fulfil their promises. They may have given a promise thinking that they are able to fulfil it, and then it gets out of their hand, as they cannot control all what is necessary for fulfilling the promise.

However, if the One Who gave the promise is the Omnipotent and there is no other god to stand against His promises or threats, then His promises will definitely be fulfilled and His threats will be certainly carried out. Hence, when Allah *the Almighty* sets a rule, the believers must take it as an absolute fact because there are no gods besides Him to change this rule, and Allah *Glorified is He* is not prone to change.

Let us give an example to illustrate this point; He *the Almighty* says: '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)

This threat against Abu Lahab and his wife could have been willingly avoided on their part, yet they insisted and did not believe in Allah *Glorified is He*. The previous verses explain that every Muslim should not deal with this issue doubtfully and think that Abu Lahab or his wife would have repented and converted to Islam like other disbelievers who converted to Islam, such as Hind bint 'Utba, and Abu Sufyan.

Allah *Glorified is He* surely knows to what choice Abu Lahab and his wife would incline, and both had the freedom of choice. There is no other god to change or modify what He *the Almighty* ruled concerning this matter. Some may mistakenly think that Allah *Glorified is He* will fulfil His promises, yet they can escape from Him. But He tells them that His promises will be fulfilled and they cannot escape from Him. No one can prevent Him *Glorified is He* from fulfilling His promises or carrying out His threats, and thus no one can

escape from either of them. We cannot escape from Allah *the Almighty* or be out of His control, for He always prevails in His purpose.

When Allah *Glorified is He* makes a threat, He is fully Able to carry it out, and no one can escape from Him. His promises are also absolute and can never be broken. As the human being is subject to change, he is expected to break his promise. For example, someone may, when the time of fulfilling his promise falls due, finds himself practically or psychologically unable to fulfil it.

Conversely, when Allah *Glorified is He* gives a promise, it will inevitably be fulfilled because there is no other power to prevent Him from that. He *the Almighty* is the One Who controls all the creatures that He made subject to change, while He is Unchangeable. In this connection, He *the Almighty* says: ‘He is Allah: there is no god but Him. He will gather you all together on the Day of Resurrection, about which there is no doubt. Whose word can be truer than Allah’s?’ (*an-Nisa*: 87) The verb ‘gather’ here means that Allah *Glorified is He* will bring us all together out of graves and gather us before Him. It also may mean that He *the Almighty* will resurrect and call us for account on the Day of Resurrection.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says:

قُلْ إِنَّمَا الْعِلْمُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَإِنَّمَا أَنَا نَذِيرٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿٢٦﴾

**Say, ‘God alone has knowledge of this:
my only duty is to give clear warning’ [26]
(The Quran, *al-Mulk*: 26)**

Here, Allah *Glorified is He* instructs Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to say: ‘Allah Alone has knowledge of this...’ (*al-Mulk*: 26). Yet, in another verse, He *the Almighty* tells him to say: ‘Say, “You have an appointment for a Day which you cannot put off or bring forward, even by a single moment.’’ (*Saba*: 30) Thus, only Allah *Glorified is He* knows the time when the Day of Judgment comes. That is why when he *peace and blessings be upon him* was asked, ‘When will the Hour be?’ he answered, ‘The one who is asked about it does not know more than the one who is asking.’⁽¹⁾

(1) This is the Hadith of Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* in which he asked about faith, Islam and *ihsan* (the highest rank of Islam), then he asked about the time of the Hour.=

Elsewhere in the Quran, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Knowledge of the Hour [of Resurrection] belongs to Allah...' (*Luqman*: 34). This interrogation about the Hour is related to the Unseen which no one has knowledge about except Him *the Almighty*. Therefore, the disbelievers' question is useless. That is why when one of the Companions asked Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* about the Last Hour, he answered him, 'What have you prepared for it?'⁽¹⁾ In this way, he *peace and blessings be upon him* drew this Companion's attention to the point that he should ask and care about.

The disbelievers do not believe that there will be a Day of Judgement, a point which is crystal clear in Allah's saying: '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..."'⁽²⁾ (*Saba*: 3). Allah *the Almighty* is the only One Who has the Knowledge of the Last Hour. The Last Hour does not only mean the Day of Resurrection, but it also means the last hour of the life of every one of us. When someone dies, his last hour begins. We have no control over the Hour. When it comes suddenly, it will be disastrous, deafening, reverberating, and shaking. So, we should beware of being seized suddenly by the Hour while we are unaware of and unprepared for it.

In this vein, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'People ask you about the Hour. Say, "Allah alone has knowledge of it." How could you [Prophet] know? The Hour may well be near.' (*al-Ahzab*: 63) Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had been asked about the Last Hour many times for two reasons. First, the

= It is a long Hadith. See Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, *Hadith no. 50 and 4777*; see also Muslim, *Sahih*, *Hadith no. 8, 9, and 10*.

- (1) Anas ibn Malik said, 'While me and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* were going out of the mosque, we met a man at the door of the mosque. He said, 'O Prophet Muhammad! When will the Last Hour be?' He *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'What have you prepared for it?' The man said, 'I have not prepared for it much of prayers or fast or alms, but I love Allah and His Messenger.' He *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'You will be with those whom you love.' See Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, *Hadith no. 7153*; and Muslim, *Sahih*, *Hadith no. 2639*.
- (2) The expression '*Adhab Al-Amr*' (became hidden) means it is far, hidden and hard to find. Here, in this noble verse, it means that nothing is hidden, far or escapes Allah's Knowledge. He knows all the minute and huge things and matters. See *Al-Qamus Al-Qawim*, 2/18.

people of the Book challenged him *peace and blessings be upon him* as they have some knowledge from their Prophets and Books. They wanted to ask him about some matters that they thought he was unaware of to put him in an embarrassing situation. They knew that he *peace and blessings be upon him* is illiterate; he could neither read nor write, and he never had a teacher. But Allah *the Almighty* has revealed the answer to him. Once he said the right answer, they felt extremely gloomy, and tried to find any other question to prove to themselves that he is ignorant.

Second, a Jew asked Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* about the Last Hour as in the chapter of *al-Ahzab*: ‘People ask you about the Hour...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 63) because they deny it. For them, it is better that this Day will not come so that they will not be held accountable for the grievous deeds they had committed in the worldly life, i.e. wrongfulness, disbelief, immorality, blood shedding and backbiting.

The matter of the Day of Resurrection and Reckoning is naturally clear. Only those who transgress against themselves deny that Day, for they fear the punishment that will be waiting for them on that Day, and they have nothing to do but to deny the reality of its coming. As for the saying of Allah *Glorified is He*: ‘People ask you about the Hour...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 63), it means that they ask, ‘Does it exist or not?’ If they answered affirmatively, they will say: ‘...if what you say is true, bring us the punishment you threaten.’ (*al-A’raf*: 70) But the answer of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was: ‘Allah Alone has knowledge of this...’ (*al-Mulk*: 26). Then he followed it by saying: ‘...my only duty is to give clear warning.’ (*al-Mulk*: 26) It was his mission to warn the people and make this warning clear. His duty was to warn them and to convey the Message to them.

Nadheer (a warner) is the one who brings the bad tidings about something that will happen in the future. The noble verse here only talks about ‘warning’ because it addresses the people of wrongfulness and denial, so, the warning is more suitable than talking about glad tidings.

In other verses, Allah *the Almighty* describes Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as both a bringer of good tidings and a warner, saying: ‘Worship no one but Allah. I am sent to you from Him to warn and to give

good news.' (*Hud*: 2) The warner is the one who warns about something bad which may happen so that there will be a chance to avoid the deeds leading to it. By contrast, the bringer of good tidings is the one who tells about the good which will happen if the Way of Guidance is followed.

Both the acts of warning and bringing good tidings are related to things that have not happened yet. Giving warning entails giving an alarm and it is also a form of teaching. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is described in the Quran by both descriptions, as a warner and a bringer of good tidings.

He *peace and blessings be upon him* delivers to us such warning through the Revelation of Allah *the Almighty* Who says: 'Use the Quran to warn those who fear being gathered before their Lord.' (*al-An'am*: 51)

So, He *the Almighty* commands him to use this revelation, the Quran, to warn those who fear to stand before Him *Glorified is He* on the Day of Judgment. As we said before, the word 'to warn' means to tell about something horrible that may happen before its occurrence, so that it can be avoided. In this sense, the Quran is a warning for the disbelievers. All the Messengers of Allah *the Almighty* are warners and bringers of good tidings, a fact which is crystal clear in His saying: 'We send Messengers only to give good news and to warn...' (*al-An'am*: 48).

The mission of the Messengers is to warn and bring good news. So, we should not take them to a further level or rank and ask them to perform miracles or do certain actions that are beyond their control. Indeed, everything is under the Control of Allah *the Almighty* Alone. The purpose of giving warnings and good news is to make people remember that there is a Fire and a Paradise. That is why we find that every messenger tells those who believe from his people that they will go to the paradise, while those who disbelieve will be thrown into the fire.

The two acts of giving warn and good news make no ground for those who may argue. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: '...they were Messengers bearing good news and warning, so that mankind would have no excuse before Allah, once the Messengers had been sent...' (*an-Nisa'*: 165). So, the people will have no ground to argue or excuse before Him *Glorified is He* after the sending of messengers. No one has an excuse after being informed.

Therefore, when the people of the hell are admitted into the fire, Allah *the Almighty* says to them: ‘...were you not sent your own messengers to recite the revelations of your Lord to you...’ (*az-Zumar*: 71). Now they have no justification for their disbelief as Allah *Glorified is He* has sent them Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessing be upon him, with the true Message, to lead them to the way of righteousness and its reward, i.e. to be admitted into the paradise, and to warn them against evil and its punishment, i.e. going to the hellfire.

Then, Allah *the Almighty* says:

فَلَمَّا رَأَوْهُ زُلْفَةً سَيِّئَتْ وُجُوهُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا
وَقِيلَ هَذَا الَّذِي كُنْتُمْ بِهِ تَدْعُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾

**When they see it close at hand, the disbelievers’ faces
will be gloomy, and it will be said, ‘This is what you
were calling for’[27] (The Quran, *al-Mulk*: 27)**

Here, Allah *the Almighty* describes the disbelievers’ reaction. When they see the approach of the Day of Reckoning that Allah *Glorified is He* has promised, their faces become gloomy because of the torture, humiliation, degradation and pain they will be suffering from. He *the Almighty* mentions the face in particular because their reactions appear on their faces; when they see what they are warned against, the feelings of sadness and worry appear on their faces.

In another noble verse, Allah *Glorified is He* talks about those darkened faces, saying: ‘On the Day when some faces brighten and others darken...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 106). It is known that the human being’s deep feelings and inner thoughts are reflected on his attitude and face complexion. The face of anyone who sees his position in the hellfire will be definitely gloomy. They may have been seen with brightened faces in the worldly life, but on the Day of Resurrection they will be seen with a dusty dark face veiled in blackness. Their faces become black and they look here and there in panic, trying to find something that may ease their worries or soothes them. Unfortunately, they will find nothing but more fear and panic. Their eyes are humbled in humiliation as there is no escape or refuge for them. Allah *the Almighty* describes their condition in various positions in the Quran, saying: ‘And their eyes will

be downcast...' (*al-Qalam*: 43); 'hearts will tremble and eyes will be downcast.' (*an-Nazi'at*: 8-9), and 'Have you heard tell [Prophet] about the Overwhelming Event? On that Day, there will be downcast faces, toiling and weary, as they enter the blazing fire and are forced to drink from a boiling spring, with no food for them except bitter dry thorns that neither nourish nor satisfy hunger.' (*al-Ghashiya*: 1-7)

With regard to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...And it will be said, "This is what you were calling for."' (*al-Mulk*: 27), it is a rebuke for their denial of the Day of Reckoning, or for their request to see the Promise of Allah *the Almighty* when they said: '...when will this promise be fulfilled?' (*al-Mulk*: 25) On the Day of Resurrection, it will be said to them, 'This is the Promise of Allah that you were calling for and alleging that it will not come. Now you see it so close to you'.

In the verse under discussion, Allah *Glorified is He* uses three verbs, 'to see', 'to be gloomy' and 'it will be said'. In the Arabic text, they are put in the past tense while the verse is talking about something that will happen in the future, that is, on the Day of Resurrection. Such linguistic technique in Arabic is used for affirmation. It is as if He *the Almighty* is telling us that such future incidents will undoubtedly occur so that they can be regarded as if they have already happened. What is considered future for us is, according to the Knowledge of Allah, a past as Allah *Glorified is He* knows all what will happen in the future. He knows everything at one time, not through a gradual process. Then Allah *the Almighty* says:

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ أَهْلَكْنِي أَلَّهُ وَمَنْ مَعِيَ أَوْ رَحِمَنَا
فَمَنْ يُجِيرُ الْكَافِرِينَ مِنْ عَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ﴿٢٨﴾

**Say, 'Just think – regardless of whether God destroys me
and my followers or has mercy on us – who will protect
the disbelievers from an agonizing torment?' [28]
(The Quran, *al-Mulk*: 28)**

Allah *the Almighty* uses this expression: 'Say, "Just think..."' (*al-Mulk*: 28), in many verses, For example, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Say, "Just think, if Allah

were to cast perpetual⁽¹⁾ night over you until the Day of Resurrection...”’ (*al-Qasas*: 71); ‘Say [Prophet], “Think: if Allah were to take away your hearing and your sight and seal up your hearts...”’ (*al-An‘am*: 46) and ‘Say, “You think: if the punishment of Allah should come to you, by surprise or openly...”’ (*al-An‘am*: 46). In the last verse, the Arabic text uses two signs referring to the second person which is a linguistic technique used to draw the attention to something. In another time, one pronoun only is used to refer to the second person to give the following meaning: ‘You tell me and provide me with certain knowledge that proves this issue’. When Allah *the Almighty* shows His Blessings to His creatures, He asks: ‘Tell Me what you could do if...?’ Such a question is meant to make them confess the truth.

Regarding the saying of Allah *Glorified is He*: ‘Regardless of whether Allah destroys me...’ (*al-Mulk*: 28), destruction is the opposite of life. When we say that something is destroyed, we mean it has no life, as destruction means death. It is as if Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* says to them, ‘What will you do if Allah causes death for me and my followers or bestows His Mercy and extends our life time?’ The disbelievers were wishing death to him *peace and blessings be upon him* and the Muslims, so He *the Almighty* ordered him to say to them, ‘Whether Allah causes death for me and my followers, or bestows His Mercy on us, still this will not, under any circumstances, save you from His Torment’.

So, if Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the believers are not fully sure whether He *the Almighty* will shower His Mercy on them or destroy them, so imagine what will be the case with those who disbelieved? Who can save them from Allah’s torment? Do they think that the idols will save them?

No one can save or protect them but Allah *the Almighty* a fact which is crystal clear in His saying: ‘Say, ‘Who holds control of everything in His hand? Who protects, while there is no protection against Him, if you know [so

(1) *Sarmad* (Perpetual) means a lasting period of time, whether night or day. Perpetual night is the very long night. It also means continuous with no interruptions. Abu ‘Ubayda says that anything that lasts with no interruptions, be it the life, prosperity, distress, or calamity is described as perpetual. See Ibn Mandhur, *Lisan Al-‘Arab*, the root *Sarmad*; see also Abu ‘Ubayda, *Majaz Al-Quran*, 2/109.

much]?’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 88) The protection implies three elements: a protector who accepts to protect and defend someone; the weak one who asks for protection; and the strong who wants to tyrannise.

Allah *Glorified is He* protects who asks for His Protection and helps the one who seeks refuge with Him. When someone wants to protect another from a powerful enemy, he should have the power to do so. So, who could protect the disbelievers if Allah *Glorified is He* wants to torment them?

Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...who will protect the disbelievers from an agonizing torment?’ (*al-Mulk*: 28) So, who will safeguard them against the very painful torment? When we need to evaluate an action, it should be evaluated according to its doer. This is because the doer, whether weak or strong, affects the action and determines its effect on the object who is the recipient of the action. Thus, if Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who is going to punish, so the Punishment must be extremely painful.

If such action of torment is attributed to Allah *the Almighty* Who has the absolute Power and Omnipotence to do so, it will, then, be intolerable torment. The wrongdoers will find neither helper nor intercessor to save them from such torment. No one will come and say, ‘There is a person in torment, let us help him’.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

قُلْ هُوَ الرَّحْمَنُ ۖ اٰمَنَّا بِهِ ۚ وَعَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْنَا ۖ فَسْتَعْلَمُوْنَ مَنْ هُوَ فِي ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿٢٩﴾

Say, ‘He is the Lord of Mercy; we believe in Him; we put our trust in Him. You will come to know in time who is in obvious error’[29] (The Quran, *al-Mulk*: 29)

The Divine Name ‘Lord of Mercy’ indicates an intensive form of Mercy. Allah *the Almighty* is the Lord of Mercy in the worldly life and the Giver of Mercy in the Hereafter. Due to His Lordship over all His creatures, Allah *Glorified is He* shows His Mercy to all of them. He gives the sinners a respite to repent, and opens the doors of repentance for whoever returns to Him. In this verse, He *the Almighty* mentions His Name the ‘Lord of Mercy’ to remind the people about the Bounties He bestowed on them. They should have appreciated these Bounties that they received without any effort on their part.

So, the Divine Name ‘the Lord of Mercy’ entails giving all bounties and bringing up His creatures. Being created, raised up, and given all the necessities of life are enough reasons for worshipping Him *the Almighty* Alone without any partners. Allah *Glorified is He* has chosen for Himself the Name ‘the Lord of Mercy’ because His Mercy encompasses all the aspects of worship. He has sent down His Way of Guidance to adjust the humans’ life and make them lead their lives happily. In fact, His Mercy is the main wisdom behind His Legislations. In this regard, He *the Almighty* says: ‘It is the Lord of Mercy. Who taught the Quran.’ (*ar-Rahman*: 1-2) The Quran was revealed to adjust, control, and reform the humans’ life. It provides you with peace in your relationship with Allah, with yourself, and with other people. Thus, it is a form of Mercy bestowed by Allah *the Almighty*.

Allah *Glorified is He* showers anyone He likes with His Mercy. As for the disbelievers, they will not receive His Mercy as none will save them of His Punishment. The Divine Name ‘the Lord of Mercy’ is mentioned here to reassure the sinners who have committed great sins, and to remind them that their Lord is the Most Merciful. If they repented, He will accept their repentance and fulfil that with which He has promised them. Thus, all the affairs of the creation are managed within the scope of Mercy, and that is why we ought to obey and submit to Him.

As for His saying: ‘...We believed in Him...’ (*al-Mulk*: 29), the verb ‘to believe’ means to acknowledge and accept something. In this regard, the brothers of Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* said to their father: ‘...you will not believe us even if we were truthful.’ (*Yusuf*: 17) If the Arabic verb *amana* (to believe) is followed by the letter *ba`*, it means to have faith; if it is yet followed by the letter *lam*, it means to believe what someone says. Further, if it is followed by another letter, it means to give protection, as in the saying of Allah *Glorified is He*: ‘So let them serve the Lord of this House. Who feeds them against hunger and gives them security against fear.’ (*Quraysh*: 3-4)

Moreover, the Arabic verb *amana* (to believe) could mean to trust someone with something, as in Allah’s saying: ‘He said: “I cannot trust in you with respect to him, except as I trusted in you with respect to his brother before...”’ (*Yusuf*: 64). So, this verb could mean to believe in something, to

believe what someone says, to give protection and reassurance or to keep a trust and pay it back. The last meaning is mentioned in Allah's saying: '...and among them there are some such that if you entrust one (of them) with a *dinar* he shall not pay it back to you except so long as you remain firm in demanding it...' (*Al-'Imran*: 75).

So, as for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...we believe in Him...' (*al-Mulk*: 29), it means that the believers say that they have believed in Him *the Almighty*, while the people of Mecca disbelieved in Him and in His Bounties and associated false deities with Him. Not only do the believers believe in Him, but they also put their trust in Him. They rely upon no one other than Him *Glorified is He*. The true meaning of reliance is to work with your body and to rely on Him *the Almighty* with your heart. The one who works without reliance is faced with frustration.

The believers rely upon Allah *the Almighty* to put them under His care. They do not rely on somebody who may die tomorrow; rather, they rely on the Ever-living Who never dies *the Almighty* Who can never be defeated, and the All Powerful Who can never be conquered. In this regard, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And rely upon the Exalted in Might, the Merciful.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 217). His Power and Mercy is for our interest. So, we must rely on the One Who loves us and appreciate our deeds. He commands us, saying: 'And rely on Allah; and Allah is sufficient for a Protector.' (*al-Ahzab*: 3)

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* gave us an example of reliance by the birds, saying, 'If you all depend on Allah with due reliance, He would certainly give you provision as He gives it to birds who go forth hungry in the morning and return with a full belly at dusk.'⁽¹⁾ The birds go out of their nests searching for food; they go forth hungry in the morning, and return back with full bellies. They followed the ways of getting food and thus gain Allah's Provision.

(1) *This Hadith is narrated on the authority of `Umar ibn Al-Khattab Allah be pleased with him. At-Tirmidhi rated this Hadith as a good, authentic one. See At-Tirmidhi, Sunnan, Hadith no. 2344; Ibn Maja, Sunnan, Hadith no. 4164; and Ahmed, Musnad, Hadith no. 205, 307 and 373.*

So, if you relied on Allah *the Almighty* you should follow the ways that Allah *Glorified is He* has shown to you. If you did not find a means of gaining your provision, you should not lose hope because your Lord has Power over any means, for He is actually the Creator of the means.

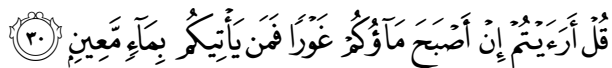
As for the meaning of the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...you will come to know in time who is in obvious error’ (*al-Mulk*: 29), the same meaning is mentioned in another verse reading: ‘...you will come to know who is the follower of the even path and who goes aright.’ (*Ta Ha*: 135) This knowledge will be revealed on the Last Day, when the people go to either the Paradise or the Hell. There, they will know who was really following the Right Path; however, this knowledge then will be of no use to the disbelievers, for it will be too late. The Day of Judgment is the time for account, not that of doing deeds.

Dalal (error) in this verse means to take the wrong way that does not make you reach your destination. The word has different meanings; it could mean to vanish, as in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘And they say: “What! When we have become lost in the earth, shall we then certainly be in a new creation?” Nay! They are disbelievers in the meeting of their Lord.’ (*as-Sajda*: 10) It also means to be unable to reach the truth, as Allah *Glorified is He* describes Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* when he refused to worship idols and kept searching for the Right Path till He *the Almighty* guided him by the Revelation, saying: ‘Did He not find you lost and guide you?’ (*ad-Duha*: 7) He was searching for the truth till the great Favour of Allah *the Almighty* came to him by revealing His Way of Guidance to him.

The third meaning of ‘error’ is to know the truth then drift away from it, as in Allah’s saying: ‘A faction of the people of the Scripture wish they could mislead you. But they do not mislead except themselves, and they perceive [it] not.’ (*Al-Imran*: 69)

Allah *the Almighty* concludes the verse in question, saying: ‘...in obvious error.’ (*al-Mulk*: 29) The disbelievers are in ‘clear error’ that is apparent to them; it takes them away from the truth and surrounds them inescapably.

Allah *the Almighty* consequently says:



**Say, ‘Just think: if all your water were to sink deep into the earth who could give you flowing water in its place?’ [30]
(The Quran, *al-Mulk*: 30)**

Allah *Glorified is He* stores some of the water for us underground. This is not meant to hide the existing water, but rather that we find it when we miss it on the surface of the earth. The underground water solves many problems, for the ground safeguards it against evaporation and does not make us in need to build dams to save the sweet water.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* gave us an example of that saying, ‘The similitude of guidance and knowledge with which Allah has sent me is like a rain which has fallen on some ground. A fertile part of earth has absorbed water and brought forth much grass and herbs. Another part, which is solid, held the water and Allah benefits men thereby. They drank and gave others to drink, and used it for irrigation. But some of it has fallen on a portion of sandy land which neither retains the water nor produces herbage. This is the similitude of guidance and knowledge with which Allah has sent me.’⁽¹⁾

These are three kinds of earth that are given as an example of the people’s level of benefiting from knowledge. The first one holds water and gives out plants. The second one keeps the water for the benefit of the people. Someone may ask, ‘What is the benefit of the third one that neither keeps water nor brings forth plants? Why was it created then?’ It is in fact beneficial as it leads the water to where it will settle underground. In this regard, Allah *Glorified is He* also says: ‘...and sent down water from the sky and given you drink from it. And you are not its retainers.’ (*al-Hijr*: 22); and ‘Say, “Just think: if all your water were to sink deep into the earth who could give you flowing water in its place?”’ (*al-Mulk*: 30) Thus, if we reflect on this kind of earth, we will find that it also has a role, as He *the Almighty* has never created something without a purpose.

(1) This Hadith is narrated on the authority of Abu Musa Al-Ash`ari Allah be pleased with him. See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 79; see also Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 2282.

In the same way, the people make benefit of knowledge. The fruits of knowledge could appear on some people very quickly, but regarding other people they are postponed to the following generations. Then, you should not think that the underground sweet water mixes with the salty water, for this does not happen. The sweet water runs into special tunnels; you can find it even under the Gulf salty water! This is one of the Wonders of Allah's creation that clearly shows His Great Power. Further, there is a barrier between the salty water and the sweet one above the ground, a fact which is crystal clear in His saying: 'He has made the two seas to flow freely (so that) they meet: between them is a barrier which they cannot pass.' (*ar-Rahman*: 19-20) Likewise, there is also a barrier between the salty underground water and the sweet one.

Allah *Glorified is He* has made the earth suitable for us, and laid down the necessary laws for achieving that purpose. The places with no much rain have underground water to be used at the time of need. It is stored underground in order not to be evaporated by the sun.

With regard to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Say, "Just think: if all your water were to sink deep into the earth who could give you flowing water in its place?"' (*al-Mulk*: 30), one may ask, 'Can the water sink deep into the earth'? In the same connection, He *the Almighty* says: 'Or its waters should sink down into the ground so that you are unable to find it.' (*al-Kahf*: 41) The disbelievers are unable to see Allah's signs on the earth, and they are unable to attain to His Guidance. That is why Allah *Glorified is He* describes them saying: 'And the parable of those who disbelieve is as the parable of one who calls out to that which hears no more than a call and a cry; deaf, dumb (and) blind, so they do not understand.' (*al-Baqara*: 171) Their ears refused to hear the beneficial knowledge, so they are like the deaf. In fact, the deaf person is better than the one who can hear but cannot understand. The deaf, dumb, or mad persons are excused, but these people are not.

You start to think after the faculty of hearing and the rest of senses play their role. The human being is originally a sensory constitution, i.e. he sees, hears and tastes first, and then starts to think. Those disbelievers hear with their ears, but they do not understand what they hear. Allah *Glorified is He* describes them, saying: '...So what is [the matter] with those people that they can

hardly understand any statement.' (*an-Nisa'*: 78) This means that they cannot even come close to understanding. Thinking necessarily leads to understanding and that is why it is very strange that they cannot understand what they see every day. He *the Almighty* has created for them all what they can live with, and has given them intelligence to make use of in gaining their sustenance.

In the same vein, He *the Almighty* says: 'And We send down water from the cloud according to a measure, then We cause it to settle in the earth, and most surely, We are able to carry it away.' (*al-Mu'minun*: 18) We take our needs from the rainwater and the rest sinks into the earth to be stored until we need it. In this connection, He *the Almighty* says: 'Do you not see that Allah sends down water from the cloud, then makes it go along in the earth in springs...' (*az-Zumar*: 21). One of the wonders of Allah's Omnipotence is that the salty and sweet water flow in different tunnels so that they do not mix together.

The underground water is stored in natural tanks to be used if we lost sweet water or missed the rain. Allah *Glorified is He* also reminds us about His Ability to deprive us from this bounty, saying: '...and most surely We are able to carry it away.' (*al-Mu'minun*: 18) So, we should use water in the right way in order not to lose it.

Regarding Allah's saying: 'Say, "Just think: if all your water were to sink deep into the earth who could give you flowing water in its place?"' (*al-Mulk*: 30), the flowing water is the running water that is easy to be reached. If your water was to become sunken into the earth, who can bring it back to you?

In this verse, there is wisdom behind saying 'your water'. Although the water is attributed to the people, they cannot control it. Only Allah is fully Able to bring it, as everything is under His Control *Glorified is He*. If the disbelievers know this, why do they associate partners with Him? Allah *Glorified is He* is asking them and He knows their answer. They would say that none can bring it back to us except Him *the Almighty*. So, why do they worship others who cannot bring the water to them?

Allah *the Almighty* is fully Able to do anything; He is Able to create and destroy, to give life and cause death, to honour and degrade people, to withhold and grant abundance, and to cause benefit and harm. He is Omnipotent over all things.

Allah *the Almighty* reminds us that He is fully Able to deprive us from the bounty of water to take care of and use it in a way that does not destroy it. We should ask the One Who controls the entire universe and supplicate to Him. When you have no means, ask the One Who owns all the means. If you relied on Him and followed all the means that He has given to you, He will always be with you; He will help you get what you want after being hindered by the earthly means.

Allah *the Almighty* has sent Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with guidance and knowledge. Some people accept this knowledge and benefit themselves and others. This kind of people are like the earth that holds water of rain and brought thus forth much grass and plants on which animals and people feed. Other people keep guidance and knowledge for others to benefit from, like the earth that keeps the rainwater for people to drink, cultivate, and from which to feed animals. The third kind of people is those who do not accept guidance or knowledge that came with him *peace and blessings be upon him*. This kind is like the earth that neither keeps water nor brings forth plants. It does not make benefit of the rain that falls on it, and thus the rainwater went in underground routes.

Human beings, in general, are losers, but who will be saved from the loss? Allah *Glorified is He* gives us the answer, saying: ‘Except for those who have believed and done righteous deeds and advised each other to truth and advised each other to patience.’ (*al-’Asr*: 3) So, the belief and good deeds are the way of being saved from loss. No disbeliever will be saved from Allah’s Punishment. His Mercy and Favour are the way to salvation and the paradise. None will be saved without them i.e. His Mercy and Favour. To be saved from the fire, you should repent to Allah *the Almighty* reform what has been corrupted, keep on His Way, and be sincere to Him.

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